

# Recording of Intimacies using Mobile Phone Cameras: An Exploratory Study into the Factors behind the Consent of Female Counterparts

I. Goswami<sup>1</sup>, Rani Premkumar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Director, Management Studies, INFO Institute of Engineering  
Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Karpagam University  
Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

**Abstract:** *Mobile Phones with cameras have permeated into the lives of the tech conscious population whose dream to “digitally immortalize” a passing image or incident turns true. The deadly twist surfaces with the fading of the bête-noir towards recording the intimacies, especially among the female participants, with the hassle free technology of the mobile phone camera, which owns an aura of privacy and secrecy. In this study, the researchers endeavor to throw light on the factors behind the consent of females in their participation in the private recordings using mobile phones for non-commercial ends, especially in this era replete with MMS scandals and the consequent monetization of the resultant category of amateur pornography. The research examines: 1) Factors behind the consent of the females for the same. 2) Their notions of safety. 3) The reasons behind the choice of mobile phones as recording devices. The research is conducted on the foundations of qualitative research methodology and the researchers have relied on in-depth interviews for procuring primary data. The paper also discusses the ‘pseudo security notions’ harbored and the remedies to ensure the dignity of women.*

**Keywords:** Mobile phone camera, amateur pornography, women, dignity, MMS

## 1. Introduction

Manu Smrithi, which is lauded as the oldest and the most authentic text of Human Theology and as the first legal text of human civilization, states that women are regarded as honor of the home. ‘A woman is a replica of honour. Hence her duty and responsibility for the family are also very important. Only those women who live in the society within the limits of their family norms are respected.’ A characterless woman not only loses her own honour but also of her family (Buhler, 2004).

In the contemporary society also, women are seen as the one who determines the honour of the family. Due to the technological breakthroughs, cultural leverages and education, women have been managing to carve an identity in the lines of liberalism. Many national and international documents gifted the women with ways to live a dignified independent life.

With the influx of the latest technologies, women too managed to have a fair share of its benefits and disadvantages. Women have forever been deemed to be objects of beauty. But, somewhere it seems to stop at the objectification of women. Indecent representations of women and pornography are just the tip of the ice berg.

In the present day, pornography is not regarded as the digital form of prostitution. Amateur or homemade porn is the rage. Many women knowingly or unknowingly fall in honey coated traps. Barcan (2004) notes that homemade nudity is most evident in the explosion of interest in sexually explicit material featuring real people – in real core, reality TV shows and chat rooms. The accessibility of all these new

forms has made sexually explicit imagery more culturally visible, whether it is accessed by individuals or not.

In this research, we seek to delve into the reasons to understand many women succumb to revealing themselves in the private recordings with the aid of mobile phone cameras, though for non commercial purposes. The researchers are curious if it is sexual liberalism or sexual slavery which prods them ahead in recordings which has the potential to tarnish their image in the society. The researchers recognize that there is a section of women who indulge, ultimately to be revealed, in amateur pornography which is being monetized. This study is a journey through the lives of women who consented to such ‘private’ recordings which has the potential to mar their lives. We endeavor to study why they agree and what all measures they take for safeguarding their dignity. There have been numerous studies undertaken in the areas of pornography including amateur pornography. However, there is hardly any study which may depict a direct research from the women point of view. Hence, the study has been undertaken.

### 1.1. The Objectives of the Study

- a) To determine the factors behind the consent for non-commercial recording of intimacies given by the female participants.
- b) To understand the notions of safety among the females and the steps taken by them to ensure their dignity.
- c) To understand the reasons behind the choice of mobile phones as the recording device.

## 2. Review of Literature

A probe into the prior work showed that there have been very few studies on the subject area and only a handful of works in close semblance with the related topic are available.

Stelmaszewska and others (2006), in their paper identified social uses and practices of camera in social settings. The study was more centered on the social uses of camera and the sharing of photos- ‘now’ and ‘later’; and its use in the interaction with strangers. The paper reveals the ‘sharing later’ aspect which has fragmental relevance in our study.

Doorn (2010) examined if the ‘DIY’ web cultures facilitate different and more authentic representations of gender and sexuality conventionally available in mainstream pornography by analyzing a sample of 100 user-generated ‘amateur’ videos on YouPorn, an adult video-sharing website. It was concluded that, rather than providing a space for alternative sexual representations, YouPorn is a site where ‘pornography, participatory media, and the representation of reality converge to maintain a politically conservative gender ideology’- thereby rejecting the premise that new media technologies are opening up spaces for the sexual emancipation of the so called previously marginalized groups. However, the study did not touch upon the matters of female consent in the same.

