



THE RISE OF CYBER-SEX CRIMES IN ZAMBIA



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TABLE OF CONTENT

1 Title	1
2: Abstract	2
3: Understanding Sextortion	3
4: Methods of Sextortion	4
5: Trends of Sextortion	4-5
6: Challenges	6
7: How to protect yourself	6-7
8: If you're a victim	7-8
9: Conclusion	9

ABSTRACT

Sextortion is an increasingly prevalent internet crime, but it is not well defined or understood. Sextortion, short form for sexual extortion is a form of blackmail where a perpetrator threatens to share intimate images and videos (sometimes manipulated) of a victim online unless they give in to their demands. Sextortion by its nature is somehow shameful for a victim to come out in the open for fear of being judged and this has resulted in victims refraining from reporting such cases of sextortion, unless the situation becomes life threatening or the perpetrator makes non-ending demands prompting the victim to open up and seek help.

This piece of literature aims at creating awareness on what sextortion really is and gives insights on what victims can do when being sextorted as well as how it can be prevented.



UNDERSTANDING SEXTORTION

What is Sextortion?

Sextortion is a recently established portmanteau of the words sex and extortion. Generally, extortion occurs when one person takes advantage of another person against his or her will by means of threat of violence or threat of harm of any kind to the person (Forsyth & Copes, 2014, p. 266).

The harm can be physical (to them or their loved ones) or can target their property or reputation (Konrad & Skaperdas, 1998), typically involving blackmail (Lindgren, 1993; Shavell, 1993) the threat of sharing damaging secret information, or ransom where something of value in this case sexual content (pictures & videos) is held until the victim fulfills a specified condition (Alix, 1978; Goldberg, 1986; Konrad & Skaperdas, 1997

It can also be referred to as the practice of extorting money or sexual favors from someone by threatening to reveal evidence of their sexual activity. It involves someone gaining access to sensitive, private photos or videos, and eventually threatening to publish them unless the person in the photos or videos pays a fee or performs certain actions. The price may be a one-time fee, or an ongoing payment brooklet.

In many instances, rather than requesting money, the extortionist may request more intimate photos or videos as the price of privacy. If a person gives in, they end up maintaining their privacy at the expense of giving the extortionist additional ammunition against them.

METHODS OF SEXTORTION

- Email phishing schemes
- All Social media
- Hacked accounts
- Hacked webcams
- Social Engineering



TRENDS ON SEXTORTION

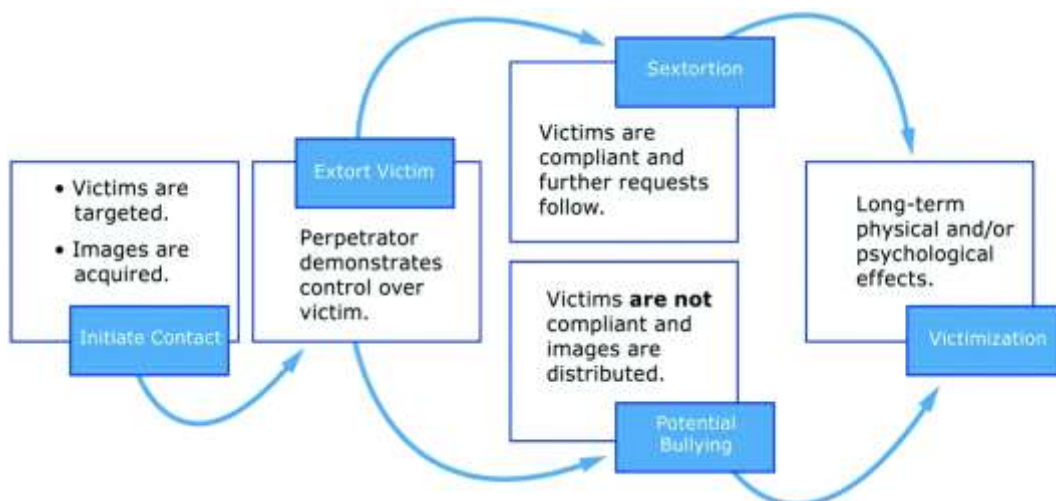
There has been an increase in blackmailing cases of sextortion among a number of internet users in Zambia. Bad actors, both male and female target either married or financially stable men and women who may not want their reputations to be bruised.

Beautiful young ladies target high profile men and entice them into exchanging naked videos or photos and in some cases, record the act of infidelity. Young guys or men on the other hand also prey on vulnerable women and sweet talk their way into making these women to fall in love with them; this makes it easy for the culprits to start manipulating with their targets making them do things like sharing sensitive photos and videos in the name of love. Once this vital data is collected, it's then used to make demands to the victims else they risk having that information leaked on different social media platforms.

However, this does not only include the targeted victims as highlighted above. Anyone one can fall prey to these crimes. In cases, the perpetrator knows the victims and it may have been a case where the perpetrator and the victim were in a relationship and sexual content was shared. When the relationship ends, the perpetrator may use the sexual content and threaten to post and expose the victim should the victim decide to end the sexual relationship. Usually the perpetrator may have his way. This kind of blackmail is an example of **sextortion** because bad actors may ask for sexual favors or they may demand for money or more sexual content.

