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Cybercrime and Harassment: The Impact of Blackmailing on Jordanian Society as a Case Study

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Abstract: This study aims to uncover the relationship between two cybercrimes, harassment and blackmailing, as well as their impact on Jordanian society. The study population included 90 prosecutors working in Jordanian courts. The researchers used the relational method in the second half of the academic year 2020. According to Jordanian prosecutors, the rate of cybercrime harassment is average, whereas that of blackmail is high. The findings also show a statistically significant relationship between harassment and blackmail crimes among the sample members, which is a statistically significant rate. The study also showed that the spread of harassment had six consequences: threatening and defaming the victim, family breakup, social decay, loss of values, instilling skcepticism and loss of self-confidence, and security instability. The authors recommend increasing citizens' awareness of the concept of electronic governance to combat cybercrime. They also recommend that governments conclude agreements and treaties that criminalize all types of crimes, pinpoint their locations when they are committed, and explain how cybercriminals should be delivered.

Keywords: Harassment, Cybercrime, Blackmail, Electronic Networks, Jordanian Society

1. Introduction

The world has seen rapid development due to the modern information revolution that followed the Industrial Revolution, compelling people to rely on technological skills and methods used in various fields of life and work. Thus, the world has shrunk to the size of a small global village, with communication between societies possible regardless of time or space boundaries (Al-badayneh, 2014), resulting in a significant civilizational leap and positive impacts in a variety of fields, as well as countless services for nations and people (Al-badayneh, 2014). According to Hakeem (2015), Al Thniyan (2012), Al Alfi (2010), and Jones (2020), the positive side of information technology has caused a number of negative effects at the same time. This has resulted from the illegal misuse and exploitation of information systems to harm both individuals and societies (Hakeem, 2015; Al Thniyan, 2012). These new, unprecedented types of crime, dubbed "cybercrime," have emerged. Among the types of cybercrime confirmed by Chadha (2020) and Slutskiy (2021) are harassment and extortion crimes, which are among the types of criminal phenomena found worldwide (Hussein Omar, 2022).

However, society has long been aware of these crimes, which have negatively impacted security, the economy, morals, culture, social and political issues, and educational issues (Kshetri et al., 2015). According to Al-Dhneebat (2015), Aal-Ajmi (2014), and Khawaldeh (2012), many electronic device users connected to the Internet report being subject to various forms of harassment, such as cybercrime, insisting on identifying and stalking people. People who have personal grievances against political opponents or security forces. According to Mamdouh (2006), and Al-Bishri (2002), 13 individuals were harassed by known and unknown individuals. Similarly, they also point out that when a crime of harassment goes unpunished for an extended period of time or if it is not adequately deterred and investigated, it can lead to extortion. Al-Bishri (2002) explained that the latter is a process of threatening and intimidating the victim into publishing pictures, video clips, and films, leaking confidential information about him in exchange for money, or forcing him to commit illegal acts in the interest of blackmailers, such as disclosing confidential information about the client, in exchange for money. According to Al Al-Khiliwi (2014), victims are tracked through their accounts on email, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms. With the increase in the number of social media users and chat programs, cyber extortion is also on the rise.

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According to Al Al-badayneh (2014) and Al Bawabiji (2006), the cybercrimes of harassment and blackmail are among the phenomena that have flourished recently, particularly with the growth of electronic telecommunications and the variety of services it offers. Indeed, contractors spreading negative behaviours in modern media technology have discovered effective tools to harm and annoy others, either for the sake of absurd entertainment or to further their malicious interests in the world of delinquency and crime. Moreover, Talpur (2018) and Jawdat (2007) distinguish between various types of harassment, ranging from pursuing and defaming others to sending letters that are a nuisance to the Internet user, such as letters asking for the user's personal information in order to send money, which is very common in many people's accounts. If these letters are ignored, it is because people are afraid that their personal information will be revealed or that others will gain access to their private information. Furthermore, direct harassment can include sending messages asking the addressee for a negative acquaintance, including bad words or curses, disseminating photos without consent, threatening or extorting, pursuing or spying, and other ever-increasing methods of incessantly annoying hundreds of thousands of users incessantly.

