TRAUMATIZED BY PROXY: THE LINK BETWEEN WOMEN'S SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS AND EXPOSURE TO OTHER WOMEN'S STRANGER HARASSMENT EXPERIENCES VIA TWITTER

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ABSTRACT

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With the growing use of social media, women increasingly disclose their experiences of stranger harassment online. Although these disclosures provide many benefits, repeated exposure to them may have unintended negative effects on other women. The current dissertation examined whether exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter is associated with women's secondary traumatic stress (STS) and investigated the underlying mechanisms of this relationship using a mixed-methods design. In Study 1, semi-structured interviews explored women's exposure to stranger harassment posts, their responses, the role of feminism, their perceptions of stranger harassment in Türkiye, and their direct experiences. Findings suggested that women are frequently exposed to such posts on Twitter and that this exposure is associated with heightened safety concerns, precautionary behaviors, fear of men, distress, empathy toward victims, and responses consistent with STS symptoms. Study 2A adapted the study measures into Turkish. Study 2B showed that more frequent exposure predicted higher STS beyond women's direct experiences of stranger harassment. Fear of men, safety concerns, and distress mediated this relationship. Indirect exposure was also associated with stronger feminist identification, greater engagement in feminist collective action, and greater intention to engage in feminist

collective action through fear of men and precautionary behaviors. Overall, the findings contribute to the STS, stranger harassment, and social media literatures by demonstrating that repeated exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter is associated with STS and by identifying the psychological mechanisms underlying this relationship.

Keywords: secondary traumatic stress, stranger harassment, social media, fear of rape, feminism

ÖZ

DOLAYLI TRAVMA: KADINLARIN İKİNCİL TRAVMATİK STRESLERİ VE TWİTTER ARACILIĞIYLA DİĞER KADINLARIN YABANCI TACİZİ DENEYİMLERİNE MARUZ KALMALARI ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİNİN İNCELENMESİ

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Sosyal medya kullanımının artmasıyla birlikte Twitter, kadınların maruz kaldıkları taciz deneyimlerini paylaştıkları en önemli platformlardan biri haline gelmiştir. Bunlar arasında yabancı (sokak) tacizi deneyimleri sıklıkla yer almaktadır. Bu paylaşımlar hem bireysel hem de toplumsal birçok yarar sağlasa da bunlara maruz kalan diğer kadınlar üzerinde beklenmeyen olumsuz etkileri olabilir. Bu doğrultuda, mevcut doktora tezinde Twitter üzerinden diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi paylaşımlarına maruz kalma sıklığının kadınların ikincil travmatik stres (İTS) düzeyleriyle ilişkisi ve bu ilişkide rol oynayan aracı ve düzenleyici değişkenler incelenmiştir. Birinci çalışmada kadınların diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi paylaşımlarına maruz kalmaları, bu paylaşımlara verdikleri tepkiler, feminizmin rolü, Türkiye'de yabancı tacizine ilişkin algıları ve kendi yabancı tacizi deneyimleri nitel olarak incelenmiştir. Bulgular, kadınların en sık Twitter üzerinden diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kaldığını ve bu maruziyetin artmış güvenlik kaygısı, önlem alma davranışları, erkeklere yönelik genellenmiş korku, psikolojik sıkıntı, mağdurlara yönelik empati ve

İTS belirtileriyle ilişkili olabileceğini göstermiştir. Çalışma 2A'da kullanılacak ölçme araçları Türkçeye uyarlanmıştır. Çalışma 2B'de ise maruziyet sıklığının, kadınların kendi yabancı tacizi deneyimleri kontrol edildiğinde dahi, daha yüksek İTS düzeyini yordadığı bulunmuştur. Erkek korkusu, güvenlik kaygısı ve psikolojik sıkıntı bu ilişkide aracı rol oynamıştır. Ayrıca maruziyet sıklığının feminist kimlik ve feminist kolektif eylemle hem doğrudan hem de erkek korkusu ve önlem alma davranışları aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak ilişkili olduğu görülmüştür. Bulgular, Twitter üzerinden diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmanın İTS ile ilişkisini ve bu ilişkinin altında yatan mekanizmaları tespit ederek İTS, yabancı tacizi ve sosyal medya alan yazınlarına katkı sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ikincil travmatik stres, yabancı tacizi, sosyal medya, tecavüz korkusu, feminizm

To my beloved family

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
STS	Secondary Traumatic Stress
SHI	Stranger Harassment Index
IESHT	Indirect Exposure to Stranger Harassment via Twitter Scale
FRS	Fear of Rape Scale
SIF	Self-Identification as a Feminist Scale

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1. Illustrative Twitter Timeline of Stranger Harassment Disclosures[1]

The posts and replies above reflect the experience of just a few minutes spent scrolling through Twitter for many women. Such experiences are far from uncommon, whether

[1] The Twitter posts and replies in the figure are created for illustrative purposes by the author. Fictional examples were used to address ethical concerns. The content draws on commonly shared stranger harassment experiences and responses in women's public disclosures on Twitter. Real posts or identifiable users are not included.

in the streets, on public transportation, at school, at work, or across many aspects of everyday life. Women have long shared these incidents with one another to find support, warn others, expose perpetrators, and seek justice. As technology has advanced and social media has become integrated into everyday life, women's disclosures have expanded to online platforms. With the rise of the #MeToo movement, Twitter has increasingly become a space where women publicly disclose their experiences of sexual harassment and violence (Bogen et al., 2021; Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019; Mendes et al., 2019). Among these disclosures, stranger harassment is one of the most frequently shared forms of sexual harassment, including catcalling, wolf-whistling, unwanted sexual comments, being followed, and unwanted touching by strangers in public spaces (Fileborn, 2013, 2017).

Although women's disclosures on Twitter have increased the visibility of harassment incidents, challenged their normalization, validated their feelings, and fostered solidarity among women (Clark-Parsons, 2022; Gede et al., 2025; Greijdanus et al., 2020; Keller et al., 2018; Li et al., 2021; Mendes et al., 2019; Zisan & Jhara, 2025), repeated exposure to such disclosures may also have unintended negative effects on other women. Previous research has shown that women's stranger harassment experiences have been associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, both directly and indirectly through fear of rape (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020). Similarly, women who are exposed to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter may also develop trauma symptoms despite not having directly experienced the incidents themselves.

According to Figley (1986, 1995), individuals may develop trauma symptoms not only through direct exposure to a traumatic event but also through indirect exposure to another individual's traumatic experiences, which they refer to as secondary traumatic stress (STS). Previous research has shown that STS may develop among family members, close ones, and professionals working with traumatized individuals (Bride & Figley, 2009; Buchanan et al., 2006; Figley, 1986; Figley & McCubbin, 1983; Foreman et al., 2018; Gates & Gillespie, 2008). More recently, it is suggested that exposure to traumatic events through social media may similarly relate to STS symptoms, even in the absence of direct exposure. Indeed, studies have shown that greater social media use is associated with STS symptoms (e.g., Özdemir, 2023;

Taşkın et al., 2024). Likewise, exposure to traumatic content about collective traumatic events such as terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with higher levels of STS (Goodwin et al., 2013; Holman et al., 2014; Liu & Liu, 2020). Yet, little research has examined whether indirect exposure to interpersonal forms of trauma also relates to STS development. To the best of my knowledge, only one study demonstrated that greater exposure to knife crime news on social media was associated with greater STS symptoms (Secker & Braithwaite, 2021). Despite the widespread sharing of stranger harassment experiences on Twitter, whether exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences is associated with STS remains unknown.

Further, stranger harassment itself remains an understudied form of gender-based violence despite its prevalence and impact on women's everyday lives (Benard & Schlaffer, 1984; DelGreco & Christensen, 2020; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023; Kissling, 1991; Lenton et al., 1999; Macmillan et al., 2000). This gap is even more pronounced in the Turkish context. To date, only one study has specifically examined stranger harassment in Türkiye, evaluating an intervention project aimed at preventing it (Atabarut et al., 2022). In addition, one study on sexual harassment in public transportation found that women who had experienced sexual harassment reported significantly higher levels of PTSD symptoms than those who had not (Karabulut & Alkar, 2019). Therefore, more research is needed to examine not only the relationship between indirect exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter and STS, but also women's perceptions and experiences of stranger harassment in the Turkish context.

Accordingly, the present dissertation aimed to examine the relationship between women's exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter and STS, both qualitatively and quantitatively, while also providing a better understanding of women's general perceptions and direct experiences of stranger harassment in the Turkish context. Building on previous literature, it was proposed that fear of rape (i.e., safety concerns, taking precautions, and fear of men) and emotional responses (i.e., empathy and distress) would mediate the relationship between the frequency of exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter and STS,

whereas feminist identity, feminist collective action engagement and intention to engage in feminist collective action would moderate it.

With this aim, two studies were conducted. Study 1 qualitatively explored women's exposure to and responses to other women's stranger harassment experiences shared online. Specifically, it examined whether the theoretical mechanisms proposed based on the literature were reflected in women's responses, thereby informing the quantitative investigation in Study 2. In addition, given the limited research on stranger harassment in the Turkish context, women's general perceptions and direct experiences of stranger harassment were also examined to provide a broader understanding of the issue. Study 2 consisted of two parts. Study 2A aimed to adapt the measures used in Study 2B into Turkish. Study 2B examined the hypothesized relationship between the frequency of women's exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter and STS, as well as the proposed mediating and moderating mechanisms underlying this relationship. Considering the mixed findings regarding the role of feminism in Study 1, an alternative model was also examined.

The following sections first review the literature on STS and social media-induced STS. Then, the literature on sexual harassment, stranger harassment, and Twitter as the main social media platform through which women are exposed to other women's stranger harassment experiences is reviewed. This is followed by a review of the literature on fear of rape, emotional responses, and feminism, along with a discussion of their proposed mediating and moderating roles in the relationship between indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS. Finally, an overview of the studies included in the current dissertation is provided.

1.1. Secondary Traumatic Stress

A traumatic event refers to an incident that involves actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence. Such events are typically uncontrollable, unexpected, and dangerous experiences, including, but not limited to, natural disasters, wars, serious accidents, life-threatening illnesses, physical assaults, and sexual violence (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Figley, 1995).

A large body of traumatology research has shown that experiencing traumatic events is associated with a range of negative mental health outcomes (Ayazi et al., 2014; Breslau et al., 1998; Kessler et al., 1995; Norris et al., 2002; Shalev et al., 2013; Tracy et al., 2014). One of the most common outcomes of experiencing a traumatic event is PTSD. PTSD is characterized by symptoms such as intrusion, avoidance, emotional numbness, negative cognitions and mood, increased arousal, and heightened reactivity. While most of the research on trauma focused on direct experiences of traumatic events, individuals who are indirectly exposed to the traumatic experiences of others are also at risk of developing similar symptoms (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Figley, 1986, 1995, 1999). This phenomenon is referred to as *secondary traumatic stress (STS)*, which can be defined as the stress resulting from learning about the traumatic experiences of others (Adams et al., 2006; Figley, 1986). The symptoms of STS closely parallel those of PTSD, including intrusion, avoidance, negative changes in cognition and mood, and increased arousal and reactivity. The primary distinction is that PTSD results from direct exposure to a traumatic event, whereas STS results from indirect exposure to another individual's traumatic experiences (Figley, 1999).

Figley's original conceptualization of STS emerged from research on the role of family members and significant others in the recovery of traumatized individuals. Drawing on observations of traumatized individuals' families, he argued that those close to a traumatized person may themselves become secondary victims of the traumatic event. Through emotional engagement with the traumatized individual, they may display symptoms similar to those of the primary victim (Figley, 1986; Figley & McCubbin, 1983). Indeed, he compared STS to a family member infecting others with trauma (Figley, 1995).

In addition to STS, various terms were used for indirect traumatization in the literature, including compassion fatigue, burnout, and vicarious traumatization. Although these terms were often used interchangeably with STS, distinctions have been proposed. Accordingly, while STS refers to PTSD-like symptoms that develop from indirect exposure to another person's traumatic experiences, compassion fatigue refers to a similar process to STS but with a greater emphasis on the emotional burden of caring for, helping, or wanting to help traumatized individuals. Burnout refers to emotional

and psychological exhaustion resulting from chronic work-related stress, particularly in professions that involve frequent contact with traumatized individuals (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Unlike STS, which involves PTSD-like symptoms, vicarious traumatization encompasses broader changes in an individual's worldview following interactions with traumatized individuals (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). Given the main focus of this dissertation, the term STS has been chosen, as it most accurately captures trauma-related symptoms arising from indirect exposure to others' traumatic experiences.

Although STS was initially conceptualized as a phenomenon affecting family members and close ones of traumatized individuals, further research showed that professionals who work with traumatized individuals may also develop STS. It is shown that mental health professionals (e.g., Buchanan et al., 2006; Devilly et al., 2009), clinicians (e.g., Foreman et al., 2018), nurses (e.g., Dominguez-Gomez & Rutledge, 2009; Gates & Gillespie, 2008; Quinal et al., 2009), social workers (e.g., Badger et al., 2008; Bride et al., 2007; Simon et al., 2005), child protective service workers (e.g., Cornille & Meyers, 1999), law enforcement investigators (e.g., Perez et al., 2010), and caregivers of military veterans (e.g., Bride & Figley, 2009) may display elevated STS levels in relation to their exposure to experiences of traumatized individuals in their work.

Building on these, the scope of STS research expanded to other contexts involving indirect exposure to trauma. One such context is the media, through which individuals may encounter details of traumatic events repeatedly. According to cultivation theory, repeated media exposure can gradually shape individuals' perceptions of social reality, leading them to see the world as portrayed in the media (Gerbner, 1977; Gerbner et al., 1976). Similarly, the social amplification of risk framework (Kasperson et al., 1988) suggests that the media is a social amplification station in which repeated indirect exposure to risky events can amplify individuals' risk perceptions. Taken together, repeated exposure to others' traumatic experiences through media may heighten perceptions of threat and vulnerability, thereby increasing susceptibility to STS. In support, studies on traditional media have shown that exposure to traumatic events through television is associated with trauma-related symptoms. For instance, one of the early studies showed that television viewing relates to PTSD symptoms

among children residing in Oklahoma during the 1995 bombing (Pfefferbaum et al., 1999). Another study found that during the Gulf Crisis, Kuwaiti children who witnessed injury and death through television reported higher levels of PTSD symptoms (Nader et al., 1993). Ahern et al. (2005) showed that participants who watched television within seven days following the 9/11 attacks exhibited greater PTSD symptoms than others. In a diary study, the MH17 airplane crash in Ukraine was found to vicariously affect Dutch participants who were exposed to the incident through media from 2.600 kilometers away. Within three days, participants' negative affect increased, positive affect decreased, and they developed somatic symptoms (Jeronimus et al., 2019).

Overall, these findings suggest that STS may develop not only among family members, close others, and professionals working with traumatized individuals, but also among individuals who are indirectly exposed to traumatic events through the media. With the widespread use of social media, recent research has begun to investigate whether indirect exposure to traumatic events on social media is also associated with STS.

1.1.1. Social Media-Induced Secondary Traumatic Stress

Social media refers to digital platforms that enable users to create and share content while communicating and interacting with each other (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Since the introduction of the first social media platforms, the number of users has increased dramatically, accompanied by the development of numerous new platforms (Mahon, 2019). In 2025, an estimated 5.24 billion people worldwide used social media, reflecting an increase of 206 million users from the previous year. Moreover, users spend an average of 2 hours and 21 minutes per day on social media, highlighting the extent to which these platforms have become integrated into everyday life (Kemp, 2025).