A victim narrated how she was sextorted by a guy she was introduced to by a work colleague. He swept her off her feet to a point where they started sexting. On a particular day, a video call was made where the victim exposed her nudity on camera on the demand of the culprit without knowing she was being recorded. Things immediately took a different twist when the sextortionist threatened to expose the recorded video on WhatsApp all over social media unless the victim paid monetary ransom. In frantic attempts to avoid having her reputation bruised or dented, she panicked and was left with no option but to transfer the money to the bad actor. However, the demands did not end just there and this was a very devastating process. A similar story can be linked to on Lusaka young man in his late twenties who was a victim of the same. A total of **ZMW 17,500.00** was involved with the bad actor walking away with a smile.

Victimization by sextortion can lead to psychological suffering and serious mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. Continued experience can even lead to self-harm and even suicide.



CHALLENGES

Sextortion is an increasingly prevalent internet crime, but it is not well-defined or understood, due to this fact only a few sextortion cases have been formally reported and ZCSIF has so far recorded only 5 cases of sextortion of which only 2 cases were reported to the police and one perpetrator was successfully arrested.

As new technology makes the challenge of combatting sextortion even more difficult, regulators should consider using a broad definition of sextortion to capture the myriad of ways that criminals are extorting victim with their sexual images.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST SEXTORTION

The easiest way to protect yourself from being sextorted is to avoid sending explicit content to anyone else via phone, tablet, or computer. Keep your wits (and a healthy amount of skepticism) about you when another person asks you to send intimate photos or videos online. Do not send intimate photos to or video-chat with a person you have not met in real life.

To avoid falling victim to sextortion, be sure to use the following tips:

Set all of your social media accounts to private;

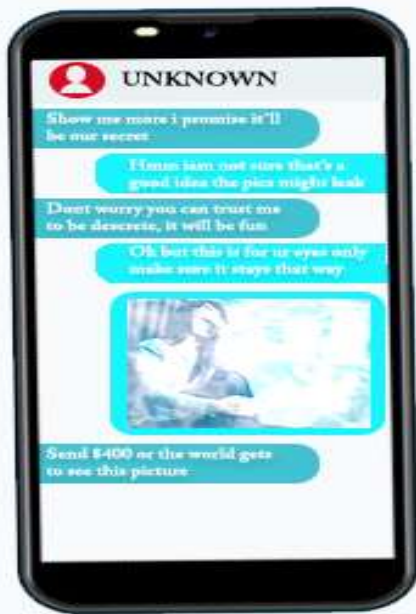
Never send compromising images of yourself to anyone no matter how close you are to them;

Do not open attachments from people you do not know;

Turn off your electronic devices and web cameras when not in use;

On social media or dating platforms, be wary of unknown users who try to move the conversation to another platform very quickly;

Be wary of new online connections who send you unsolicited sexual images that they claim are pictures of themselves. Sextortionists often use this tactic to guide the conversation in a sexual direction and lower their victim's guard.



**DONT TRUST ANYONE
WITH YOUR PHOTOS
OR
VIDEOS**

BE SAFE ONLINE

STOP SEXTORTION



IF YOU ARE THE VICTIM OF SEXTORTION, WE URGE YOU TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Dont panic. Panicking is exactly what the bad actors want you to do as it makes it easy for them to manipulate you into doing whatever they want.
- Tell someone close to you.

As hard as this may sound, we recommend that you do knowing for a fact that it is not easy to admit that you have fallen prey to the manipulative tactics of a faceless, anonymous sextortionist. You might be concerned that your friends or family wont possibly understand how the situation began, or you are frightened that the offender will make good on his threat to post the compromising footage online.

Remember this: you are the victim of a malicious bad guy who is relying on your silence to continue the assault.

- Stop communicating with the perpetrator.

The idea of suddenly, out of the blue, not responding with the sextortionist might cause you to panic. Your mind will start racing with panicky thoughts: Will they contact family? Send messages to close friends?

You should also ask yourself, Am I willing to do this forever? And the answer should be NO! You deserve to be freed from this. Any more chats or sessions with the bad actor

keep you in the manipulative grasp of your abuser. Once the contact is severed the battle to bring him to justice can begin.

- Don't give in to their threats by sending money or more intimate content
- Don't delete anything.

Evidence is absolutely necessary to measure the scope, length, and timeline of the exploitation. You may feel the urge to rid your computer or smart phone of any memory of the situation out of embarrassment, but don't. Keep it all. It is no longer your shame to bear. It is now your ammo.

- Tell the cops.

Involving the police from the beginning is important. Gathering more information on how often it occurs will increase the need for legislative reform.

Sextortionists keep control by making you believe that if you don't obey; your life will be over. They will convince you that you don't have options and there is no way out. That is a wrong message.

At ZCSIF we work hard to ensure that extortionists are brought to book and advocate on your behalf with law enforcement.

Contact or report the crime at <https://www.zcsi-foundation.org/file-complaint/>

or you can call us on (+260777680138) or send our office a message to tell us what is going on. We will be in touch right away.

<https://www.facebook.com/ZCSIF? rdc=1& rdr>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN9B1Z5547XoITynxpi9R0w>

<https://twitter.com/CyberZambia>



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