In addition, Al Matiri (2015) and Al Omari (2010) explained that blackmailing could also take various forms, such as emotional blackmailing, which involves dominating other people emotionally and psychologically so that the victim feels guilty and indebted to the party blackmailing him, which is an extremely primitive way of dealing with others. Moreover, material blackmail occurs when a person is forced to pay a sum of money in exchange for being forgiven in a legal suit or offered a portion of the money extorted from him. One problem with material blackmail is that it is common. Additionally, cyber blackmail allows perpetrators to deprive victims of their free will and dominate their personalities. What are the consequences of the spread of cybercrimes, such as following those definitions above? This study aims to address the relationship between crimes of harassment and blackmailing, as well as how far the cybercrime of harassment and blackmailing has spread from the reality of the prosecutor's work in Jordan.

2. Literature Review

Harassment and extortion are electronic crimes that destroy value and impede societal progress. As such, they must be combined with proper planning and methodology (Alansari et. al, 2019). Faster communication tools that have spread more quickly have been discovered (Alansari et. al, 2019). Such tools have enabled harassment and blackmailing crimes to evolve from simple postal letters to other tools such as chat rooms, Internet forums, social media sites (Facebook and Twitter), instant text messages on mobile phones, free communication programs, symbolic pictures, Internet advertisements, automatic transfer links that users may encounter while surfing the Internet, and pop-ups that contain shameless and unabashed adverts or expressions that are offensive (Alansari et.al, 2019, Hussainat 2013). Another change is that the crimes of harassment and blackmail were primarily related to sexual issues and money thefts, but the focus has shifted to include political, sectarian, and even personal account settlement issues, all of which threaten the pattern of values and, thus, the ethical system of all facets of society (Al Matiri,2009).

Al Habsi et.al (2021) conducted research titled "Blackmail on social media: What do we know and what remains unknown?" The study investigates what is known about the relation between blackmail and the disclosure of private information on social media. It finds that young female users of social media are more likely to be victim of blackmailing as they try to create and distribute images.

Al-Qteishat (2018) discussed the crime of attacking private life in the system of combating Saudi informatics crimes. The research aimed to identify the criminal protection of private life in the Internet environment and its challenges. The article also defined private life on the internet and its protection as applicable by the Western and Arab laws. It further explains the elements and penalty of the crime of assaulting private life in the Saudi Regulation.

Alshathry (2016) investigated the effects of a 2012 cyber-attack by a virus Â on Saudi's biggest oil company, Aramco. The paper also analysed the mechanisms that the attackers used to launch the virus. It finally explained how Saudi Aramco recovered from the cyber attack. Moreover, Salvati's (2008) study on the dangers of information systems aimed at providing an environment in which decisions about information security risk management can be made through the provision of solutions and prototypes for analogies. This study relied on a mathematical analytical method using real-world statistical data from Germany's banks and institutions' information systems. The main findings of the study demonstrated that the analogy and calculation of threats and assault prospects became a reality, allowing decision makers to use them as an alternative to estimate.

Saeed (2015) investigated privacy and security in electronic transactions by revisiting e-commerce and security protocols. The researcher used a qualitative approach, and the findings emphasized that e-commerce transactions encounter a variety of issues that can be resolved through various security measures, as security is the most important factor in the application of e-commerce.

Al Matiri (2009) conducted a study titled "Special Verdicts for Blackmailing in the Saudi system of Combating Information Crimes." The researcher used an inductive approach for both the old and new sources and references to the subject. The study findings demonstrated the increasing danger of blackmailing to society and

individuals, as evidenced by its negative impacts on various fields, such as social, psychological, and ethical, as well as those related to security, economy, and so on.

Hamilton-Giachritsis et al. (2020) conducted research to investigate and compare the outcomes of technology-assisted child sexual abuse from the perspective of young people. The study concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between online and offline child sexual abuse using a mixed methods approach. However, the study also reveals that IT facilitated the abuse in six ways and worsened its impact in five.

Al Majali (2009) researched the reality of harassment in Jordan's public and private universities. The study sample included 600 female students, and the findings revealed that the longer female students stayed on campus with friends, the more likely they were to be harassed, especially when the guards did not do their job properly. The findings also revealed that female students needed to be fully aware of the university's rules and penalties, that the penalties were not severe enough, and that they dressed unconventionally. As a result, the rate of harassment was not higher than the national average.