While social media enables users to connect and share more easily than ever, it also allows traumatic events to spread quickly around the world. Further, since social media platforms rely on user-generated content, this content is far less regulated than in traditional media. There is also a tendency to share vivid images and graphic details of traumatic events to attract attention and increase engagement (Berger & Milkman,

2012; Lubens & Holman, 2017). Hence, a traumatic event with unfiltered, vivid details shared on social media can reach millions of users worldwide within minutes. This makes social media users potentially vulnerable to STS through exposure to other users' traumatic experiences. As Figley (1995) compared STS to an infection spreading within a family. Social media might be allowing this "infection" to spread far beyond the inner circle of the traumatized individual, exposing millions of users to others' traumatic experiences. According to Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory, mass media expand individuals' symbolic environment beyond the limited social world they directly experience. Since individuals encounter only a small portion of social reality in their everyday lives, they rely on vicarious experiences, with the media serving as one of the most important sources. In this regard, while the number of traumatized individuals one can meet and interact with face-to-face is naturally limited, social media enables users to be exposed to the details of traumatic events shared by many different individuals within seconds. In support, social media usage has been linked to a wide range of negative mental health outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, distress, eating disorders, body image issues, low well-being, and low life satisfaction (Booker et al., 2015; Dane & Bhatia, 2023; Huang, 2022; Shakya & Christakis, 2017; Ulvi et al., 2022).

However, it is only recently that researchers have begun to examine social media users as a potentially vulnerable population for developing STS. Referred to as *social media-induced STS*, the limited literature suggests that social media usage may be associated with STS development. For example, among residents of the New York metropolitan area, higher social media use following Hurricane Sandy was found to be associated with higher levels of PTSD reactions (Goodwin et al., 2013). Holman et al. (2014) showed that greater exposure to bombing-related media, including social media, following the Boston Marathon bombings was associated with higher levels of acute stress symptoms. Notably, bombing-related media exposure was associated with higher acute stress symptoms than direct exposure to the bombing itself. Similarly, another study found that after the Boston Marathon bombings, greater exposure to bombing-related media, including social media, was associated with higher levels of acute stress symptoms, PTSD symptoms, fear of future terrorism, and functional impairment. Exposure to graphic, bloody images via media was more strongly associated with acute stress symptoms, PTSD symptoms, fear of future terrorism, and

functional impairment than exposure to non-graphic images (Holman et al., 2020). A study with a Chinese sample found that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the frequency of social media use positively predicted the severity of vicarious traumatization (Liu & Liu, 2020). Zhao and Zhou (2020) showed that the frequency of exposure to COVID-19-related content on social media was associated with STS symptoms. Similarly, a study of Wuhan residents found that social media use was related to higher levels of COVID-19-related STS (Zhong et al., 2021). In a UK sample, greater exposure to knife crime news on social media was associated with greater STS symptoms (Secker & Braithwaite, 2021).

In the Turkish context, Özdemir (2023) found that greater time spent on social media was associated with higher levels of social media-induced STS. Participants who followed news through social media reported significantly higher levels of social media-induced STS than those who did not. Women also reported higher levels of social media-induced STS than men. Social media-induced STS was positively associated with helpless coping, submissive coping, anxiety, depression, negative self, somatization, and hostility. In another study, Taşkın et al. (2024) examined the relationship between doomscrolling, which refers to the continuous consumption of negative news online, and social media-induced STS. Their findings showed that greater engagement in doomscrolling predicted higher levels of social media-induced STS, which in turn predicted reduced well-being. A qualitative study of young adults following the 2023 Earthquake in Türkiye found that exposure to earthquake-related content on social media was associated with STS symptoms (Meral et al., 2025). Similarly, Kırıkkanat and Şimşek (2026) found that social media-induced STS was positively associated with intolerance of uncertainty and maladaptive cognitive-emotion regulation strategies, and negatively associated with mental well-being among young adults following the 2023 Earthquake in Türkiye.

Although existing findings demonstrate that social media use is associated with STS symptoms, most research has focused on general social media use or on social media-induced STS following large-scale natural or human-made traumatic events, such as earthquakes, terrorist attacks, and COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, traumatic events shared on social media are not limited to large-scale disasters. Users are also frequently exposed to disclosures of interpersonal traumatic experiences. One such experience is

sexual harassment, specifically stranger harassment, which is among the most frequently disclosed forms of gender-based violence on social media (Bogen et al., 2021; Fileborn, 2017; Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019; Mendes et al., 2019). Accordingly, the following section reviews the literature on sexual harassment and stranger harassment.

1.2. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment can be defined as any unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical behaviors of a sexual nature that violate an individual's dignity by creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2024). It is often rooted in broader social and structural power inequalities of gender, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, and disability (Rafin et al., 2025). According to Gelfand et al. (1995), sexual harassment consists of three main components. Sexual coercion includes situations in which sexual activity is explicitly or implicitly demanded in exchange for occupational or academic benefits. Gender harassment includes behaviors that demean, insult, or belittle women as a social group rather than targeting specific individuals, such as sexist jokes or derogatory comments. Unwanted sexual attention refers to unwelcome sexual behaviors directed at a specific individual, such as sexually suggestive messages, intrusive staring, inappropriate physical contact, or other actions that objectify women and disregard their consent.

Previous research has consistently linked experiencing sexual harassment to a wide range of negative mental health outcomes for women, including depression, anxiety, distress, lowered well-being, and trauma symptoms (Ho et al., 2012; Houle et al., 2011; Östergren et al., 2022; Stockdale et al., 2009; Willness et al., 2007). As discussed in the previous section, women's experiences of sexual harassment are frequently disclosed on social media, allowing large numbers of users to encounter these experiences indirectly. Therefore, understanding how sexual harassment affects women requires consideration not only of women who directly experience harassment but also of those who are repeatedly exposed to other women's disclosures online. While there is a large body of research on sexual harassment in workplaces and schools (e.g., Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Chan et al., 2008; Willness et al., 2007), other

forms of sexual harassment remain understudied (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). Given this, and considering that different forms of sexual harassment may have distinct dynamics and outcomes (Dillon et al., 2013), the present dissertation focuses on stranger harassment, a form of sexual harassment that has received relatively limited academic attention despite its prevalence and impact on women's lives.

1.3. Stranger Harassment

Stranger harassment is a form of sexual harassment that refers to unwanted sexual attention from an unknown stranger in public spaces such as streets, parks, public transportation, stores, bars, and restaurants. While men may also be subjected to stranger harassment, especially related to their other social identities such as sexual orientation, race, or ethnicity, most definitions include stranger harassment as a gendered phenomenon in which women are the primary targets and men are the primary perpetrators (Fileborn, 2013; Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023). Stranger harassment includes, but is not limited to, a wide range of behaviors, such as nonverbal acts including wolf-whistles, staring, winks, leering, and sexual gestures; verbal acts including catcalling, sexual comments, kissing noises, repeated requests for phone numbers or dates, and unsolicited remarks; and more severe forms including indecent exposure, public masturbation, unwanted touching, groping, and following. Some definitions also extend to physical assault, sexual assault, and rape (Fileborn, 2013).

In the literature, different terms have been used interchangeably to refer to stranger harassment, including street harassment, men's intrusions, men's stranger intrusion on women in public, public intrusions, public harassment, and street remarks. Among these terms, stranger harassment and street harassment are the most commonly used. While street harassment emphasizes the location of the incident, stranger harassment emphasizes the relationship between the perpetrator and the target, and it shifts the focus to the perpetrator (Fairchild, 2023; Vera-Gray, 2016). In the current dissertation, the term stranger harassment is preferred to emphasize the relationship between the perpetrator and the target, as well as the perpetrator's identity.

Davis (1993) refers to stranger harassment as "the harm that has no name." Until very recently, it remained largely absent from both academic and public discourse. It is

argued that stranger harassment is so common that it is often regarded as a routine part of social life. It is usually dismissed, trivialized, normalized, or framed as harmless compliments. Women learn to get used to stranger harassment and come to view it as an inevitable part of everyday life. They are socialized to ignore and tolerate it, often resulting in these incidents remaining unreported and undisclosed, even to those closest to them (Benard & Schlaffer, 1984; Fleming, 2018; Fileborn, 2019; Gardner, 1980).

Yet, rather than being a trivial or harmless experience, stranger harassment is a reflection of the everyday oppression of women and a form of gendered violence (Benard & Schlaffer, 1984; Kissling, 1991; Kissling & Kramarae, 1991). According to Goffman (1963), strangers interact under the norm of civil inattention in public spaces. They acknowledge each other's presence while also respecting others' privacy and personal boundaries. However, as "low status people," women and children are treated as "open persons" whose boundaries can be more easily violated. Stranger harassment allows men to engage in minor acts of gender-based violence that are easy to deny when confronted. Even when it takes the form of a seemingly harmless compliment or an attempt at communication, stranger harassment violates women's boundaries and demands their attention, burdening them with the responsibility of responding (Fleming, 2018). Thus, stranger harassment is not merely an interaction between strangers, it reflects and reproduces men's status and power over women. Referred to as "sexual terrorism" by Kissling (1991), stranger harassment makes public spaces "hunting grounds" where men can reinforce their dominance and control over women through a "tool of sexual domination available to all men" (Hutson & Krueger, 2019; Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023; Fogg-Davis, 2006). In support, previous studies found that men who engage in stranger harassment justify their actions by blaming victims (Henry, 2017). Men's hostile and benevolent sexist attitudes are positively related to beliefs that women should respond to stranger harassment passively rather than actively resist it (Saunders et al., 2017). Stranger harassment creates an illusion of intimacy between the perpetrator and the woman while aiming to make her feel uncomfortable, unsafe, and afraid (Bailey, 2016). Moreover, stranger harassment serves to push women out of the public spaces and restrict their engagement in social life while contributing to a broader culture of violence against

women (Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023; Gardner, 1980, 1995; Kissling, 1991; MacMillan et al., 2000).

Most research on sexual harassment has focused on workplace and educational settings, and forms of sexual violence that are considered more serious. There are several reasons for this. As previously mentioned, stranger harassment is often dismissed as trivial and harmless. It often consists of brief and seemingly mundane interactions that occur unexpectedly, catching women off guard. Since these incidents typically take place in public settings, perpetrators can easily leave the scene. Although sexual harassment is recognized in the legislation of many countries, legal frameworks often lack provisions that address the unique characteristics of stranger harassment (Alves & Souza, 2024; Fairchild, 2023; Fileborn, 2013). However, according to Kelly's (1987) continuum model, all forms of sexual violence are connected in a continuum. From this perspective, sexual violence should not be approached as a hierarchy of harm. Rather, different forms of sexual violence are understood as part of a broader system of gendered violence rooted in the same unequal power structures. As Benard and Schlaffer (1984) argue, stranger harassment "makes the average man in the street a minor sex offender" while also making him an accomplice in the more serious forms of violence against women. Further, according to the continuum model, effects of different forms of sexual violence are experienced alongside one another in a cumulative way across women's lives (Kelly, 1987). Therefore, encountering stranger harassment in everyday life, even when it looks like harmless interactions between strangers, has the potential to remind women of their vulnerability and the possibility of more severe forms of sexual violence, such as sexual assault or rape (Fairchild, 2023; Fileborn, 2013; Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023).

Taken together, examining stranger harassment is essential for understanding its dynamics, its impact on women's lives, and its contribution to the unequal social structure between genders. Although the literature on stranger harassment is still relatively limited, Fairchild (2023) notes that interest in the issue has grown considerably over the past decade, making stranger harassment a promising area of inquiry. This growing body of research has shown that stranger harassment is a common experience among women around the world. For example, one of the earliest studies on stranger harassment, conducted with a sample of 1.990 Canadian women,

found that only 9% had never experienced stranger harassment. Thus, the vast majority of participants had experienced stranger harassment at least once in their lifetime, while many reported experiencing it frequently (Lenton et al., 1999). Similarly, another Canadian study found that 85% of women reported experiencing stranger harassment, whereas only 51% reported experiencing harassment by someone they knew (MacMillan et al., 2000). A study of 982 women in the United States found that 51% had experienced whistling or catcalling, 25% had experienced unwanted comments, and 23% had experienced being touched by strangers (Kearl, 2014). In the United Kingdom, 80% of women participants reported experiencing catcalling, staring, or whistling at least once a month, while 35% reported experiencing unwanted touching at least once a month (Donnelly & Calogero, 2018). Another study conducted with a sample from Australia found that 87% of the women had experienced at least one form of stranger harassment. Studies from non-WEIRD (i.e., Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) samples have yielded similar findings. For example, a study conducted in Egypt found that 83% of Egyptian women and 98% of foreign women reported experiencing stranger harassment on public transportation (Gekoski et al., 2017). A study in Mumbai showed that 77.2% of women reported verbal harassment, 30% stalking, and 29% groping (Bharucha & Khatri, 2018). Similarly, women in a study conducted in Delhi reported experiencing harassment during 50% to 100% of their visits to public spaces (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014).

In addition to its prevalence, stranger harassment has been associated with a wide range of negative psychological, emotional, and physical outcomes for women. Research has shown that women's experiences of stranger harassment are related to higher levels of anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances (Davidson et al., 2016; DelGreco & Christensen, 2020). It has also been linked to self-objectification, body surveillance, body shame, and lower self-esteem (Davidson et al., 2016; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Moya-Garofano et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2017). Further, women who experience stranger harassment commonly report feelings of fear, anger, distress, violation, and repulsion, as well as a range of other negative emotions (Betts et al., 2019; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Lenton et al., 1999). Stranger harassment particularly affects women's sense of safety and freedom of movement (MacMillan et al., 2000), which will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections. Finally,

one study found that experiences of stranger harassment predicted higher levels of PTSD symptoms among women (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020).

Taken together, these findings indicate that stranger harassment is a widespread experience in women's lives and a significant threat to their psychological well-being and mental health. With the increasing use of social media, women's exposure to stranger harassment is no longer limited to their own direct experiences. Instead, women are increasingly exposed to other women's stranger harassment experiences through online disclosures. Among social media platforms, Twitter has emerged as a primary space where women share these experiences, making it an important context in which women are indirectly exposed to stranger harassment.

1.3.1. Twitter as a Platform for Indirect Exposure to Stranger Harassment

While many women experience stranger harassment directly in their daily lives, they may also be exposed to it indirectly through other women's disclosures shared on social media. Among social media platforms, Twitter has emerged as the most prominent space where women disclose these experiences (Cobb & Horeck, 2018; Gede et al., 2025; Mendes et al., 2019). This is a microblogging platform that allows users to create, share, and engage with content with features such as tweets, threads, hashtags, photos, and videos (van Dijck, 2011). Through these features, Twitter enables women to share their experiences, connect, and support each other across geographical, linguistic, and social barriers (Li et al., 2021; Turley & Fisher, 2018). Specifically, Twitter's hashtag feature has played a central role in the disclosure of sexual harassment experiences, enabling users to easily access and follow discussions on specific topics by using keywords marked with the # symbol (Mendes et al., 2019).

