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Exploring the Social Perception of Cyber-Sexual Exploitation: A Thematic Analysis of Reactions Toward "Amouranth Case" on X

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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

- The **cyber-sexual exploitation**, a type of sexual aggression using new technologies (Henry & Powell, 2018), is often hidden behind seemingly consensual live streams, social media platforms, and/or pornography (Henry & Flynn, 2019).
- In October 2022, streamer Amouranth revealed she was being abused and coerced by her husband into creating sexual content, a case of cyber-sexual exploitation. She shared evidence of threats and financial control. After a brief absence, she returned to thank her followers and said she was seeking help. Later, she announced a reconciliation with his husband. The case went viral on X (formerly know as X), sparking debate.
- The **purpose of this research** was to qualitatively examine the social perception of cyber-sexual exploitation of women by analyzing the emerging discourses about the case of Amouranth on X.

METHOD

We followed these steps:

Step 1: Collecting the social reactions to the incident

❑ Tweets were downloaded from **Twitter API** using the R software (rtweet package by Kearney, 2019; R Core Team, 2020):
- ▪ We download **posts published** between 18 and 23 November 2022 (this week marked the peak period following the initial incident that led to the story going viral before subsequently tapering off)
  - • After removing retweets and content lacking originality were excluded, 814 tweets in Spanish were collected

Step 2: Coding the reactions following a Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019)

1) The replies were grouped according to the following categories (Ullman, 2000):

POSITIVE — **Replies that support the victims of cyber-sexual violence**

NEGATIVE — **Disapproval or negative social reactions towards the experiences and victims**

2) Inductive strategy:

1 Familiarizing with the data
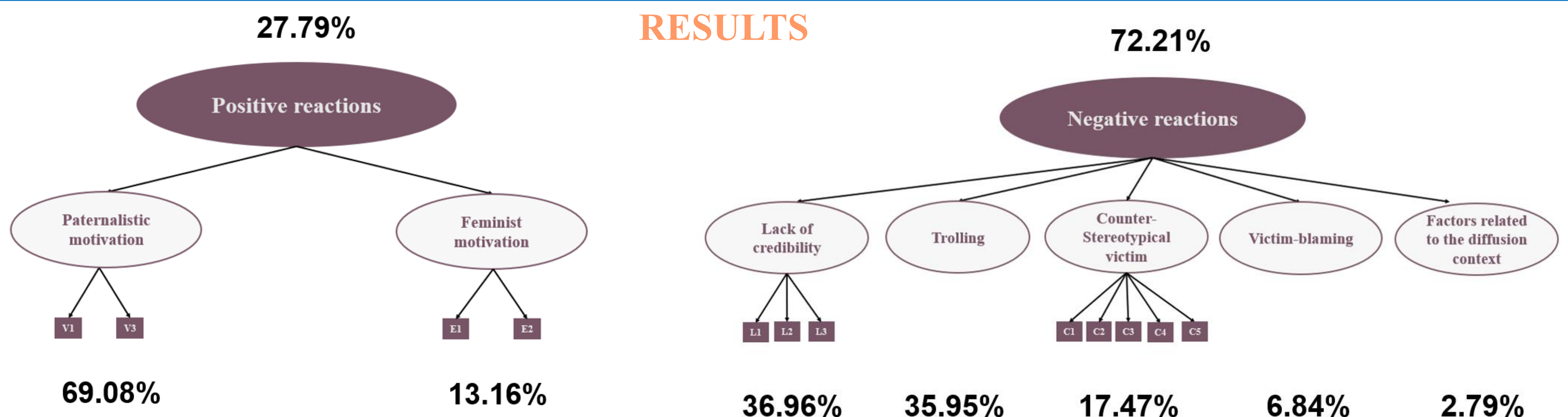2 Generating initial codes
3 Identifying themes
4 Reviewing themes
5 Naming and defining themes
6 Producing a report

Themes and sub-themes were considered "salient" according to:
❑ **Prevalence** (i.e., number of different users who expressed a patterned response across the entire data set)
❑ **Relevance** (i.e., whether the discourse significantly informs the research question)

RESULTS

27.79%
Positive reactions
- Paternalistic motivation — V1, V3 — 69.08%
- Feminist motivation — E1, E2 — 13.16%

72.21%
Negative reactions
- Lack of credibility — L1, L2, L3 — 36.96%
- Trolling — 35.95%
- Counter-Stereotypical victim — C1, C2, C3, C4, C5 — 17.47%
- Victim-blaming — 6.84%
- Factors related to the diffusion context — 2.79%

CONCLUSIONS

- Our findings reveal that X, in addition to being a space that serves for **disseminating attitudes that rationalize and trivialize the severity of cyber-sexual exploitation**, also functions as a **conduit for visibility and confrontation of emerging violence against women**.
- Our findings also underscore the ways in which patriarchy employs novel avenues, denoted as *technologies of the self* (Foucault, 1988), to surveil, control, and govern women through their own actions.