Schwarz (2010), in a study in Israel, examined the photographed sex in ‘the historical contexts of the visualization of sexuality, pleasure and desire’; and the new norms of photographed self-documentation. It was shown that photographed sex produces new sort of pleasure and knowledge- about oneself, partner, sexuality and relationship. This objective visual knowledge is stated to be superior to subjective knowledge. Photography is stated to have introduced new performances and encouraged borrowing from media-representations of sex and rational self-improvement. Hence it is revealed that there is no exclusive focus in previous studies on the compelling reasons of women to be a part of such acts and the measures adopted to ensure secrecy.

## 3. Research Methodology

As the study seeks to delve into the sensitive realm of the factors that lured the female participants into recording intimacies with mobile phone cameras, the qualitative research methodology was used to view the scenario from the point of view of the participants. The exploratory study seeks to focus on factors behind female consent to intimate recordings, their notions of security and the reasons for choosing mobile phone camera as recording medium.

The sampling method adopted was purposive sampling due to the delicateness of the issue and the limited number of participants in the area. The study puts an effort to reveal the respondents’ inner thoughts despite their urge to protect their right to privacy. The researchers sought to elicit data from those females whose intimate moments were recorded in the form of pictures or video, with the help of a mobile phone camera for non- commercial purposes. It is to be noted that

that the aftermath of such incidents is not dealt with in this paper.

In- depth interviews were conducted with twenty female respondents to constitute primary data. An interview guide was constructed for the purposes of sticking to the predetermined focus areas during the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately for forty to fifty minutes and the medium of interaction was their regional language Malayalam and English. Each respondent was given assurance as to anonymity and that their real names will not be used in the study. Informal conversational approach was relied on. The field work was conducted between September 2012 and January 2013. The study was conducted in the state of Kerala, India. The data thus procured was transcribed and coded for analysis. After the comparison of data and refining categories, emerging themes were consolidated to be included in this study.

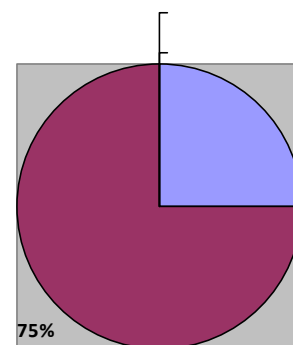
## 4. Findings

By ‘intimate recordings’, sixty- five percent of the participants meant full nudity while the rest settled for semi-nude and indecent images which were to be kept in private. Before presenting the key findings, the researchers would like to bring in some basic information on the respondents who participated in the study

**Table 1.** Respondents’ Age Categories

Age (Years)	Respondents
Below 20	3
20-30	16
Above 30	1

The analysis of data points out at the multiple instances of intimate recordings to which the respondents have consented. Seventy- five percent of the respondents have consented to the recordings more than once.



**Figure 1:** Percentage of females who consented to intimate recordings more than once.

The researchers however do find it necessary to state the occupational profiles of the participants.

**Table 2:** Occupational profiles of the respondents

Students	3
Working Women	11
Housewives	6

**4.1. Factors behind the Consent of Females**

The analysis of data revealed the factors behind the consent of females in matters of intimate recordings using mobile phone cameras. It is submitted that there had been overlapping of common factors and there are multiple factors serving as an impetus for most respondents. The findings are articulated hereunder.



**Figure 2:** Factors behind the consent of females

**4.1.1. Trust**

All the respondents mentioned about the assurance from their male counterparts in the act, regarding the safety and care they would put in to make sure it does not become public. “The mobile phone is password protected and my husband will not show it to anyone. So I am safe”, Leela quipped.

**4.1.2. Force**

Thirty- five percent of the respondents mentioned that the consent was obtained by emotional and verbal pressure from the male counterparts.

**4.1.3. To Divert**

Some see such acts to divert the attention of their men to themselves. Sreekala stated so, “My husband is addicted to porn and I consented to such pictures so that he does not watch the body of any other woman”

**4.1.4. To keep men hooked in relationships-**

**Jyotsna:** “My boyfriend is loving and all that- but I want all his attention. He is very handsome. So I consented to such things, you see!”