One of the most commonly used hashtags for this purpose is #MeToo. The movement originated in 2006 and gained widespread public attention in 2017 when actress Alyssa Milano used the hashtag asking, "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted, write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet." Her tweet encouraged women to share their experiences of harassment and violence and expose perpetrators. #MeToo movement increased the visibility of women's sexual harassment experiences, raised public awareness, fostered solidarity among women, and generated widespread discussions about gender equality, victim blaming, and the prevalence of sexual violence

(Greijdanus et al., 2020; Jaffe et al., 2021). Since then, not only the #MeToo hashtag but also various other hashtags like #YesAllWomen, #EveryDaySexism, #BeenRapedNeverReported, #TimesUp, and #WhyIStayed have been increasingly used by women to disclose experiences of sexual harassment and violence online (Gede et al., 2025; Jackson et al., 2020; Mendes et al., 2019; Turley & Fisher, 2018).

Stranger harassment experiences are among the most commonly shared sexual harassment disclosures on Twitter. According to Fileborn (2017), women often disclose their stranger harassment experiences online to seek support and informal justice, as legal responses to these incidents are often inadequate. In many countries, legal frameworks often fail to explicitly recognize stranger harassment as a distinct form of sexual violence and address its unique characteristics. Since perpetrators are strangers in public places, they can easily flee the scene without leaving evidence, making it difficult to pursue formal justice (Alves & Souza, 2024; Fairchild, 2023; Fileborn, 2013). Online disclosures help women connect with others who have had similar experiences, fostering a sense of support and solidarity. They can also provide validation, affirmation, and emotional catharsis by helping women recognize that their experiences and emotions are legitimate. By sharing these experiences online, women can transform private experiences into public testimonies. In doing so, online disclosures increase the visibility of stranger harassment and raise awareness about its prevalence and effects on women's lives (Fileborn, 2017; Mendes et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021; Zisan & Jhara, 2025).

Despite these benefits, disclosures of stranger harassment experiences on Twitter may also have unintended negative impacts on women who are exposed to them. Previously, Chaudoir and Quinn (2010) showed that women who imagined witnessing stranger harassment directed at another woman reported increased intergroup anger and fear toward men, as well as stronger motivations to oppose and avoid men. Another study examining women's online disclosures of stranger harassment found that some participants experienced emotional burden when witnessing other women's stranger harassment disclosures online (Fileborn, 2017). Fileborn and O'Neill (2023) argued that the impacts of stranger harassment may extend beyond the target and that further research is needed to examine these effects.

However, little is known about how indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter affects women. Understanding this relationship requires identifying the mechanisms through which indirect exposure may be associated with STS. Based on previous literature, fear of rape and emotional responses have been proposed as two potential mechanisms underlying this relationship. Accordingly, the following sections first review the literature on fear of rape and then on emotional responses.

1.4. Fear of Rape

In 2018, civil rights activist Danielle Muscato asked on social media, “Ladies, a question for you: What would you do if all men had a 9 p.m. curfew?” leading to a heated online discussion. Thousands of women responded that they would walk freely in the streets, go for a run or go into the woods alone at night, go for a run after dark, and listen to music without constantly checking whether someone was following them. All these responses indicated that in the scenario described by Muscato, women would be able to move through public spaces without worrying about the possibility of sexual violence. On the other hand, the discussion also prompted backlash from men, many of whom argued that “not all men” are rapists and the women in the replies are hysterical (Guest, 2018). This illustrates how the possibility of sexual violence shapes women's everyday lives and behaviors. Even routine activities, such as walking alone at night, may require women to remain vigilant of stranger men and take precautions against potential sexual violence. Such concerns are often difficult for men to fully comprehend, as fear of rape represents a gendered fear rooted in women's disproportionate risk of sexual victimization and the broader culture of violence against women (Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023; Kissling, 1991; Kissling & Kramarae, 1991; Tuerkheimer, 1997; Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020).

Criminology research has shown that although men are statistically more likely to be victims of crime, women report higher fear of crime than men (Harris & Miller, 2000; Stanko, 1992). Ferraro's (1996) shadow of sexual assault hypothesis suggests that women report greater fear of crime because their disproportionately higher risk of sexual victimization leads them to perceive even seemingly minor forms of victimization as having the potential to escalate into sexual assault or rape. Hence, they often experience greater fear than men even in situations that may appear less

threatening. As previously discussed, stranger harassment is a gendered form of violence that reinforces a broader culture of violence against women. As Crouch (2009) argues, stranger harassment has a very specific purpose: “to keep women in their place.” It serves to make women feel unsafe in public spaces and restrict their freedom of movement by signaling the possibility of further victimization. Although stranger harassment may seem less severe than other forms of sexual violence, it serves as a constant reminder of women's vulnerability to more serious forms of sexual violence on a daily basis (Donnelly & Calogero, 2018; Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023; Kelly, 1987; Kissling & Kramarae, 1991). Further, stranger harassment may be eliciting a unique form of fear compared to other forms of sexual harassment, as it is perpetrated by an unknown man whose intentions and potential actions are uncertain (Vera-Gray, 2016). This uncertainty may make it difficult for women to assess the level of danger they face and increase concerns that seemingly minor acts of harassment could escalate into more serious forms of sexual violence. Therefore, a central argument in the literature is that stranger harassment contributes to women's fear of rape (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). Fear of rape consists of three components: safety concerns, fear of men, and taking precautions (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020).

Safety concerns refer to worries about safety due to the potential threat of sexual violence (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020). Previous research shows that women perceive public spaces as less safe than men, and their experiences of stranger harassment are associated with heightened safety concerns. For example, a study found that across 28 cities worldwide, women were 10% more likely than men to report feeling unsafe in metro and 6% more likely to report feeling unsafe on buses (Ait Bihi Ouali et al., 2020). Bastomski and Smith (2017) found that women were more likely than men to perceive rude behavior by strangers as threatening and more likely to avoid locations similar to where the incident occurred. Jorgensen et al. (2012) showed that women reported significantly higher fear of crime than men in community parks, particularly when they were alone in the park. In another study, it was found that women who experienced stranger harassment felt less safe while using public transportation, walking alone at night, walking through parking garages, and being alone at home at night (MacMillan et al., 2000). Similarly, Davidson et al. (2016) reported that women who experienced stranger harassment perceived public spaces as less safe and reported higher levels of anxiety. In the Turkish context, Tandoğan and İlhan (2016) found that

72.7% of women reported not feeling safe in public spaces. Further, 88% reported feeling insecure while walking alone on deserted streets at night, 85.6% in dark subways, and 81.2% on poorly lit streets after dark. More than half of the participants (57.6%) also reported feeling unsafe when using public transportation late at night. Another study found that 92.2% of women participants reported concerns about being sexually harassed while using public transportation in Türkiye (Üsküdar Haber Ajansı, 2016). Antmen (2025) showed that women feel powerless on the streets at night, especially in poorly lit streets, which heightens their sense of powerlessness.

Taking precautions refers to engaging in preventive behaviors to avoid sexual violence (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020). According to the literature, women adopt a wide range of precautionary behaviors in response to the perceived threat of harassment in public spaces. These behaviors constitute what Kelly (2012) refers to as safety work, which requires women to invest significant time, effort, and cognitive resources to maintain their safety, often limiting their freedom. Such behaviors include avoiding walking alone at night, altering routes, avoiding isolated or poorly lit areas, remaining vigilant of their surroundings, carrying personal safety devices, limiting the use of headphones or mobile phones while walking, and sharing their live location with family or friends (Farmer & Jordan, 2017; Stanko, 1990; Valentine, 1989). In Türkiye, Okan (2023) found that women routinely take safety precautions in their everyday lives, including avoiding unsafe areas of the city, talking with friends or family on the phone and sharing their location with them, traveling with companions, modifying their clothing and appearance, and carrying self-defense or protective tools. Antmen (2025) found that women adopted various precautionary strategies when going out at night, including carefully planning their routes, choosing well-lit streets, and staying constantly vigilant. In addition to routinely taking precautions in their daily lives, women who experienced stranger harassment were found to engage in greater precautionary behavior. For example, MacMillan et al. (2000) found that women who experienced stranger harassment were more likely to avoid walking alone after dark, restrict their use of public transportation, and modify their daily routines to reduce their perceived vulnerability. Carretta and Szymanski (2020) showed that women who experienced more frequent stranger harassment reported taking more precautions. Similarly, Fairchild and Rudman (2008) found that women who experienced more frequent stranger harassment reported greater fear of rape and perceived risk of rape,

and that greater fear of rape was associated with increased restriction of freedom of movement.

Fear of men refers to a generalized fear of men as potential perpetrators of sexual violence (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020). According to Fileborn and O'Neill (2023), women are socialized to fear male strangers. Similarly, Valentine (1992) argues that women internalize the possibility of being attacked by unknown men in public spaces from an early age. Benard and Schlaffer (1984) further suggest that the possibility of being exposed to stranger harassment transforms the "average man in the street" into "a minor sex offender" in women's perceptions. Findings in the literature support the argument that women often perceive stranger men as potential perpetrators of harassment, and experiences of stranger harassment reinforce this fear. For example, Harris and Miller (2000) found that women reported significantly greater fear than men in potentially dangerous situations involving male strangers. Similarly, Bastomski and Smith (2017) found that public incivility, such as yelling or cursing, elicited greater fear among women than men. Moreover, they reported greater fear when such behaviors were perpetrated by male strangers than by female strangers. Research further suggests that stranger-perpetrated harassment evokes greater fear than harassment perpetrated by known individuals. MacMillan et al. (2000) found that women reported greater fear of stranger harassment than harassment by acquaintances. Similarly, McCarty et al. (2014) found that harassment perpetrated by a stranger was perceived as more severe than harassment by a known individual, such as a colleague. Consistent with these findings, Hickman and Muehlenhard (1997) found that although acquaintance rape is more prevalent than stranger rape, women reported greater fear of rape committed by a stranger. In the Turkish context, Becerikli (2023) found that when women were asked about fear of crime, their primary concerns centered on male violence and sexual harassment.

While these findings illustrate that women's experiences of stranger harassment are associated with higher levels of fear of rape, Fairchild and Rudman (2008) found that women who reported more frequent experiences of stranger harassment also reported greater fear of and perceived risk of rape. Moreover, their findings suggested that stranger harassment may indirectly contribute to women's restriction of movement through self-objectification and fear of rape. Specifically, greater frequency of stranger

harassment predicted higher levels of self-objectification, which in turn was associated with greater fear of rape, and greater fear of rape predicted greater freedom of movement restriction. In another study, which constitutes the main rationale for the current dissertation, Carretta and Szymanski (2020) examined whether fear of rape mediated the relationship between women's experiences of stranger harassment and PTSD symptoms. Their findings showed that stranger harassment was associated with greater fear of rape across all three components. In turn, safety concerns and fear of men were associated with higher PTSD symptom severity, whereas taking precautions was associated with lower PTSD symptom severity. All three components significantly mediated the relationship between stranger harassment and PTSD symptoms. Building on these findings, it is possible that the effects of stranger harassment on fear of rape and, in turn, trauma symptoms extend beyond women's direct experiences. Women who are indirectly exposed to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter may also experience heightened fear of rape, which in turn may relate to STS. To examine this possibility, the current dissertation investigated fear of rape as a potential mediator between indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS.

1.5. Emotional Response

According to the intergroup emotions theory (Mackie et al., 2000; Mackie & Smith, 2018), individuals may experience emotions in response to events affecting members of groups with which they identify. Women may perceive other women as members of their own ingroup, and therefore exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences may evoke emotional responses even when they have not directly experienced stranger harassment themselves. Among the different emotions that may emerge following such indirect exposure, empathy and distress may be particularly relevant, as both have been highlighted in the literature and may function as mediators in the proposed relationship.

1.5.1. Empathy

Empathy can be described as the tendency to respond to others' emotions with similar feelings (Mehrabian, 1988). Stotland (1969) suggests that empathy is a vicarious emotional response to another individual’s emotional experiences. According to

Figley (1986; 1998), empathy plays a fundamental role in the development of STS. He refers to empathy as the “Achilles' heel” of those who care for traumatized individuals and argues that it makes them vulnerable to being indirectly affected by others’ traumatic experiences. Previous research also demonstrated that higher levels of empathy are associated with greater STS levels among professionals who work with traumatized individuals, including social workers (e.g., MacRitchie et al., 2010), nurses (e.g., Mottaghi et al., 2020), police officers (e.g., Ogińska-Bulik & Bąk, 2025), and therapists (e.g., Ogińska-Bulik et al., 2022).

The relationship between empathy and STS extends beyond individuals who have direct contact with traumatized individuals. For instance, Woodward et al. (2005) found that empathy was positively associated with traumatic stress symptoms among college students following the 9/11 attacks. Research also indicates that empathy may play a role in the relationship between indirect exposure to traumatic events via social media and STS. For example, Schleicher (2026) found that somatic empathy predicted higher STS related to exposure to war-related violent content on social media among adolescents and young adults in Germany. Çakıroğlu (2026) showed that after the Bolu hotel fire in Türkiye, exposure to incident-related media content predicted both empathy and STS levels.

Frequent exposure to others’ stranger harassment experiences may also evoke empathy among women. They may emotionally identify with the victim and imagine themselves in a similar situation. Such empathic engagement may increase vulnerability to developing STS. Supporting this, a qualitative study with Turkish women found that participants frequently identified with women in gender-based violence news shared on social media and described strong emotional and bodily reactions to such content, including fear, anxiety, distress, and hypervigilance, which resemble STS symptoms (Soysal, 2025). Similarly, in Fileborn's (2017) qualitative study with Australian women, some participants who engaged with online disclosures of stranger harassment reported feeling an emotional burden for other women. Together, these findings suggest that exposure to other women's experiences of stranger harassment via Twitter may evoke empathy, which in turn may relate to STS.

1.5.2. Distress

The other emotional response that may be particularly relevant to the development of STS when women encounter other women's stranger harassment experiences on Twitter is distress. *Distress* can be defined as an unpleasant emotional experience characterized by feelings such as anxiety, sadness, worry, tension, and psychological discomfort (Ridner, 2004).

The STS literature emphasizes that although distress and trauma symptoms are closely related, they are conceptually distinct constructs. Indeed, when developing measures of STS, researchers deliberately distinguished distress from core trauma symptoms (Bride et al., 2004). Figley (1995) identifies emotions such as sadness, depression, anxiety, fear, rage, and shame as common indicators of the distress experienced following indirect exposure to trauma. Similarly, trauma literature suggests that traumatic events often evoke distress, which may contribute to the development of trauma-related symptoms (Courtois, 1988; Figley, 1995; Herman, 1992). Consistent with this, studies among family members and significant others of traumatized individuals, as well as mental health professionals, social workers, and healthcare providers, have shown that higher levels of distress are associated with greater STS symptoms (Beck, 2011; Bride, 2007; Figley, 1998; Hensel, 2015; Ogińska-Bulik & Bąk, 2025; Ogińska-Bulik et al., 2022).

Beyond direct interaction with traumatized individuals, distress has also been linked to indirect exposure to traumatic events through the media. For instance, following the Boston Marathon bombings, greater exposure to bombing-related media content was associated with higher levels of acute stress symptoms and functional impairment (Holman et al., 2014). Vlahov et al. (2002) found that increased television viewing after the September 11 attacks was linked to stress-related coping behaviors such as smoking and alcohol use. Similarly, Liu and Liu (2020) showed that greater exposure to COVID-19-related media content was associated with increased anxiety and psychological distress. Research focusing specifically on social media has yielded similar findings. Participants in Comstock and Platania's (2017) study reported experiencing greater distress in relation to their frequent exposure to negative content on social media. Higher levels of doomscrolling were associated with lower

psychological well-being and greater psychological distress among Turkish participants (Taşkın et al., 2024). In a qualitative study with Turkish participants (Soysal, 2025), participants reported that they experience distressing emotions as a result of viewing social media content about gender-based violence.