In Al Bawabiji's (2006) study "The Harassment of Women: A Social Study and Legal Solutions," the descriptive approach linked to the survey method was used, and the study sample included 400 male and female students. Women in Jordan were found to be more likely to be harassed, with an average harassment rate of 2.79, indicating that they were frequently verbally harassed. The average rate among male students was also 3.22, indicating that they did it frequently. The second type of harassment occurs via mobile phones. The average rate of harassment among female students was 2.05, indicating a high frequency of harassment among women, whereas the average rate of harassment among male students was 2.43. This type of harassment trailed only verbal harassment.

A review of previous studies reveals a scarcity of research on the relationship between harassment and blackmail crimes, as well as their effects on society, which justifies the importance and relevance of this study. Unlike most previous studies, which focused on high school and university students, the current study takes a relational approach, emphasising the relationship between cybercrimes of harassment and blackmail and their consequences.

3. Research Methodology

The researchers used the relational approach because it is most convenient for the variables of the research, which examines not only the relationship between the crimes of harassment and blackmailing through electronic networks from the reality of the prosecutor's work, but also the effects of those crimes on Jordanian society.

3.1 Research Universe & Sampling

Random sampling was used in this study. The study population consisted of 100 prosecutors working in Jordanian courts, and the sample comprised 90 people. Ten participants were eliminated to prove the tool's firmness. The study was conducted in the second half of the academic year 2020.

3.2 Consistency of the Study Tool

To demonstrate the consistency of the study tool, the researchers distributed it twice, with a two-week interval, to an exploratory random sample of 10 people outside the study sample and then calculated Pearson's correlation coefficient between their grades. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was applied to all fields and the tool as a whole to demonstrate the consistency of the tool since it measures the degree of harmony between the respondents' answers to all questions in the questionnaire, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Coefficient of consistency of the practice using Pearson's correlation and consistency of the tool using Cronbach's alpha.

Field	Consistency coefficient using Cronbach's alpha	Consistency coefficient using Pearson's method
Spread of the crime of harassment on electronic networks	0.84	0.85*
Spread of the crime of blackmailing on electronic networks	0.86	0.86*
The effects of the crimes of harassment and blackmail on the Jordanian society	0.81	0.82
The tool as a whole	0.88	0.83*

* Statistical function at a significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). Source: Calculated by the authors.

3.3 Measurement of the Study

Prevalence was measured on a five-point Likert scale as follows:

The study tool alternatives had the highest average of (5) degrees and the lowest average of (1) degrees. The highest score was subtracted from the lowest score to produce a result of 5–1 = (4). It was then divided into 3 levels, as shown by the equation (3– ÷ 4 levels: high, medium, and low) = 1.33. As a result, the following criteria

were used to assess the study: from a low level of 1 + 1.33 = 2.33, 2.34 + 1.33 = 3.67 is the average level, and 3.68 to 5 is the high level.

3.4 Statistical Methods

The following methods were used: arithmetic (the term arithmetic refers to the standard deviation), Cronbach's alpha equation, Pearson's correlation coefficient to measure the consistency of the tool and its application, and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

4. Findings and Discussion

First, an explanation of the findings in relation to Question 1: To what extent is the crime of harassment spread on electronic networks in Jordan based on the reality of the prosecutor's work? The arithmetic means and standard deviations of the responses were calculated to answer the above questions, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Arithmetic means and standard deviations of sample members' answers to Question 1 about the spread of the crime of harassment arranged from high to low.