**Interviewer:** “Don’t you think it is too risky?”

**Jyotsna:** “Love and physical attraction are two things. We love each other so much. I just want him to see me intimate with him on his cell always, that he does not get attracted to any other girl.”

Some go a step ahead and state that the recordings is to keep men in the relationship, as the recordings act as a ‘proof’ of intimate relationship and ensure the future of the relationship, when it is a case of ‘out of wedlock relationship’.

**4.1.5. Body Image**

Some find it an expression of self love and adore seeing them getting intimate with their loved ones. “It makes you feel content with your body and boosts your body image....thus your confidence”, Diya raved. Some opined that they feel like film stars after viewing the act later on and it is a good reason to stick to an exercise regimen.

**4.1.6. Peers**

Peers play an important role in the casting away of the inhibitions. Priya revealed that she had discussed the matter with some of her female friends and have found their response encouraging and states that most of them have ‘tried a hand at it’.

**4.1.7. Excitement**

Sreekala stated that it is also “a matter of retaining excitement in the marital relationship, whether you want it or not!” Thus recording is seen by many as a way to rev up their marital life.

**4.1.8. Intoxication**

There is a cross- section of the respondents who can only get to shed their inhibitions with alcohol. Intoxication let them feel more ‘secure with their bodies’ and ‘relieves the tension which accompanies such acts.’

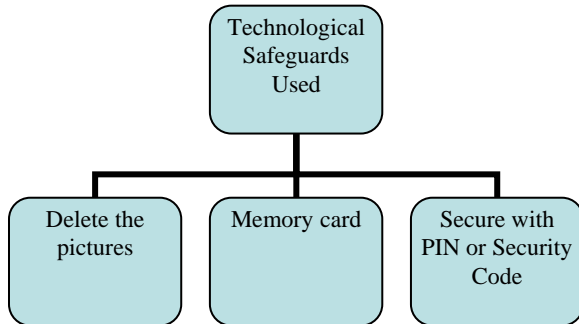
**4.1.9. Pornography**

Watching and getting inspiration from pornographic movies are the reasons that make some feel open to experiment so, on suggestion from their men.

**4.1.10 Presence of both**

Some mention that as both of them- the man and the lady being present in the recording makes them feel secure, as they feel their ‘men have self respect and are respectable in society’, hence ‘would not want to have their porn clips in the scandal/ amateur category of porn sites’.

## 4.2. Notions of Safety



**Figure 3:** Technical measures taken by women

### 4.2.1. Technological Safeguards

Deleting the pictures or clipping is stated to be one of the measures adopted by females as a measure of safety. Some personally make sure the clipping or picture is deleted, if recorded in their partner's phone. While some ensure that the recording is made to be saved in the memory card of the mobile phone instead of mobile memory and secure the card. While some secure their mobile phones with pin or pass codes.

### 4.2.2. Mobile phone is private

"Mobile phones are least suspected for such clips", Sini opined. Mobile phone is seen as a personal communication device and kept secure. So such clips or pictures are secure, is the opinion of many. "Unlike camera which is shared by others in the family, mobile phone is safe and it is up to us to give our mobile for others to browse", Sreekala opined. It is also a common notion shared by the respondents that as everyone has mobile phones of their own it considered acceptable not to share mobile phones.

### 4.2.3 'Loved ones do not cheat'

It is opined by many that they are doing such acts with trusted ones and hence are in the safe zone. They exude the confidence in their mates and some state that 'they have together googled/ searched in the internet options to secure such clips in the mobile phone'.

## 4.3. The choice of mobile phone camera for intimate recordings

Third important probe was on the selection of the recording medium to be mobile phone cameras. It seems relevant here that twenty percent of the respondents have tried other devices of recording like the digital camera.

### 4.3.1 Non- predetermined recording

Some chose mobile phone camera as a handy device especially when it comes to 'non- predetermined recordings', otherwise to say, the recordings at short notice or those which were recorded at an impulse; "because mobile phones are always kept charged while a digital camera might not be ready to use unless used on a daily basis"- added Rekha.

### 4.3.2. Absence Of alternative

Twenty percent of the respondents opted for the mobile phones due to the sole reason that there was no alternative available for them, as they did not own an alternate recording device.