Taken together, these findings suggest that exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter may evoke distress among women, which in turn may increase their vulnerability to STS. Thus, in addition to cognitive and behavioral responses reflected in fear of rape, women may also respond emotionally with distress, along with empathy, when encountering other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter. Accordingly, distress may represent one of the emotional mechanisms underlying the association between indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS.

1.6. Feminism

Although exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences may increase women's vulnerability to STS, women may not respond to such exposure in the same way. Feminism may function as a protective factor by providing women with resources to interpret stranger harassment within a broader socio-political context rather than as isolated incidents. In addition, feminism may foster solidarity among women by creating a sense of belonging, support, and empowerment (Brown, 2004; Gefter et al., 2013; Leavy & Adams, 1986), thereby buffering the association between exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences and STS. Accordingly, the present dissertation examined two forms of feminism as potential moderators of the suggested relationship between indirect exposure to stranger harassment and STS: feminist identity and feminist collective action.

1.6.1. Feminist Identity

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests that individuals derive part of their self-concept from group memberships. Identification with a social group can provide psychological resources that help them to cope with stressors and negative experiences (Haslam et al., 2018; Jetten et al., 2012). In the context of gender-based violence, having a feminist identity may enable women to interpret harassment as a

consequence of broader structural inequalities and may protect them from its negative effects on mental health. *Feminist identity* can be defined as understanding the sexist and patriarchal system that sustains gender inequalities, knowing and supporting feminist beliefs, ideas, and goals, and incorporating being a feminist and the label feminist into one's self-identity (Brown, 1994). Importantly, feminist identity is not the same as merely holding feminist beliefs. Although individuals may endorse feminist beliefs, identifying as a feminist requires a stronger commitment to the feminist movement and a willingness to adopt the feminist label as part of one's identity (Weis et al., 2018). Therefore, the current dissertation focuses on feminist identity rather than having feminist beliefs.

Previous literature suggests that feminist identity may play a protective role for women against the negative outcomes of living in a patriarchal society. For example, feminist identity has been associated with having a more positive body image, lower disordered eating (Murnen & Smolak, 2009), lower body surveillance, and lower body shame (Hurt et al., 2007). Women who identify as feminists demonstrate greater awareness of sexism, are more likely to challenge gender inequality, and perceive gender hierarchies as unjust (Leaper & Arias, 2011; Liss & Erchull, 2010; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). In contrast, women who do not identify as feminists have been found to conform more strongly to traditional gender norms (Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). Moreover, feminist identification has been associated with better psychological adjustment in the face of sexism and sexual harassment. For instance, Moradi and Subich (2002) found that the lower passive acceptance dimension of feminist identity development buffered the association between recent sexist events and psychological distress. In another study, among women who had experienced physical or sexual abuse perpetrated by men, those with a feminist identity reported lower levels of shame and self-blame and described feeling less helpless, more independent, and more assertive (Gefter et al., 2013). Research has shown that feminist identification is associated with more adaptive coping responses to sexism and sexual harassment, including seeking social support and confronting perpetrators (Ayres et al., 2009; Leaper & Arias, 2011; Leaper et al., 2013). In addition, feminist identification may foster stronger solidarity and a greater sense of connectedness among women, thereby enhancing social support that can help them cope with gender-based violence (Gefter et al., 2013).

In the context of stranger harassment, to the best of my knowledge, Carretta and Szymanski's (2020) study is the only study that directly examined feminist identity as a protective factor against the impact of stranger harassment on women. Yet, their findings present a mixed picture. They found that feminist identification did not buffer the direct relationship between frequency of stranger harassment experiences and PTSD symptoms. However, feminist identification weakened the indirect effect of stranger harassment on PTSD symptoms through self-blame, suggesting that feminist identity may protect women by shaping how they interpret and cope with stranger harassment. To date, no study has examined whether feminist identity may also serve as a protective factor when women are indirectly exposed to other women's stranger harassment experiences. Given that indirect exposure involves witnessing and interpreting others' experiences rather than personally experiencing harassment, the resources, awareness, sense of solidarity, and coping mechanisms associated with feminist identity may be especially effective. Therefore, the current study examines whether feminist identity moderates the relationship between exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter and STS.

1.6.2. Feminist Collective Action

Engagement in feminist collective action may also influence how women respond to other women's stranger harassment experiences shared on Twitter. *Feminist collective action* can be defined as behaviors that target gender-based social inequalities and aim to change them, promote equality, and improve women's rights. Unlike feminist identity, which reflects the extent to which feminism is incorporated into one's self-concept, feminist collective action involves active engagement in behaviors that promote social change on behalf of women. Women can engage in feminist collective action in many ways, such as marching in the streets, boycotting sexist companies, or using digital platforms, such as signing online petitions or tweeting (Radke et al., 2018).

According to the social identity model of collective action (SIMCA; van Zomeren et al., 2008), individuals are more likely to engage in collective action when they identify with a disadvantaged group, perceive the group's disadvantage as unjust, and believe that collective action can bring social change. Such engagement may also have

important psychological benefits for members of disadvantaged groups. In the context of gender-based violence, engagement in feminist collective action may foster a sense of agency, collective efficacy, belonging, social support, and empowerment, thereby helping women cope with the impact of gender-based violence (Brown, 2004; Cohen, 2008). In support, Watson et al. (2018) found that feminist collective action was associated with bisexual women's higher psychological well-being. In another study, greater engagement in feminist activities was associated with higher levels of perceived social support and was the strongest predictor of self-acceptance among lesbian women (Leavy & Adams, 1986). Foster (2000) found that social support coping was positively associated with engagement in feminist collective action, whereas avoidance coping was associated with greater helplessness among women. Conlin et al. (2020) found that women's critical consciousness predicted higher engagement in feminist collective action. Further, feminist collective action mediated the relationships between critical consciousness and well-being and life satisfaction, suggesting that women with higher critical consciousness tended to engage more in feminist collective action, which in turn was associated with higher well-being and life satisfaction. Szymanski and Owens (2009) found that engagement in feminist activities buffered the association between sexist events and psychological distress among lesbian and bisexual women.

Previously, Carretta and Szymanski (2020) suggested that feminist collective action may be a protective factor against the effects of stranger harassment on women. Further, research suggests that many women view collective action as a more meaningful response to stranger harassment than individualized or punitive solutions, as it focuses on challenging the broader social structures that sustain stranger harassment (Fileborn & Vera-Gray, 2017). Through promoting solidarity, social support, collective efficacy, and empowerment, engagement in feminist collective action may provide women with psychological resources that help buffer the negative impact of stranger harassment. Accordingly, these resources may also help buffer the effects of indirect exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter. However, to the best of my knowledge, no previous study has examined whether feminist collective action buffers the association between exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences and STS. Hence, the current dissertation examined feminist collective action, alongside feminist identity, as a potential

moderator of the relationship between exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter and STS. To capture different aspects of feminist collective action, both actual engagement (operationalized as past engagement) and intentions to engage were examined.

1.7. The Current Study

Taken together, although research on social media-induced STS and stranger harassment has increased considerably in recent years, important gaps remain in the literature. First, research examining social media-induced STS in the context of interpersonal forms of trauma remains scarce. Apart from one study on exposure to knife crime news on social media (Secker & Braithwaite, 2021), existing research has focused almost exclusively on large-scale collective traumatic events. However, whether indirect exposure to interpersonal forms of trauma through social media is associated with STS remains largely unexplored. Second, previous studies on social media-induced STS have often examined social media as a whole without differentiating among platforms. Yet, each platform has unique features and dynamics that may affect the results. Third, previous studies have primarily investigated whether social media exposure is associated with STS, with only a few examining the psychological mechanisms by which such exposure may relate to STS development. Fourth, stranger harassment remains an understudied form of gender-based violence, especially within social psychology. Although previous studies have shown that women's personal experiences of stranger harassment are associated with adverse mental health outcomes (e.g., Betts et al., 2019; Davidson et al., 2016; Moya-Garofano et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2017), no study has examined whether these incidents' effects extend beyond direct targets to women who are exposed to them indirectly. Finally, both social media-induced STS and stranger harassment remain understudied in the Turkish context, and there is a need for more research with non-WEIRD samples in both literatures. Existing research on social media-induced STS in Türkiye has mainly focused on collective traumatic incidents, and only a few of them have examined the psychological mechanisms underlying the relationship between social media use and STS. Moreover, research on stranger harassment in Türkiye is even more limited. While a few studies have investigated women's safety perceptions in public spaces (e.g., Tandoğan & İlhan, 2016) and one has examined the effects of

sexual harassment in public transportation (Karabulut & Alkar, 2019), to the best of my knowledge, no empirical study has systematically examined stranger harassment itself. The only study specifically addressing stranger harassment is a case study evaluating the implementation of an educational intervention against stranger harassment rather than examining the phenomenon or its psychological consequences (Atabarut et al., 2022).

To address these gaps, the present dissertation aimed to investigate whether women's frequency of exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter relates to their STS severity. Fear of rape (i.e., safety concerns, taking precautions, and fear of men) and emotional responses (i.e., empathy and distress) were examined as potential mediators, whereas feminist identity and feminist collective action (i.e., intention to engage and past engagement) were examined as potential moderators. To do so, two studies were conducted using a mixed-methods design. In Study 1, qualitative interviews were used to explore women's exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via social media, and their cognitive, emotional, physiological, and behavioral responses to such content. Study 1 also examined whether the theoretical mechanisms proposed in the literature were reflected in women's responses. In addition, given the scarcity of research on stranger harassment in the Turkish context, Study 1 also explored women's general perceptions and direct experiences of stranger harassment to provide further insights into the issue. Building on the findings of Study 1 and the literature, Study 2 quantitatively examined the hypothesized relationships. Specifically, more frequent exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter was expected to be associated with greater safety concerns, fear of men, precautionary behaviors, empathy, and distress. In turn, safety concerns, fear of men, empathy, and distress were expected to be associated with higher STS, whereas precautionary behaviors were expected to be associated with lower STS. Feminist identity, intention to engage in feminist collective action, and past engagement in feminist collective action were expected to buffer the relationship between exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter and STS.

CHAPTER 2

STUDY 1: A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF WOMEN'S INDIRECT EXPOSURE TO OTHER WOMEN'S STRANGER HARASSMENT EXPERIENCES VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

As discussed in the previous chapter, prior research has demonstrated that indirect exposure to others' traumatic experiences is associated with STS development and that social media may serve as a source of indirect exposure to traumatic events such as wars, earthquakes, and terrorist attacks. Yet, little is known about whether indirect exposure to interpersonal traumatic experiences, such as stranger harassment, may similarly relate to STS development. Given that women's direct experiences of stranger harassment have been associated with PTSD symptoms (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020), indirect exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via social media may also be associated with trauma symptoms. To explore this possibility and provide an empirical foundation for the quantitative examination conducted in Study 2, a qualitative study was conducted as the first part of the current dissertation. Specifically, Study 1 aimed to explore women's exposure to and responses to other women's stranger harassment experiences shared on social media. In addition, given the limited research on stranger harassment in the Turkish context, it is also aimed to provide a broader understanding of the issue by exploring women's general perceptions of and direct experiences with stranger harassment in Türkiye.

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Participants

A total of 30 women social media users aged between 18 and 28 years (M_{age} = 21.00, SD_{age} = 1.91) were recruited through convenience sampling via the METU-SONA

system and social media announcements. Participation was voluntary. Participants from METU-SONA systems received course credit for their participation (N = 23), whereas those from social media announcements received no compensation (N = 7). On a scale ranging from 1 (*low*) to 6 (*high*), participants reported a mean economic status of 3.90 (SD = .66). Rated on a scale ranging from 1 (*extreme left*) to 6 (*extreme right*), the mean political view was 2.70 (SD = .79). Additional demographic information of the participants is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants in Study 1

Participant	Age	Level of Education	Major	Having a Twitter Account
1	21	1st year undergraduate	Psychology	Yes
2	21	1st year undergraduate	Industrial engineering	No
3	20	1st year undergraduate	Psychology	Yes
4	20	1st year undergraduate	Industrial engineering	Yes
5	20	1st year undergraduate	Psychology	Yes
6	18	1st year undergraduate	Psychology	Yes
7	22	2nd year undergraduate	Industrial engineering	No
8	23	4th year undergraduate	Industrial engineering	Yes
9	21	1st year undergraduate	Psychology	Yes
10	22	4th year undergraduate	Food Engineering	Yes
11	22	3rd year undergraduate	Psychology	Yes
12	19	1st year undergraduate	Mechanical Engineering	Yes
13	23	2nd year undergraduate	Psychology	Yes
14	19	1st year undergraduate	Psychology	Yes
15	21	1st year undergraduate	Chemical Engineering	No
16	20	1st year undergraduate	Psychology	Yes
17	24	4th year undergraduate	Chemical Engineering	Yes
18	21	1st year undergraduate	Mechanical Engineering	Yes
19	21	1st year undergraduate	Psychology	Yes
20	20	1st year undergraduate	Psychology	No
21	19	1st year undergraduate	Mechanical Engineering	Yes
22	21	2nd year undergraduate	Mechanical Engineering	Yes
23	21	1st year undergraduate	Sociology	Yes
24	20	1st year undergraduate	Psychology	Yes
25	21	1st year undergraduate	Psychology	Yes
26	19	2nd year undergraduate	English Language Education	Yes
27	20	2nd year undergraduate	English Language Education	No
28	20	4th year undergraduate	Medicine	Yes
29	23	3rd year undergraduate	Veterinary	Yes
30	28	1st year graduate	International Relations	Yes

2.1.2. Procedure

Ethical permission was obtained from the METU Human Research Ethics Committee. Each participant was given an individual appointment for the interview. Prior to the interview, participants provided both verbal and written consent to participate and to audio recording. Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face by the author in a private setting. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 25 minutes. At the end of the study, participants completed the Demographic Information Form on paper, were given contact information for support services for different types of violence, and were thanked for their participation.

2.1.3. Measures

2.1.3.1. Interview Questions

The interview questions were developed based on the relevant literature. They consisted of 15 open-ended questions examining participants' general perceptions of stranger harassment in Türkiye, their direct experiences of stranger harassment, their indirect exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via social media, their responses to such exposure, and the role of feminist identity and feminist collective action in shaping their responses (Appendix E). After answering the questions about their conceptualization of stranger harassment, participants were provided with the following definition of stranger harassment, which was developed for the current study based on the literature, to ensure that they all shared a common understanding of the concept before answering the remaining questions: "*Stranger harassment (also referred to as street harassment) is a form of sexual violence that occurs in public spaces, such as streets, public transportation, and stores, and is perpetrated by strangers whom the target does not know. It includes behaviors such as whistling, staring, making unsolicited sexual comments, persistently asking for name, phone number, or destination despite being told no, following, indecent exposure, and unwanted touching or groping*."