Para No	Paragraph	Arithmetic means	Standard deviation	Extent of Spread
3	The spread of the crime of harassment is higher among males	3.29	1.44	Average
5	The spread of harassment through electronic networks by intercepting the victim's e-mail	3.22	1.28	Average
1	The spread of harassment on electronic networks through social media	3.21	1.14	Average
4	The spread of harassment on social networks through concealing real identity and assuming fictitious ones	3.20	0.97	Average
7	The spread of harassment on electronic networks for the purpose of robbing information from the victim	3.15	1.25	Average
6	The spread of verbal harassment on electronic networks	3.11	1.11	Average
9	The spread of harassment through the diffusion of photos and immoral films	3.05	0.77	Average
8	The spread of harassment on electronic networks by sending letters with offensive content to the addressee	3.03	0.82	Average
10	The spread of harassment on electronic networks through requesting friendship and relations for sexual purposes	2.78	1.05	Average
12	The spread of harassment on electronic networks through seducing the victim materially	2.70	0.88	Average
2	The spread of harassment on electronic network through offering services and moral assistance to the victim	2.69	0.75	Average
12	The spread of harassment on electronic networks for the purpose of disseminating the victim's name and photos on obscene sites without his consent	2.67	1.26	Average
The tool as a whole		**2.67**	**1.13**	**Average**

Source: Calculated by the author.

Table 2 shows that the arithmetic means of the responses of the sample members ranged between 2.67 and 3.29 in terms of the spread of the harassment crime on electronic networks in the opinion of the prosecutors. For example, paragraph 3 discusses the higher prevalence of harassment on electronic networks among men; paragraph 5 discusses the spread of harassment through electronic networks by intercepting the victim's e-mail; paragraph 1 discusses the spread of harassment on electronic networks through social media; and paragraph 12 discusses the spread of harassment on electronic networks for disseminating the victim's name and photos on obscenity. However, the arithmetic mean of the tool as a whole is 2.76, reflecting the average spread of the crime of harassment on electronic networks from the reality of the prosecutor's work. What can be inferred is that this crime is committed by people who lack the positive values that are commonly practised in society, amoral and heartless people who are surveyed by cybercrime police and handed over to the prosecutor to determine the appropriate punishment. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Al Bawabiji (2006, 17), who emphasized that women in the Amman community are likely to be harassed in general since the overall rate of women's harassment was average. However, they disagree with Al Majali's (2009) (31) findings that the rate of female student harassment is low and with Al Haqabani's (2017) (27) findings that highlight several findings, including an increase in the number of cybercrimes, the most common of which is harassment, which has a high rate.

Second, an explanation of the findings in relation to Question 2: To what extent is the crime of blackmailing spread on electronic networks in Jordan based on the reality of the prosecutor's work? The arithmetic means and standard deviations of the respondents' answers regarding the extent of the spread of cybercrime and blackmail were calculated from the reality of the prosecutor's work to answer the above question, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Arithmetic means and standard deviations of the respondents' responses on the extent of the spread of cybercrime of blackmail.

Para No	Paragraph	Arithmetic means	Standard deviation	Rate of spread
2	The spread of blackmailing committed by males is higher than that committed by females	4.05	0.95	High
1	The spread of blackmail on electronic networks due to the abundance of spinsterhood	4.01	0.70	High
3	The spread of blackmail on electronic networks for material profit	3.98	0.72	High
5	The victim's ignorance and fear of the scandal aggravate and facilitate the crime of blackmailing.	3.92	0.74	High
6	The spread of blackmailing on electronic networks through the use of photographs or videos to threaten and blackmail the victim into unwillingly complying with requests	3.90	1.02	High
4	The spread of blackmail on electronic networks through the use of the Internet and social networks	3.89	1.00	High
7	The spread of blackmail on electronic networks by making the victim feel as if he has offended the perpetrator	3.85	1.10	High
9	The spread of blackmailing on electronic networks because of the multiplicity of methods used by the perpetrator in committing the crime	3.80	1.22	High
10	The spread of blackmailing on electronic networks through gaining emotional and psychological control of the victim	3.73	1.35	High
8	The spread of blackmailing on electronic networks by tempting the victim and recording his conversations, including amoral and scandalous content.	3.61	1.49	High
11	The spread of blackmail on electronic networks for sexual purposes	3.27	1.15	Average
The tool as a whole		**3.46**	**0.94**	**High**

Source: Calculated by the authors.