### 4.3.3 Ease and Privacy

There is a concurrence on the ease in recording and storing such clips. Tamanna opined that it is easier to handle and there is a danger that the kids might come across such clips if shot and stored in a digital camera, due to its non-private nature- especially in middle class families where there is no separate cameras for all; while it is not the case with mobile phones..

### 4.3.4 Easy to retrieve

"Intimacies are recorded for the purposes of reviewing it at ease", Reshmi opined." The ease of viewing the clipping without making it obvious, as mobile phone is a multi functional device, is a popular reason for the selection of the medium for intimate recordings.

### 4.3.5The Choice of the Man

Some chose mobile phone camera in a passive way as it was the male who used to decide on it and the women were not considered partners in the decision making.

## 5. Discussions

**Force-**The study revealed that thirty- five percent of the females 'succumbed due to force- emotional or verbal'. It is to be noted that coercion to a similar act should be considered sexual abuse which constitutes domestic violence according to The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 in India. The term 'sexual abuse' is explained in the Act as including 'any conduct of a sexual nature that abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the dignity of women.'

**Body Image V Self Esteem-** It seemed to be an irony that some found the recordings to boost the 'body image', while compromising on self respect consenting to such acts them do not inherently agree on.

### Pseudo Security Notions-

Researchers find some findings to be 'pseudo security notions' cradled by the participants about the security measures they bank on.

a)Blackmail weapons-While some state that 'loved ones do not cheat', it is still to be remembered that in case of a domestic strife or break up such videos and pictures have the potential to become 'blackmail weapons'.

b) Data does not vanish- Another is the belief that the deleting of pictures or videos is a safety measure. It is a misconception. There are numerous softwares in the market which enable the retrieval of the deleted data, though they

were developed primarily for the pure intention of retrieving valuable data which got lost by accidental deleting or formatting. Same is the case with memory card and formatting it is also not a 'cyber safe' option.

c) 'Mobile Phone is private'-There is yet another belief that surfaced during the study -that the 'mobile phone is private' and data could be made secure with a PIN or security code . The researchers mulled over the scenarios where the mobile phone is stolen or handed over to a technician for repair which makes the recordings vulnerable. The researchers suggest that the mobile phones with such sensitive data, even though deleted, should be destroyed and prevented from changing hands by means of selling or sharing. It is also submitted here that the PIN or security codes are vulnerable as they are not 'crack proof' -ie- a skilled person can crack the protection measures.

d)Trust- There lies the irony that despite men assuring the privacy of the clipping, many such videos surface. Some are intentionally circulated to demean the women and to denigrate their image in public. As the popular quote by Bernard goes, "Men are always sincere. They change sincerities, that's all."

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, we quote La Bruyere, "When a secret is revealed, it is the fault of the man who confided it." Thus, the point is in restraining from confiding, even to an inanimate mobile device. Though various factors have been pointed out as reasons for the consent of female counterparts in such recordings, the inherent reality that it leaves behind traces is to be remembered always. Technology is good and there is no use blaming it if we cannot make proper use of it.

## References

- [1] Barcan, Ruth. (2004). *Nudity: A Cultural Anatomy*. Oxford and New York: Berg.
- [2] Doorn, V.N. (2010). *Keeping It Real: User generated Pornography, Gender Reification And Visual Pleasure,* Convergence, Vol.16, 2010.
- [3] G.Buhler.(2004). *The Laws Of Manu*. NewDelhi: Indigo Books.
- [4] Schwarz, O.(2010). *Going to Bed with a Camera: on the Visualisation of Sexuality and the Production of Knowledge*. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* , 13(6):637-656.
- [5] Stelmaszewska, H., Fields, B. & Blandfors, A. (2006). *Camera Phone Use in Social Context*. In Proc. HCI 2006 (Vol. 2)

## Author Profile

Dr. I. Goswami is an academican with the rich experience of being a mentor and guide to scholars and students from a wide cross section of the nation. He has been the author of the seminal work on ethics in social work and has dabbled in cyber victimology, women's studies and human resource management and has been closely associated with many prestigious institutions including universities. Presently, he is the Director of Management Studies, INFO Institute Of Engineering, Coimbatore.

Rani Premkumar is a lawyer and has been associated with many ace law schools in India qualifying her in cyber laws, IPR, media laws and criminology. She is the proud recipient of the NIXI Fellowship in 2010. Cyber victimology, cyber criminology and cyber laws are her areas of interest. Presently, she is a research scholar at Karpagam University, Coimbatore.