2.1.3.2. Demographic Information Form

Gender, age, education level, economic status, political view, whether they use social media, and whether they have a Twitter account were measured as demographics (see Appendix F).

2.1.4. Researcher Positioning

The researcher is a 32-year-old woman who lives in one of the most populated cities in Türkiye and regularly uses public transportation. She has been assisting in a gender and women's issues course for six years and has conducted academic research on these topics. While analyzing the interviews, she drew on her lived experience as a woman in Türkiye, the perspective she has developed through her work in gender and women's issues, and the theoretical background provided by the literature.

2.1.5. Analysis Strategy

The interviews were conducted by the researcher herself. Consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis approach, data collection concluded when the researcher decided that the dataset provided sufficient richness and complexity to address the research questions. After that, the researcher transcribed the interviews, repeatedly reviewed them, and became thoroughly familiar with the data. Then, the data were coded, and themes were determined using MAXQDA 24. The analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis and followed a primarily deductive, semantic, and realist approach, while acknowledging the researcher's active role and drawing on relevant theoretical literature throughout the process.

2.2. Results

Four themes were developed through the analysis (see Table 2). The first theme includes participants' general perceptions of stranger harassment in Türkiye and their direct experiences of stranger harassment. The second theme concerns participants' indirect exposure to stranger harassment via other women's social media posts. The third theme includes their responses to these posts. The fourth theme concerns how

feminist identification and engagement in feminist collective action shape these responses.

Table 2. Themes Based on Interviews of Study 1

Theme	Subthemes
Theme 1: General Perceptions of Stranger Harassment	1. Conceptualization of stranger harassment 1.1. Perceived perpetrators 1.2. Perceived victims 1.3. Behavioral aspects 1.4. Contextual aspects 2. Direct experiences of stranger harassment 3. Stranger harassment in Türkiye 3.1. Stranger harassment as a significant societal issue 3.2. Official stance, reporting, and punishment 3.3. Public awareness and societal attitudes 3.4. Suggested solutions
Theme 2: Indirect Exposure to Stranger Harassment via Social Media	1. Platform of exposure 1.1. Twitter 1.2. Other platforms 2. Frequency of exposure 3. Form and intention of the posts 4. Depicted behaviors in the posts 5. Context of the incident 6. Perpetrators in the posts 6.1. Identity of perpetrators 6.2. Motivation of perpetrators 7. Victims in the posts 7.1. Identity of victims 7.2. Feelings and thoughts of victims 8. Reaction of others 8.1. Comments on the post 8.2. Impact of comments on women
Theme 3: Responses to Stranger Harassment Posts	1. Responses during exposure 1.1. Cognitive-affective responses 1.2. Physiological responses 1.3. Behavioral responses 2. Post-exposure responses 2.1. Recollection of the posts 2.2. Cognitive-affective responses 2.3. Physiological responses 2.4. Taking precautions
Theme 4: Feminism and Responses to Stranger Harassment Posts	1. Feminist identity and its impact 2. Feminist collective action 2.1. Online feminist collective action 2.2. Offline feminist collective action 2.3. Feminist collective action against stranger harassment 2.4. Impact of engagement

2.2.1. Theme 1: General Perceptions of Stranger Harassment

The first theme includes participants' general perceptions of stranger harassment in Türkiye, beyond their exposure to social media posts. Considering the scarcity of research on stranger harassment in the Turkish context and the broader literature, this theme seeks to provide in-depth insights into how women in Türkiye perceive and experience stranger harassment (see Figure 1).

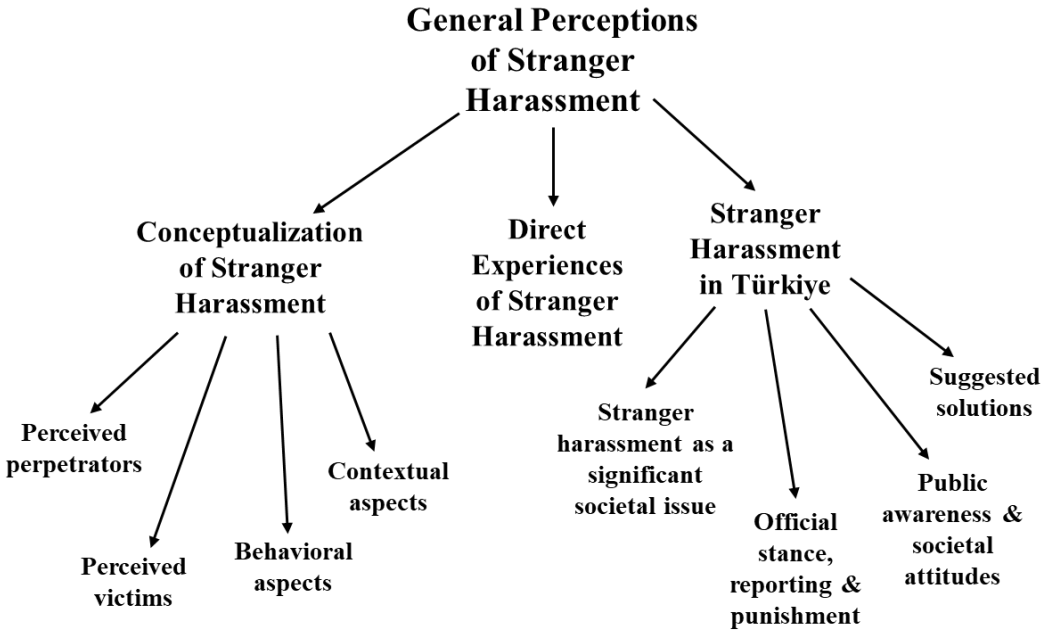

Figure 2. Theme 1: General Perceptions of Stranger Harassment

2.2.1.1. Conceptualization of Stranger Harassment

2.2.1.1.1. Perceived Perpetrators

Most participants perceived perpetrators of stranger harassment to be almost exclusively men, typically middle-aged or older. Some participants observed that young men also engage in stranger harassment, especially when in groups. Yet, younger men were perceived as perpetrators less frequently than older men. A few participants mentioned that older women occasionally exhibit harassing behavior as well, though these incidents were not sexual in nature. Rather, they were described as attempts to police women's clothing or impose moral judgment. Many participants

expressed their fear of men. Some mentioned that they believe every woman is afraid of men to some degree, because all of them carry the potential to cause harm.

> "The common thread of women is always being cautious around men. I honestly think about it, my chances of being harassed by a woman are extremely low. And even if that happened, I'd probably be more capable of defending myself. That's why the shared experience is this constant vigilance around men, especially middle-aged and older ones. It's not just about women…animals, children, and even plants are harassed by men. A man passing by a tree might tear off a leaf or pick an unripe fruit for no reason. That, too, is a form of harassment. It's a deeply troubling issue. Honestly, every woman with common sense fears men to some degree, feminist or not, because any man holds the potential to cause harm. Men get offended when we say that, yes, it's not all men, but somehow it's always a man." *(Participant 28)*

Some participants stated that men who engage in stranger harassment often do not feel ashamed. Instead, they view such behavior as a source of pride and a way to assert or enhance their masculinity.

> "They even turn it into a joke within their male circles, something that reinforces their masculinity and makes them feel proud. So, it's clearly not an act they fear or shy away from." *(Participant 29)*

2.2.1.1.2. Perceived Victims

According to most participants, the victim of stranger harassment is almost always a woman. Some said that when they hear the term "stranger harassment," they immediately think of women as victims and men as perpetrators, rarely the other way around. Although less frequently, some participants acknowledged that men can also be victims of stranger harassment.

> "I can't imagine a man being harassed on the street. But I can easily picture a woman being harassed." *(Participant 22)*

> "Ninety-nine percent of these incidents happen to women. I've never seen a man get yelled at in public with things like, 'You have great legs,' or get whistled at. I've never seen a woman persistently ask a man for his number or follow him in a creepy way. I think this kind of harassment is gendered. It happens to us because we're women." *(Participant 30)*

Most participants emphasized that women targeted by stranger harassment do not share any specific characteristics. They believed that any woman, regardless of age, clothing, or behavior, can be a potential target. Many also noted that such incidents often occur while women simply go about their daily routines, and the ordinariness of the context made these incidents especially disturbing for them.

2.2.1.1.3. Behavioral Aspects

Participants defined a wide range of behaviors as stranger harassment. These included non-verbal acts such as staring (although some participants were not sure whether staring alone qualifies as stranger harassment), whistling, and honking from passing cars, as well as verbal behaviors like catcalling, initiating unwanted conversations, using pretexts (e.g., asking for directions) to start a conversation, making inappropriate comments about one's appearance or clothing, using nicknames, or speaking about her within a group loud enough for her to hear. Physical behaviors such as touching, groping, brushing against the body, standing too close, or invading personal space, especially in crowded settings like public transportation were also frequently mentioned. In addition, more severe behaviors such as public masturbation, taking photos or videos without consent, following, and cornering were also commonly mentioned as stranger harassment behaviors.

Many participants noted that such behaviors are difficult to prove, and perpetrators can easily deny the acts or flee the scene. They believed that this ambiguity enables perpetrators to continue harassing women without facing consequences.

2.2.1.1.4. Contextual Aspects

Participants most frequently identified streets and public transportation, such as buses and subways, as the primary settings for stranger harassment. Many also mentioned that perpetrators sometimes harass women from passing cars and then quickly flee the

scene. These incidents were perceived as more likely to occur late at night or in poorly lit areas.

2.2.1.2. Direct Experiences of Stranger Harassment

Many participants had experienced stranger harassment at least once in their lives. These experiences included behaviors such as staring, catcalling, making unwanted comments about appearance, touching, initiating unwanted conversations, persistently asking for contact information, and exposure to sexually explicit material and public masturbation.

Some participants stated that they had been experiencing stranger harassment from a very young age, and some mentioned that all the women around them had experienced similar incidents. Most participants mentioned experiencing stranger harassment very frequently, with some stating that it occurs every time they go out or at least once a day.

> "Yes, many times. I mean, I'm exposed to stranger harassment almost every time I go out, you know, the looks, the comments, and so on." *(Participant 17)*

> "It's something I encounter frequently. I see it a lot, both in real life and on social media." *(Participant 30)*

Some of those who are not frequently exposed to stranger harassment explained that it was not because such incidents are rare, but rather because of the precautions they take to protect themselves.

> "It's not something I experience very often, but I guess I do make some effort to avoid being exposed to it." *(Participant 15)*

> "I don't recall experiencing it in my daily life. I'm pretty sure that not being alone most of the time plays a big role. I think it's because I'm usually with friends or in places like campus or Kızılay, where you're less likely to be targeted because they're crowded." *(Participant 18)*

Some participants stated that they did not recognize the behavior as harassment at the time, but only realized it later, either upon reflection or after hearing the definition of stranger harassment.

> "There were a few incidents I only realized were harassment afterward. In the moment, you might say to yourself, 'No, it's probably nothing,' or 'He's not actually looking at me,' or 'That wasn't directed at me.' But when you think about it later, or talk to someone else who went through the same thing, you realize, 'This happened to me too,' and 'That was clearly harassment.' Sometimes it's hard to recognize, because they don't always do it explicitly." *(Participant 27)*

Participants mentioned feeling scared, helpless, lonely, angry, and unable to respond when they experienced stranger harassment. Some participants noted that bystanders failed to intervene, and in one instance, even security personnel did not take action. Some also stated that when they reported the incident afterward, officials often did not take it seriously.

> "In that moment, I always feel so helpless and angry, I want to scream or fight back. But I also get scared. You think, 'What if he does something worse? What if he hits me? Even verbal harassment makes me feel incredibly alone and helpless" *(Participant 30)*

> "It's hard to respond in those situations. When it happens to someone else, I think, 'I wish they had said something.' But when it happens to me, it's much difficult. You don't know how people will react, or what if he says, 'I wasn't looking at you.' That uncertainty makes it scarier when I'm alone." *(Participant 27)*

> "Two days ago, an elderly man sat in front of me and my friend on the bus. He opened Twitter on his oversized phone and started watching porn, holding the screen in full view. We just sat there, unwillingly watching with him. Eventually, another man sitting nearby said, 'What are you doing?' to him and lowered his phone. But nothing else happened, no one

did anything. The man got off at his stop as if nothing had happened." *(Participant 28)*

2.2.1.3. Stranger Harassment in Türkiye

2.2.1.3.1. Stranger Harassment as a Significant Societal Issue

All participants identified stranger harassment as a serious and important issue in Türkiye. They believed that its prevalence has led to the normalization of such behavior, making it something that can occur at any time and place. Moreover, many participants perceived an increase in the frequency of such incidents. They perceived stranger harassment as a significant barrier to Türkiye's development. One participant mentioned that such incidents reinforced her decision to consider living abroad.

> "It's a serious problem. It happens very frequently, and I hear about it from many people around me. I believe it has happened to every woman, and it's a major issue in Türkiye." *(Participant 21)*

> "People often grow up with ideas about women's lower place in society, shaped by their families and surroundings. A young man who harasses someone on the street likely does so because he was raised in an environment that normalized such behavior. That's why I see it as a serious issue in Türkiye, it's about where society and families position women, and that's what gives perpetrators the sense of entitlement." *(Participant 22)*

> "I think it can happen to anyone in daily life, and it's starting to become normalized." *(Participant 3)*

> "It's a major problem. I don't think it has decreased over time, in fact, I think it's been increasing." *(Participant 17)*

> "It's a significant problem, as I believe it reflects deeper societal issues such as a disregard for rights and laws, gender inequality, and tendency toward aggression and violence. Minor acts often escalate into more serious ones." *(Participant 20)*

> "It's a very important issue. Türkiye's status as a developed, developing, or underdeveloped country is debatable, but if we want to take even a small step toward becoming a more civilized society, we need to address this problem. Almost every woman, when asked, says she has suffered from it. I believe a country's level of development can be measured by how it treats women, which is why I see this as such a critical issue." *(Participant 29)*

> "I think if this country weren't like this, we'd be able to travel and live more freely. That's why it strengthens my thoughts about moving abroad. I feel angry because I believe society is to blame." *(Participant 15)*

2.2.1.3.2. Official Stance, Reporting, and Punishment

Most participants believed that authorities fail to take effective measures to prevent stranger harassment and, according to some, do so intentionally. The limited measures that do exist tend to restrict women rather than deter or hold perpetrators accountable. Public reactions and collective action are often suppressed by the government. They also believed that people are not getting proper public education about stranger harassment.

> "We're not safe. I mean, if the authorities wanted to, they could take action, but they don't. So, we're not really protected, and that makes us feel unsafe." *(Participant 8)*

> "Because there aren't cameras or lighting on every street. There's no real oversight. So, when it comes down to the victim's word, it means nothing in our system, in this country." *(Participant 13)*

> "The authorities are actually aware of these incidents, but I think the measures they take only aim to restrict women. I don't see them taking any real precautions. They know what's happening, but they choose not to act." *(Participant 24)*

> "I think we should do more about these incidents, but I avoid engaging in protests out of concern that something might happen to me afterward. Because we've seen investigations and consequences, I hold myself back.

> It's not because I don't want to, I'm just trying to protect myself." *(Participant 16)*

According to the participants, victims often choose not to report the incident because they do not feel safe. They fear negative reactions from their families or society, and victim-blaming, find it difficult to prove the incident or identify the perpetrator, and believe that the perpetrator will not be punished. Additionally, many mentioned that victims often believe reporting would not change society's attitudes toward these incidents.