According to Table 3, the arithmetic mean of the responses of the sample members regarding the extent to which blackmail is spread on electronic networks from the reality of the prosecutor's work ranges between 3.27 and 4.05. Paragraph 2 concerns the higher prevalence of blackmailing committed by males than by females; paragraph 1 is about the prevalence of blackmailing on electronic networks owing to the abundance of spinsterhood; paragraph 3 is about the prevalence of blackmailing on electronic networks for material profit; and paragraph 11 is about the prevalence of blackmailing on electronic networks for sexual purposes. However, the overall field score of 3.46 reflects a high rate of the spread of the crime of blackmailing on electronic networks based on the reality of the prosecutor's work in Jordan. This can be attributed to the prosecutor's large number of cases and the wide variety of blackmailing methods used by perpetrators to put more pressure on victims. The findings of this study confirm those of Al Namer (2017) (26), emphasizing the high rate of proliferation of the crime of blackmailing,

Third, an explanation of the findings in relation to question 3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the crimes of harassment and blackmailing in Jordan at a significance level of 0.05 based on the prosecutor's estimates? To answer this question, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to compare harassment and blackmail crimes in the opinions of the sample members, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Pearson's correlation coefficient between harassment and blackmail crimes according to prosecutors' estimates.

The crime of blackmail		
The crime of harassment	Correlation coefficient	0.21
	Statistical significance	0.02

Source: Calculated by the authors.

Table 4 clearly shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between the crime of harassment and blackmailing in the estimates of the sample members at the significance level (0.05), with a correlation coefficient of 0.21, which is a statistically significant rate. Concerning the crime of harassment, it also reveals that the offender uses any means, regardless of whether they are inhuman or contradictory to human values or social principles, to contact the victim and then begins to blackmail him to make any number of possible concessions to avoid prosecution.

Fourth, an explanation of the findings in relation to Question 4: What are the societal consequences of the spread of cybercrimes such as harassment and blackmail? To answer this question, the researchers used repetitions

and percentages of the effects selected by the sample members and considered them highly offensive to society. As shown in Table 5, 70 of the 100 respondents answered this question, and their responses included six highly offensive effects resulting from the spread of harassment.

Table 5: Repetitions and percentages of sample members' estimates of the effects resulting from the spread of cybercrimes of harassment and blackmail, arranged from high to low.

No	The effects	Repetitions	Percentages	Rank
1	Threatening and defaming the victim	127	98%	1
2	Family breakup	125	96%	2
3	Social decay	123	95%	3
4	Loss of values	123	95%	4
5	Inducement of scepticism and loss of self-confidence	122	94%	5
6	Instability of security	120	92%	6

Source: Calculated by the authors.

Table 5 shows that Section 1 has 127 repetitions and a percentage of 98%, whereas Section 10, about the growth of specialized data sources, has only 111 repetitions and a percentage of 85 percent; however, paragraphs with percentages less than 50% have been deleted. Researchers attribute the emphasis of the sample members on the aforementioned effects to society's highly negative impact, including its stability, security, and the proliferation of obscenity and fornication within it, resulting in a loss of security and confidence in the state and society.

5. Conclusions

Explicitly revealing the extent to which cybercrimes of harassment and blackmail are spread from the reality of the prosecutor's work in Jordan. It includes new scientific research work related to harassment and extortion crimes and presents its knowledge by explaining its contribution to the study of harassment and extortion crimes in Jordan. This study paves the way for future research on harassment and extortion. This study presents new scientific evidence that shows the seriousness of harassment and extortion crimes as well as the importance of preventing, combating, and eliminating them as top priorities.

6. Recommendations

The significance of increasing citizens' awareness of the concept of electronic governance, as well as providing this project with all the legal safeguards necessary to adequately protect it, as well as electronic security measures to prevent cybercriminals from intercepting or using it. This should be considered for preventive purposes to avoid crimes before they occur. Collaboration is critical for combating this type of crime in the electronic information environment by, among other things, concluding agreements and treaties that criminalizes all types of such crimes, pinpointing their location when they are committed, and explaining how cybercriminals should be delivered. They may also advocate the exchange of knowledge and experience regarding cybercrime issues. Specialized training courses are required for judges and public prosecutors to provide them with adequate knowledge of the crimes and methods used to commit them. In addition, these crimes should be referred to specialized judicial authorities that are better equipped to deal with and adjudicate them.

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