Intimate Image Abuse (IIA) Scale & Scoring

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This document provides a practical guide for researchers and practitioners on how to score the Intimate Image Abuse (IIA) Scale. The IIA Scale is a 20-item instrument designed to measure experiences of technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Its development and validation are detailed in Bonnesen (2025), Bonnesen, Patel, & Swartout (under review), and Bonnesen & Swartout (2025). The development of the IIA Scale was made possible through the generous financial support of The Lindsey M. Bonistall Research Fellowship. Given the multifaceted nature of IIA, this guide offers three distinct, evidence-based scoring methods to ensure researchers can select the approach that best fits their specific analytic goals.

The IIA Scale

The IIA Scale is administered with the following preamble:

> The following questions concern sexual experiences that you may have had online. We know that some of these experiences may have occurred without your knowledge. We ask that you answer the questions based on the experiences you have had, where you did not give your consent. Definition of consent: Your permission given without coercion, and when you were conscious and sober enough to stop what was happening if you wanted.

		No	Yes
A	**Has someone ever taken or created a naked or sexual picture or video of you without your consent ...**		
A1	where you were partially or fully nude or otherwise exposed (for example where you were in a bathing suit, or your breasts/genitals were visible)?		
A2	where you were engaged in sexual activity?		
A3	where you were showering, bathing, or on the toilet?		
A4	that would reveal parts of your body otherwise covered by clothes (for example up your skirt or down your top or pants)?		
A5	that was edited to show you in a more sexual way (e.g., photoshop, deepfake, AI, or other photo/video editing)?		
B	**Has someone ever posted or shared a naked or sexual picture or video of you without your consent ...**		
B1	where you were partially or fully nude or otherwise exposed (for example where you were in a bathing suit, or your breasts/genitals were visible)?		
B2	where you were engaged in sexual activity?		
B3	where you were showering, bathing, or on the toilet?		
B4	that would reveal parts of your body otherwise covered by clothes (for example up your skirt or down your top or pants)?		
B5	that was edited to show you in a more sexual way (e.g., photoshop, deepfake, AI, or other photo/video editing)?		
C	**Has someone ever threatened to send or post a naked or sexual**		

	picture or video of you…		
C1	where you were partially or fully nude or otherwise exposed (for example where you were in a bathing suit, or your breasts/genitals were visible)?		
C2	Where you were engaged in sexual activity?		
C3	where you were showering, bathing, or on the toilet?		
C4	that would reveal parts of your body otherwise covered by clothes (for example up your skirt or down your top or pants)?		
C5	that was edited to show you in a more sexual way (e.g., photoshop, deepfake, AI, or other photo/video editing)?		
D	**Has someone ever…**		
D1	pressured you into taking a sexually explicit photo or video (e.g., where you were partially nude or your genitals were visible)?		
D2	pressured you into sharing a sexually explicit photo or video (e.g., on social media)?		
D3	pressured you into partaking in a sex act that was photographed/recorded even though you did not want to?		
D4	sent you sexually explicit images or videos without your consent (e.g., naked picture or "dick pic")?		

Scoring Approaches

There are three primary methods for scoring the IIA Scale. The choice of method depends on your research question.

Scoring Approaches	Description	When to Use
1. Binary Scoring	A respondent is coded as having experienced IIA if they endorse **at least one** item on the scale.	For estimating the overall prevalence of IIA in a population (e.g., in campus climate surveys).
2. Community-Based Scoring	Create four separate subscale scores based on the empirically derived clusters from the validation study.	When you want to analyze the differential impacts of specific *types* of harm (e.g., comparing outcomes for survivors of voyeurism vs. deepfakes).
3. Thematic (Act-Based) Scoring	Create four separate subscale scores based on the perpetrator's action.	When you want to analyze specific abusive *tactics* or behaviors (e.g., for research on perpetrator typologies or prevention of coercive acts).

Implement Your Chosen Approach

Approach 1: Binary Scoring

Create a single dichotomous variable. If a participant answers "Yes" to any item from A1 through D4, they are coded as '1' (experienced IIA). If they answer "No" to all items, they are coded as '0'.

Approach 2: Community-Based Subscales

Create four separate binary subscale scores. A participant is coded as '1' for a subscale if they endorse any of the items within that community.

Subscale	Description	Items to Include
1. Nude & Sexualized Imagery	Non-consensual images where the victim was nude or engaged in sexual activity.	A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2
2. Voyeuristic Imagery	Covert recording in private settings and "upskirting."	A3, A4, B3, B4, C3, C4
3. Digitally Manipulated Imagery	Creation or sharing of "deepfakes" or other altered content.	A5, B5, C5
4. Coercion & Pressure	Threats, manipulation, and unwanted exposure.	D1, D2, D3, D4

Approach 3: Thematic (Act-Based) Subscales

Create four separate binary subscale scores based on the abusive act.

Subscale	Description	Items to Include
1. Taking/Creating	Any non-consensual creation of an intimate image.	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5
2. Sharing/Distributing	Any unauthorized distribution of an intimate image.	B1, B2, B3, B4, B5
3. Threatening	Any threat to share or distribute an intimate image.	C1, C2, C3, C4, C5
4. Pressuring/Coercing	Manipulation or coercion to create/share an image.	D1, D2, D3, D4

Important Considerations

Guidance on the 'Miscellaneous' Item: During development, an "Other" item with a write-in option was tested. The validation study (Bonnesen & Swartout, 2025) concluded that this item should not be included in formal scoring due to poor psychometric properties and the introduction of measurement noise. Its use should be reserved for qualitative, exploratory purposes only.

The Reference Period: Researchers must define the time frame for victimization (e.g., "in your lifetime," "in the past year," "since turning 18"). The chosen reference period should be clearly stated and justified.

Suggested Citations

Bonnesen, K. (2025). Intimate Image Abuse: A Mixed Method Scale Development Project [Doctoral dissertation, Georgia State University].

Bonnesen, K., Patel, Y., & Swartout, K. M. (under review). "A canon event in a young woman's life": A scale development study on Intimate Image Abuse. Manuscript submitted to Violence Against Women.

Bonnesen, K., & Swartout, K. (2025). Validation of the Intimate Image Abuse Scale: A Network Psychometrics Approach. Psychology of Violence.