> "They want to go to the police, but they might be afraid of being blamed by society, like, 'You dressed like this,' or 'You brought it on yourself." *(Participant 5)*

> "I think most women don't report it. It's easy for a perpetrator to defend himself by saying, 'I wasn't looking at you,' or 'That wasn't directed at you.' Then, whether it's a police officer or someone else, they might say, 'Don't take it personally,' or even blame you, like, 'You shouldn't have looked at him,' 'You shouldn't have dressed like that,' or 'You shouldn't have been out that late.' And that's exactly why these things keep happening." *(Participant 27)*

Most participants believed that reporting stranger harassment rarely results in meaningful action. Accordingly, police officers often do not take these reports seriously, fail to respond appropriately, and frequently adopt victim-blaming attitudes. Further, the perpetrator is sometimes the one responsible for public safety, such as a police officer or a night watchman. Even when reports are formally processed, perpetrators often receive little or no punishment. This perceived lack of accountability fosters feelings of helplessness, frustration, and anger among women while allowing perpetrators to continue their behavior with few consequences. Participants believed that many women turn to social media to draw public attention to such incidents, hoping to pressure authorities to take action and ensure justice.

> "There isn't a strong enough penalty for either femicide or street harassment. I've even heard people talk in ways that seem to justify or

encourage the harasser. When someone says, ‘You should’ve watched where you were going’ or ‘You shouldn’t have dressed like that,’ it makes the harasser feel justified, like they were right to do it. And that kind of reaction actually paves the way for them to do it again.” *(Participant 27)*

“When someone follows you, someone you're supposed to trust, like a police officer or a security guard, it affects me more. You're supposed to be there to protect people. If I hear that someone like that harassed someone, it makes me even more angry, or honestly, it unsettles me more than anything.” *(Participant 12)*

“Most of the time, there’s no legal action when harassment is reported. Let alone verbal harassment, even in cases of physical harassment, there is often no real action. That’s why people try to cope by ignoring the incident or talking about it with friends or posting it on social media instead of reporting it.” *(Participant 13)*

“When someone harms a woman and gets away with it, people know about that. And perpetrators start thinking, ‘So what? I’ll just serve a little time and get out.’” *(Participant 8)*

2.2.1.3.3. Public Awareness and Societal Attitude

Participants believed that most people in Türkiye are not very aware of stranger harassment. Accordingly, older individuals, in particular, are often unaware of these incidents because they do not use social media and have not experienced them directly. When they learn about such incidents, they often blame the victim. Although many people acknowledge that such incidents occur, because they are so common, they have become normalized and are often ignored or not discussed in public. Perpetrators do not face social consequences when these incidents become public, and the patriarchal structure of society encourages them. Participants also believed that men tend to be indifferent to the issue since they usually do not experience it and often dismiss what victims go through. Some believed that the rise of misogynistic male groups has shaped societal attitudes toward stranger harassment. They also said that the lack of

support for feminism makes people less aware and less sensitive to the issue in Turkish society.

> "I don't think there's social awareness. People only acknowledge things if they experience them personally. I see these issues on Twitter because I follow related content, but someone older or more isolated does not. Since they don't experience or hear about it, they're more likely to say things like, 'Why was she there?' or 'Why was she dressed like that?' When people are unaware of the issue, they are more likely to react inappropriately." *(Participant 27)*

> "I try to talk to my male friends about this, but they don't really understand how serious it is. They even make jokes about it. I tell them it's not something to joke about, that I feel a lump in my throat when I talk about it, and that sometimes we only realize it was harassment afterward. It's a serious issue." *(Participant 16)*

> "Lately, there's been a strange trend among young men, they openly say they dislike feminist women and see women as inferior. These views used to be hidden, but now they express them proudly. I think this also affects how they perceive stranger harassment." *(Participant 9)*

According to participants, the small group that is aware of the issue typically consists of young people, women, and individuals with higher levels of education. Additionally, some participants believed that the growing use of social media has contributed to increased societal awareness of the issue.

> "An awareness about this issue may have recently started to grow, especially as platforms like Twitter have begun to function as part of the justice mechanism. As more people shared their experiences, others found the courage to speak up. I think we started to develop some awareness." *(Participant 26)*

Further, participants mentioned that although some people may want to intervene when they witness stranger harassment, they often refrain from doing so, either because they fear for their own safety or because they are unsure how to intervene.

"People can easily stay indifferent to these incidents. Honestly, I didn't do anything either. I don't even know what I could've done. We just feel sad and move on, I guess." *(Participant 24)*

2.2.1.3.4. Suggested Solutions

Participants suggested several solutions to prevent stranger harassment. These included appointing lawmakers who are aware of the issue, enacting and enforcing laws with deterrent penalties, and ensuring justice is served. They emphasized the importance of early education through the school system, training law enforcement officers, and encouraging politicians and public figures to raise awareness and avoid language that demeans women. They also mentioned the need for psychological and social support for victims, safer public spaces, and preventive measures that focus on educating men rather than restricting women. Among these, the most emphasized solutions were the implementation of deterrent legal penalties and education.

2.2.2. Theme 2: Indirect Exposure to Stranger Harassment via Social Media

The second theme includes participants' indirect exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via social media (see Figure 2).

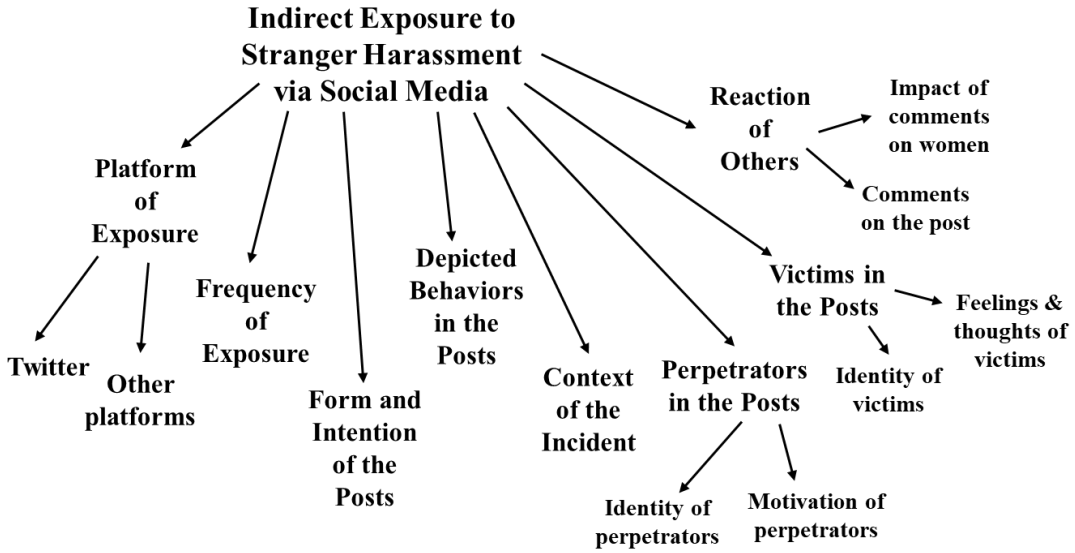

Figure 3. Theme 2: Indirect Exposure to Stranger Harassment via Social Media

2.2.2.1. Platform of Exposure

2.2.2.1.1. Twitter

Participants most frequently mentioned Twitter as the platform where they encounter other women's posts about their stranger harassment experiences. They said sharing personal experiences is common on Twitter, which makes it the platform where harassment experiences are most frequently shared, especially since the #MeToo movement. Those who did not use Twitter believed that, if they did, they would likely encounter such posts more often on Twitter than on other platforms. Some participants noted that they tried to reduce their Twitter use or even delete their accounts due to frequent exposure to such posts.

> "I try not to use my Twitter while I'm in Türkiye, because I come across these kinds of posts much more frequently there." *(Participant 18)*

2.2.2.1.2. Other Platforms

Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and WhatsApp groups were the other platforms that participants mentioned in addition to Twitter. Instagram was the second most frequently mentioned platform, but responses about it were mixed. Some participants said they often encounter such posts on Instagram, while others said they had never seen them there, noting that people typically share only positive posts and tend to avoid posting about unpleasant issues like harassment.

> "I mostly see these posts on Twitter. They're not really shared on Instagram. Instagram feels more like a platform for positive things." *(Participant 15)*

2.2.2.2. Frequency of Exposure

Participants mentioned frequently encountering other women's stranger harassment experiences on social media, mostly on Twitter. Those who frequently use social media and Twitter reported more frequent exposure to posts about other women's stranger harassment experiences, while those who use these platforms less often

encountered such posts less frequently. Participants who reported frequent exposure said they came across such posts every day or at least several times a week.

2.2.2.3. Form and Intention of the Posts

According to the participants, victims often describe the stranger harassment they experienced in detail in the posts. Some posts include photos or videos from the incident. Victims record these to preserve evidence or in hopes that the act of recording will deter the perpetrator or prevent escalation. In some posts, the victim records herself to explain what happened. In these videos, the victim's distress is often clearly visible. She is crying, trembling, or visibly shaken, and participants can understand how frightened, sad, and traumatized she is by the experience by watching the video. Sometimes, even if they have not experienced it recently, women share their past experiences of stranger harassment, often encouraged by movements like #MeToo.

> "I see posts of young women on Twitter who shared the video of the harassment from the very beginning as a way to protect themselves. They use it entirely as a form of self-protection. Later, they share these on social media so they don't feel alone or ashamed." *(Participant 29)*

Victims share these posts to expose the perpetrator, warn other women, gain social support, pressure justice mechanisms to take action, and raise public awareness of such incidents.

> "They talk about the incident usually over several tweets in detail, explaining what happened, who the person was, what they did, and how long it lasted. Often, they also mention going to the police and what was said to them." *(Participant 8)*

> "In these posts, if the woman is lucky enough to have taken a photo of the perpetrator, she often shares it to warn others. For example, "If you live in X city, be careful with this person." *(Participant 28)*

> "I feel like the victim is searching for justice, and she's trying to find it through Twitter. I think she just wants her voice to be heard more." *(Participant 10)*

> "If the police are not doing anything, and they usually don't, she wants more people to know about this perpetrator and be cautious. She's defending herself and trying to make her voice heard through that." *(Participant 15)*

> "Part of it is to raise awareness, so that people, especially in Türkiye, become more aware of this issue." *(Participant 25)*

2.2.2.4. Depicted Behaviors in the Posts

Participants mentioned encountering a wide range of behaviors described in other women's posts about their stranger harassment experiences. These included staring, whistling, catcalling, touching, groping, brushing against the body, initiating unwanted conversations, asking insistent questions, making unsolicited comments about the woman's appearance or clothing, persistently requesting her phone number, contacting with her using personal information obtained through their profession (e.g., a food delivery courier), standing too close or invading personal space (especially on public transportation), masturbating in public (often while looking at or sitting next to the victim), attempting to smell or kiss the victim, secretly taking her photo, and following her. Among these, the most frequently mentioned behaviors were staring, touching, invasion of personal space on public transportation, public masturbation, and following.

2.2.2.5. Context of the Incident

According to participants, the stranger harassment incidents described in other women's social media posts occurred in various contexts, including streets (especially when deserted), public transportation such as buses, metro, and minibuses (especially when overcrowded), social gatherings or parties, malls, and foreign countries. Among these, streets and public transportation were the most frequently mentioned contexts.

2.2.2.6. Perpetrators in Posts

2.2.2.6.1. Identity of Perpetrators

According to most participants, the perpetrators described in the posts were mostly men, often middle-aged or older. While some noted that women are also sometimes mentioned in these posts as perpetrators, their behavior was typically judgmental rather than sexually harassing. Younger men were also mentioned by some participants as perpetrators. Some posts include incidents involving groups of men acting together. One participant mentioned that stranger harassment behaviors seemed to vary by age.

> "Younger men typically engage in behaviors like whistling, following, or saying things like 'Can I have your Instagram?' or 'Can I get your phone number?' Older men tend to stare, follow, and catcall." *(Participant 13)*

2.2.2.6.2. Motivation of Perpetrators

Most of the participants attributed the perpetrators' motivations for stranger harassment in the posts as a desire to assert power over the victim. Accordingly, perpetrators do not see women as individuals, but rather believe they are superior simply because they are men. They feel entitled to harass women, disregard their feelings and thoughts, and normalize harassment. They enjoy making women uncomfortable or scared because it makes them feel powerful. Participants also believed that the societal structure that positions men above women reinforces these attitudes. The patriarchal mindset leads perpetrators to objectify women and believe that if a woman is out late or wearing revealing clothing, she somehow deserves to be harassed. Further, the lack of legal consequences for their behavior reinforces perpetrators' sense of entitlement and encourages them to continue.

> "I think men feel entitled to harass women because women are already seen as lower in society. And the ones who do this usually grow up hearing the same stuff about women being beneath men, from their families or the people around them. That's why they think it's okay to harass a woman when they see her walking down the street." *(Participant 22)*

> "I think they actually believe they have the right to do it… And maybe it's also because, culturally, people say things like 'Men can do this' or 'Men are allowed to do that,' so it kind of gives them a sense of entitlement." *(Participant 19)*

> "I think these people aren't fulfilled in their daily lives, emotionally, intellectually, or in terms of feeling useful. So, they try to make up for that by getting little kicks out of power trips like this." *(Participant 26)*

Some participants believed that the repression of sexuality in society leads perpetrators to fetishize harassment and derive sexual gratification from it. However, the majority believed that harassment is less about sexual desire and more about power and dominance.

> "These days, a lot of things get labeled as kinks or fetishes, like there's some logical excuse behind them. I think for some people, it's about chasing that rush or arousal. They get a thrill from the danger of the situation. Especially older men. Maybe they're drawn to younger women but feel like the only ones they can approach are strangers on the street, so they end up acting like that." *(Participant 18)*

> "I don't think it's really about sexual desire. To me, it feels more like a power thing, something rooted in a lack of education and the need to dominate. Maybe it's someone who feels unsatisfied with their own life and lashes out at someone they see as weaker." *(Participant 9)*

> Maybe it's about getting attention, or maybe they actually enjoy the act itself. I think they get something out of making someone uncomfortable or scared. It puts them in a position of power. I honestly don't believe they expect a real response or connection. It feels more like they enjoy the dynamic, the control." *(Participant 13)*

Some participants believed that perpetrators are men with mental health issues, lack self-control, or are simply bad people. Also, some argued that perpetrators are often men who have limited access to women in their daily lives and attempt to seek closeness through harassment, not knowing how to have a close relationship with a

woman. Additionally, some participants acknowledged that perpetrators could also be educated individuals, but most of them associated stranger harassment with those who lack education.

> “I don’t think the harasser has any real goal. I think he just has an ill mind and sees women as sexual objects” *(Participant 27)*

> “They’re probably trying to connect with a woman, but in the wrong way. They end up crossing boundaries, probably without even realizing it.” *(Participant 11)*

> "They do it mostly because of a lack of education. Of course, educated people can do it too..." *(Participant 8)*

2.2.2.7. Victims in Posts

2.2.2.7.1. Identity of Victims

All participants stated that the victims in the stranger harassment posts they encountered on social media were overwhelmingly women. While some noted that men could also be victims, such incidents were perceived much less frequent compared to those of women. According to participants, victims often do not share any particular common features in terms of age, clothing, or lifestyle. Women of all ages, with varying styles of dress and worldviews, can be subjected to stranger harassment. Many participants highlighted that these women were simply going about their daily lives and were suddenly harassed, without having done anything to provoke it.

> “I think all these women are very different from one another, and the only thing they have in common is being harassed. Whether they’re wearing a swimsuit or a burkini, they still get harassed. I don’t think what matters to the perpetrator is how the woman looks. It’s more about the image he creates in his own imagination. That’s why I don’t think these women share any particular characteristic.” *(Participant 28)*

> “The victim doesn’t really do anything. She’s just minding her own business, walking down the street, going somewhere, getting on a bus, just

having a normal day without harming anyone. And yet, she still gets this kind of response from people." *(Participant 8)*

2.2.2.7.2. Feelings and Thoughts of Victims

According to participants, women in the posts often experience shock, fear, disgust, anxiety, stress, anger, trauma, and helplessness following stranger harassment. The need to convince others, including law enforcement, of the legitimacy of their victimization further intensifies their sense of helplessness. Some participants added that victims sometimes feel shame for not being able to protect themselves or blame themselves for the incident. They also experience ongoing fear of re-victimization, and the lack of justice increases their frustration. They also mentioned that, during the incident, women often fear that the harassment might escalate further.

> "She probably imagines the worst-case scenario, which makes her feel extremely unsafe. In that moment, her mind shifts into survival mode, thinking, 'What can I change about myself to get out of this?' So even though she's just trying to protect herself, she ends up blaming herself at first. I think the possibility of getting raped comes to her mind, and she's trying to figure out how to get through it with as little harm as possible." *(Participant 29)*

> "The victim probably feels helpless and awful. Sometimes there's just nothing you can do. You don't know what the perpetrator's next move will be. Will it stop at harassment, or will it turn into something more serious?" *(Participant 19)*

> "I think the victim feels horrified and scared. It's disgusting, like, in that moment, you feel a bit ashamed. Even though the perpetrator should be the one feeling shame and shouldn't act that way, I think it's the victim who ends up feeling ashamed and afraid." *(Participant 27)*

2.2.2.8. Reactions of Others

2.2.2.8.1. Comments on the Post

Participants believed that there are usually two types of comments under the posts. One group supports and defends the victim, while the other blames her. Accordingly, supportive comments mostly come from women and from younger, educated, and less conservative individuals. These comments often include them sharing similar experiences, offering help, providing information about legal procedures, and expressing emotional support. On the other hand, those who blame the victim are typically men, older, more conservative, and less educated. In these comments, victims are judged for their clothing and lifestyle, and perpetrators are defended. Men sometimes mock the incident or ridicule the victim.

> "Some people say the victim is lying just to get attention, or that the man was just trying to satisfy himself by masturbating, and it had nothing to do with the woman. Others wonder how the woman was dressed, whether she looked at the guy, or whether she gave him any kind of reaction. But there are also people who write supportive and helpful comments, like explaining how she can file a complaint, where she can go, or tagging a lawyer. From what I've seen, the supportive ones are mostly women. There are fewer women who blame the victim, but I think most of the blaming comes from men." *(Participant 27)*

> "Some people, usually men and conservatives, make comments like 'She shouldn't have dressed like that' or 'She must have done something.' Women, on the other hand, are generally more supportive." *(Participant 10)*

> "Men always say, 'Not all men,' but even if it's not every man, it's always a man. So, their comments tend to focus on defending themselves, and they take it personally. It shifts the conversation from harassment to reassuring men like 'Don't worry, you're not one of them.' Meanwhile, women are usually like, 'Yes, I've seen this too. I've experienced it. That guy targeted me too.'" *(Participant 28)*

2.2.2.8.2. Impact of Comments on Women

Participants mentioned feeling sadness, hopelessness, fear, stress, and anger when reading comments that blame the victim. When these comments come from men, especially those defending the perpetrator, participants said it makes them suspect that these men might also be perpetrators, which deepens their fear of men and sense of hopelessness. In addition, seeing how many women shared similar experiences reinforces their perception that harassment is widespread, further amplifying these feelings. This, in turn, led participants to become more cautious and take more precautions in their daily lives. On the other hand, supportive comments foster their feelings of empathy. Participants said these comments make them feel better, as they make them think that if something similar happened to them, people would stand by them. Some also noted that reading such supportive comments helped them to gain new perspectives.

> "These comments affect me a lot because, at the end of the day, the ones harassing are men, and so are the ones making these comments. It makes me realize there are probably many more potential perpetrators out there." *(Participant 7)*

> "Especially when I see those comments that blame the victim, I get even more scared. It makes me realize that people like that exist. If something like this ever happens to me, they'll probably think the same things about me. That really scares me. Supportive comments do make me feel a bit better, but I think the fear still weighs heavier." *(Participant 9)*

> "Most women start sharing their own stories in the comments. That part is really healing. It's such a supportive interaction. Everyone talks about what they went through, how they dealt with it, what they felt at first, and maybe the emotional scars they carry. And all of this gives women strength. Seeing that kind of solidarity in the comments just makes me feel better." *(Participant 29)*

2.2.3. Theme 3: Responses to Stranger Harassment Posts

This theme includes participants' responses during and after encountering other women's social media posts about stranger harassment (see Figure 3).

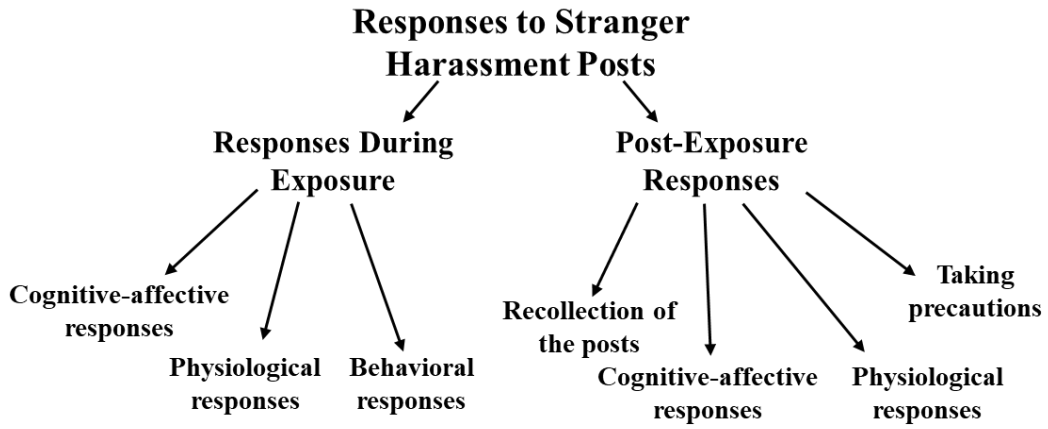

Figure 4. Theme 3: Responses to Stranger Harassment Posts

2.2.3.1. Responses During Exposure

2.2.3.1.1. Cognitive-Affective Responses

Participants believed that repeated exposure to other women's social media posts about their stranger harassment experiences leads them to perceive such incidents as widespread and remember the possibility that they or their loved ones could also be targeted. These posts often evoke feelings of fear, stress, anxiety, hopelessness, and helplessness. The fact that the victim experienced harassment unexpectedly and in the midst of everyday life heightens participants' perception that such incidents could happen to anyone, including themselves. Participants who had experienced similar incidents said that these posts often trigger memories of their own, resulting in distress.

> "It makes me think that this kind of incidents happens all the time. Like it could happen to anyone, anywhere. And people have started to see it as something normal." *(Participant 3)*

> "I used to think this wouldn't happen to me. But now, the more I see these posts, it feels so close. Like it could happen to me anytime, anywhere." *(Participant 4)*

Nearly all participants talked about empathizing with the victim and noted that this empathy intensifies their emotions. Posts that include videos of the victim crying while talking about the incident were described as particularly impactful and further increasing participants' distress. Also, participants mentioned feeling especially disturbed when the victim was a young woman or a child, when it was mentioned in the post that the perpetrator faced no consequences, or when the perpetrator was someone expected to ensure public safety, such as a police officer.

> "In most of the posts I see, it's usually a woman being harassed by a man, so it's much easier for me to empathize with the woman. I put myself in her shoes…It's like I'm experiencing what she went through myself" (*Participant 2)*

> "When I empathize with her, I end up feeling even worse. Because in that moment, I feel a similar fear myself." *(Participant 9)*

> "I honestly think there are very few women who wouldn't be able to empathize with that feeling. Every time I read one of those posts, I feel the same fear, stress, the same discomfort, that sudden heat and sweating. Because it's happened to me too, my own experience immediately comes to mind, and I feel like I'm reliving it all over again by putting myself in her place." *(Participant 28)*

> "What affects me the most isn't necessarily videos of the incident itself, but when a woman comes forward and tells her story in her own words. Hearing it directly from her, that's what really hits me." *(Participant 21)*

They also expressed frustration with the system that allows perpetrators to act with impunity and even have the audacity to deny the harassment afterward. This led participants to feel discomfort, helplessness, distress, a sense of entrapment, anger, and disappointment with society.

> "It's upsetting to see that things have gotten this bad. It doesn't even feel like it's about some subtle difference between men and women anymore. It feels like we've regressed to something really primitive. No one ever faces real consequences. That's what it makes me feel. Even if it's a small

> incident, it ends up being the final straw. It just makes me think, 'How ridiculous is this? What are these people even feeling? Is this really what it's come to? Are we never going to make any progress?' It gives me this kind of constant anxiety." *(Participant 13)*

Some participants talked about how these posts prompted them to reflect on how this system might be changed and how such incidents could be prevented. In contrast, some expressed that repeated exposure to such posts had led them to emotional desensitization.

> "Sometimes they just make me think. Like, when I become a more active member of society in the future, is there something I could actually do about this? Or at least, could I use these posts to inform younger people around me? Maybe I could say, 'Look, these things happen, and here's what we shouldn't do, and if we ever experience it, here's how we can respond.' I wonder if I could have that kind of impact." *(Participant 20)*

> "How do I feel? It might sound strange, but after a while, seeing these kinds of things starts to feel more normal. When they come up so often, people get used to it. Like, 'She was harassed too? And her, too?' I don't think I feel much about it anymore." *(Participant 12)*

2.2.3.1.2. Physiological Responses

Some participants reported experiencing only cognitive and emotional responses, whereas others also described having physical responses when they encountered other women's stranger harassment posts. Accordingly, they experience a general sense of bodily discomfort and distress. They mentioned goosebumps, chills, nausea, stomach cramps, increased heart rate, chest tightness or pain, sweating, trembling, tingling in the hands and legs, and crying.

2.2.3.1.3. Behavioral Responses

The most commonly reported behavioral response was supporting the victim by liking, commenting on, or reposting the post. This aims to help the victim feel less alone, amplify her voice, gather broader societal support, and pressure justice mechanisms to

act. Most participants stated that they engage in these behaviors because they feel there is little else they can do and believe this is the only effective way to show support. Some mentioned that they warn their close ones about the incident so they can take precautions. They also try to learn details of the incident and read the comments. In contrast, some talked about intentionally avoiding reading the comments, as doing so heightens the post's emotional impact. Some participants even said that they deliberately ignore such posts, close the app, or, in some cases, turn off their phones altogether to protect their emotional well-being.

> "I usually try to retweet the post so that it can reach more people. That's the only thing I can do at that moment. I can't physically reach the victim, and I don't know any lawyers or anyone else who could help directly. But I think at least I can help by making sure it spreads more on social media." *(Participant 15)*

> "On Twitter, I try to support those who've been harassed by liking their posts, mentioning them, or following them, to let them know they're not alone. But at the same time, there's this part of me that feels like if I don't see these posts, maybe it's like they're not really happening. So, I feel torn between wanting to support the victim and the desire to ignore these posts." *(Participant 2)*

> "First, I look into the incident and read what's written. I usually check the comments too. But if I see something really bad, I try not to read much because it affects me a lot. I try to scroll past it, but that's not easy either." *(Participant 30)*

> "Honestly, whenever I open any social media app, all the news is terrible. Same with the news channels, everything just feels overwhelmingly bad. And sure, that's the reality of the world, but it instantly crushes your energy and mood. It's really hard to deal with that. I don't want to spend my whole day thinking about these things. So sometimes, even though I know this is the reality, I just decide, 'Not today.' I close the app or turn off the news channel and step away from it all." *(Participant 28)*

> "I immediately check the comments. Seeing the solidarity there makes me feel better. But honestly, I'm scared to even finish watching the video. I worry something worse might have happened, like if there was physical contact or really triggering things that the perpetrator said. So, I usually hesitate to watch the whole video and spend more time reading the comments instead." *(Participant 29)*

2.2.3.2. Post-Exposure Responses

2.2.3.2.1. Recollection of the Posts

The majority of participants said they remember other women's stranger harassment posts when they are in a similar situation, like being in the same kind of place, seeing someone who looks like the perpetrator, or feeling unsafe. Some mentioned that these posts come to their mind when they are unsure whether they are being harassed. Additionally, some participants noted recalling these posts during the day or right before going to sleep, even if nothing specific had happened. They also pointed out that the more often they encounter such posts, the more frequently the incidents described in them come to their mind in their everyday lives.

> "Let's say I am on public transportation and someone starts staring at me. That woman's experience immediately comes to mind. I start thinking, 'Am I being harassed right now or is it just a normal look?'" *(Participant 27)*

> "Seeing those posts makes me fear because the examples are from daily life, like someone catcalling while a woman is just walking down the street. So, I feel more on edge when I'm outside. These incidents come to mind more often after seeing the posts." *(Participant 14)*

> "They usually come to mind right before I go to sleep or when I'm out alone, especially in the evening, if the situation feels similar to what I've seen in those posts. They also come to my mind when I'm in my room by myself." *(Participant 13)*

> "It comes to mind depending on the period of the year. Like, I don't really go out at night in the winter, so it doesn't affect me much. But in the summer, I do go out more at night, and that's when I think about them more often." *(Participant 1)*
>
> "I think about it a lot on nights when I go home late or when I'm the only one on public transportation." *(Participant 2)*
>
> "If an older man is sitting close to me, or if there's a middle-aged man nearby, or if the metro is crowded, those posts come to mind." *(Participant 6)*
>
> "Sometimes it comes to mind during the day after I've seen a post. If I had witnessed something like that in person, I'd probably think about it more, but I don't really witness it much. Still, because we constantly see these posts on social media, they always stay in our minds anyway." *(Participant 20)*

The posts that participants most commonly recall are those involving children or victims who resembled them in some way, incidents that included physical contact, posts containing videos or images, those that described incidents in vivid detail, and those widely shared or quoted by other women who shared having experienced similar incidents.

2.2.3.2.2. Cognitive-Affective Responses

When participants recall the posts later, they think about the possibility of experiencing a similar incident themselves, which leads to feelings of fear and anxiety. Nearly all participants reported experiencing deep sadness and distress upon remembering the posts. They also reported emotions such as a sense of entrapment, low mood, fatigue, frustration at the normalization of such incidents, and anger directed at both the perpetrator and the broader societal system that enables such behavior. The most pronounced emotional responses were empathy and distress. Many said they strongly identify with the victims, imagining what they must have gone through and how they might have felt after the incident. Also, they mentioned thinking about how to protect themselves and reflecting on how to prevent such incidents in the future.

> “I find myself wondering, could something like this happen to me too?... And sometimes I wonder how men who harass women can then go home and, if they have, look their wives or daughters in the face.” *(Participant 5)*

> “I’m mostly scared that something like this might happen to me.” *(Participant 7)*

> "I'm constantly thinking about how I can better protect myself." *(Participant 28)*

> “I feel stressed and bad. It brings my mood down again, and I feel drained and stressed. I feel low for a while. But it’s not as intense as the first time I saw the post. It hits me for a shorter time now, more like just bringing my mood down.” *(Participant 18)*

> “I think about what the victim went through after posting about the incident, what they felt in the days that followed, what steps they took, whether anything got easier for them, or what changed.” *(Participant 2)*

> “I think what I do the most is empathize with her. When I imagine what she has felt, I get really unsettled. And I guess it’s that feeling of helplessness that bothers me the most.” *(Participant 9)*

2.2.3.2.3. Physiological Responses

Along with cognitive-affective responses, some participants reported experiencing physical reactions when recalling the posts, though these were not as intense as their initial responses upon first encountering them. These include increased heart rate and breathing, tingling in the hands, and a tight feeling in the stomach.

2.2.3.2.4. Taking Precautions

Participants described a wide range of precautions they take against stranger harassment. Many reported taking more precautions as they encountered posts about other women's stranger harassment experiences. For some participants, these precautions have become such an ingrained part of their daily lives that some initially

responded "no" when asked whether they take any precautions, only to later list several precautions they routinely take.

> "Now that I think about it, I realize there are actually a lot of precautions I take without even noticing…" *(Participant 30)*

> "For example, I never walk through a dark street late at night. If I'm going somewhere at night, I always let someone know. It's something that's basically wired into my brain at this point." *(Participant 1)*

Some of these precautions were taken proactively, before any direct risk of stranger harassment, while others were taken in the presence of a potential perpetrator. Proactive precautions included carrying self-defense items such as pepper spray, a pocketknife, or heavy objects; dressing more conservatively or in ways intended to appear less attractive; and, when participants wore more revealing clothing, carrying a modest outfit to change into while on route. When going out, they often prefer to be accompanied by friends rather than going alone, avoid certain parts of the city, limit their alcohol intake, and leave social gatherings earlier than they would to avoid returning home late. On their way home, they avoid walking and take public transportation instead, even if it is more expensive or takes longer. They prefer taxis from official stands or ride-hailing apps like Uber, where drivers can be tracked. They inform friends or family of their whereabouts and share the taxi's license plate or live location. If they need to walk, they avoid deserted, dark, or poorly lit streets, frequently check whether someone is following them, remove one earbud while walking so they can hear if someone is approaching, hold their keys in their hand as a weapon, and walk quickly or even run. Some said they just avoid going out at night altogether. They also learn self-defense techniques, such as how to grip keys or throw a punch.

> "I change how I look. I take precautions like doing my makeup or dressing in a way I think people won't find attractive. That way, these things happen a little less often." *(Participant 3)*

> "In the morning, I plan what to wear based on where I'm going and the socio-cultural environment of that place, just to reduce the risk of something happening to me if I return home late… It affects my social life.

I also started carrying pepper spray as a precaution. If I take a taxi late at night, I share my location or send a photo of the license plate to a friend." *(Participant 4)*

"I usually don't go out at night at all. But if I do, I choose the safest routes possible. I don't take a taxi off the street. I go to a taxi stand instead. And I avoid deserted streets, I walk along main roads instead." *(Participant 9)*

"I usually avoid standing in the middle of the bus. I prefer leaning against the back so I can keep an eye on what's in front and around me." *(Participant 28)*

"I usually avoid drinking too much alcohol when I'm out, especially if I'm alone, not to lose myself. While walking, I sometimes take out one of my earbuds and listen to check if there is someone" *(Participant 13)*

"I try to use the strategies I see in those posts. For example, I pack items in my bag to protect myself, like my keys or a glass water bottle. I think about how I could use them, like how to hold my keys or throw a punch. I always think about these kinds of things before going out." *(Participant 14)*

"Wherever I'm headed, I walk fast or even run. I keep my phone in my hand so I can call someone quickly if something happens." *(Participant 19)*

"I don't go to neighborhoods I don't know or that I think are unsafe, unless I'm with someone." *(Participant 20)*

"If there are two possible ways to home and one is more deserted, I always choose the other one, no matter how much longer or more expensive it is." *(Participant 26)*

Consistent with their general perceptions of perpetrators and the perpetrators described in the posts, some said they are especially cautious around men in public spaces and prefer to stay close to other women. They especially avoid middle-aged men.

> "I try not to get close to middle-aged or older men. If there are two empty seats, one next to someone my age and one next to an older man, I'll sit next to the younger one. I probably see the risk of harm as slightly lower with him compared to the older one. These precautions shape my daily life. I constantly integrate them into my routine. The common thread, as I said, is always being cautious around men." *(Participant 28)*

When they sense a potential risk of stranger harassment, participants often call someone they know and speak loudly on the phone to signal to the potential perpetrator that someone is aware of their location. This is intended to create a sense of surveillance and deter the perpetrator. Some also said that if a man stared at them threateningly, they would stare back just as firmly, believing this would unsettle him and make him back off.

> "If someone stares at me, I stare back. Honestly, sometimes I even make a rude hand gesture when someone stares at me." *(Participant 3)*

> "I respond back. Say, I'm on public transport, and someone's staring. I stare right back. Or if a man, older or maybe younger, sits next to me and spreads his legs, I do the same. I spread mine even wider. I guess my main strategy is to act a bit crazy. They don't like that. They see that I notice the harassment, I'm not scared, and I'm not nice about it. So, acting crazy to scare them off has been the most effective for me when I'm harassed like that. I don't know if it's right or wrong, but that's usually how I deal with it." *(Participant 28)*

Participants talked about feeling bad about having to take such precautions, acknowledging that the problem lies not with them but with the perpetrators. Nevertheless, they felt compelled to take these measures for their safety. On the other hand, some participants said that they believe no precaution can prevent harassment. They described feeling helpless and said that, for this reason, they do not take any precautions.

> "I don't want to feel this way, but sometimes I find myself being cautious about what I wear. If I'm outside of school, I try not to wear anything too

short or revealing. I also try not to stay out too late at night. It makes me really sad that I feel the need to do this. Still, I try to take some precautions in my own way. But at the same time, sometimes I just want to wear a skirt when I'm out." *(Participant 5)*

"I try to take precautions because it feels like maybe that way, I can protect myself. But the truth is, I've seen posts of women wearing hijabs or full-body coverings who were still harassed. So, I know it has nothing to do with clothing. Still, I've noticed that I tend to dress more modestly when I'm going somewhere alone or to certain areas." *(Participant 27)*

"I really enjoy walking and spending time by myself, but whenever I'm alone, I worry like 'Will something happen to me?' 'Will someone harass me?' It's awful, especially because I love being on my own, but I end up limiting myself. For example, going for a walk at night just isn't even an option for us." *(Participant 22)*

"I don't take any precautions because I don't think there's anything that can be done to prevent this kind of thing. Sometimes you're just standing there, doing nothing, and you still get harassed. I don't wear revealing clothes, and I see women on social media who are fully covered and still experience this. So, it feels like there's no solution. Even confronting or warning someone doesn't seem effective. I honestly don't think it makes a difference to someone who's already in that mindset. It just feels hopeless to me." *(Participant 6)*

2.2.4. Theme 4: Feminism and Responses to Stranger Harassment Posts

This theme includes participants' feminist identification, their engagement in feminist collective action, and the role of these in shaping their responses to other women's stranger harassment posts (see Figure 4).

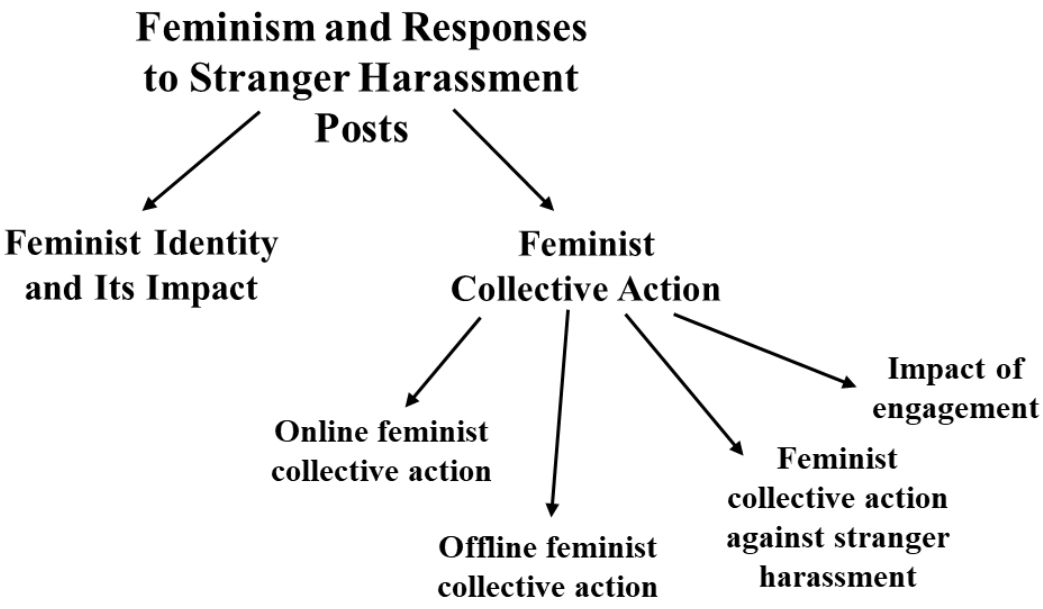

Figure 5. Theme 4: Feminism and Responses to Stranger Harassment Posts

2.2.4.1. Feminist Identity and Its Impact

Of 30 participants, 20 identified as feminists, 5 were unsure, and 5 did not identify as feminists. Among those who identified as feminists, some expressed uncertainty about whether they were doing enough to deserve the label. Similarly, among the undecided participants, some were unsure about the adequacy of their engagement in feminism, while some felt uncomfortable being associated with feminism.

> "I identify as a feminist, but a flawed one. I don't think I fully meet the definition. I still find myself placing the blame on myself. I question my clothing choices and end up changing how I dress. Fear definitely plays a role in that, but it also makes me feel like I'm not truly living up to what being a feminist means." *(Participant 29)*

> "I guess I'm a little bit of a feminist. Because when someone at home says things like 'Well, she shouldn't have done that' about harassment, I can't hold back. I react like, 'What does that have to do with anything?' So yeah, maybe I'm a little bit of a feminist." *(Participant 5)*

Some feminist-identified participants stated that their feminist perspective heightened their awareness of the structural gender inequalities and power relations that position

women as victims and men as perpetrators. They believed that this awareness shapes how they perceive and respond to the incidents described in the posts. Some mentioned that being a feminist made them feel stronger, empowered, and in solidarity with other women when they encountered posts about such incidents. One participant said she felt guilty for not acting, although she calls herself a feminist.

> "Yes, it affects. Someone who isn't a feminist or doesn't identify as one can still feel sad about these things. After all, someone has been harmed, and anyone can empathize with that. But when you are a feminist, you see it from a different perspective, too. For example, I realize that I'm not seen as an equal, even though I believe I should be. I feel like I'm not respected. For example, my boyfriend walks me home to make sure I'm safe. When I'm alone, I'm not respected as an individual. But when I'm with him, I'm treated differently, because he's a man. That difference in how I'm treated, just because he's a man and I'm not, really get to me. " *(Participant 8)*

> "Being a feminist absolutely makes a difference. Someone who isn't an advocate for women's rights won't react the way I do. In fact, they're more likely to blame the woman, shame her, or imply that she somehow deserved it, and we do see that happening. That's why I believe being a feminist is a defining factor in how one responds to these incidents." *(Participant 29)*

> "Being a feminist might make me feel angrier, but I'm not sure whether anger or sadness is stronger for me. On one hand, I feel deeply sad. On the other hand, I feel intense anger when I ask, 'Why are we still going through this?' So, I'm not entirely sure. I think being a feminist affects me, like even when I try to cover up my clothes, I later question myself and ask, 'Why did I do that?' Because it's not about what I wear. Even if I were fully covered, this could still happen to me. I feel scared, but at the same time, I remind myself I don't owe anyone an explanation. No one should feel entitled to harass me because of my clothes. So, feminism supports and empowers me in that sense, but my fear also weighs heavily" *(Participant 27)*

> "It actually makes me feel a bit guilty. I say to myself, 'Okay, you call yourself a feminist, but look at you, just sitting there, get up, do something.' I feel that urge. But most of the time, I don't act on it." *(Participant 9)*

> "I was born a woman. I identify as a woman. And people see me that way. And for many men, that automatically means I'm weak. That makes me feel helpless. But at the same time, being a feminist and thinking this way…there's also a community behind me, especially on Twitter, and I feel that. Like when something happens, a woman lawyer might comment, 'Send me your info, I'll help you.' So, it feels like there's this collective of women behind me. So, it makes me feel both powerless and powerful at the same time." *(Participant 30)*

On the other hand, some feminist-identified participants stated that their responses were not influenced by their feminist identity and that they would react similarly even if the victim were a man. Some argued that empathy, rather than feminism, shaped their reactions. In contrast, others reported that repeated exposure to such posts strengthened their feminist beliefs, reinforced their feminist identity, and increased their motivation to engage in feminist collective action.

> "I think it's not so much about being a feminist, but being a woman is what really makes it intense for me. Since most victims are women, I empathize with them more. I imagine what it would be like if I went through what they did. That's what affects me the most. The feminist aspect comes in a bit later." *(Participant 5)*

> "In the vast majority of posts I see, the victim is usually a woman and the perpetrator is a man. That makes it much easier for me to empathize with the woman. Although I was raised with a patriarchal perspective, I find myself naturally empathizing with other women. Because of that, I feel more distant from men, not in a man-hating way, but I am less inclined to empathize with them." *(Participant 2)*

"I think it does. Because we're more aware of these issues, we know that the victim is not to blame under any circumstances. I think that's one way it affects us. It makes us think about what we can do and encourages us to take action whenever we can." *(Participant 16)*

"The more I come across these posts, the more upset and angrier I feel, and the more they make me want to take action." *(Participant 15)*

2.2.4.2. Feminist Collective Action

2.2.4.2.1. Online Feminist Collective Action

The majority of participants stated that they had only engaged in online feminist collective action, such as liking and reposting others' content, creating posts, engaging in hashtag campaigns, and signing online petitions. Some expressed guilt for engaging only in online actions rather than offline ones. Some participants initially stated that they had never engaged in feminist collective action, but later realized they had after learning that feminist collective action can also take place online.

"I do engage in a small scale, like signing online campaigns or sharing posts. But at the same time, it makes me feel that I should be more active, that this alone isn't enough." *(Participant 20)*

"I haven't really joined many marches or directly supported many women, to be honest. But I do what I can on social media, like sharing posts, leaving supportive comments." *(Participant 27)*

2.2.4.2.2. Offline Feminist Collective Action

A few participants mentioned engaging in offline feminist actions along with online ones. Those included joining protests and March 8th marches, attending workshops and taking part in feminist projects, and preparing presentations and organizing discussions to raise awareness about harassment and educate other women. Some participants who had not engaged in offline feminist actions said that, although they wanted to, they refrained due to concerns about their family's reaction or their personal safety.

> "I think we should be doing more. But what holds me back, especially when it comes to joining marches, is the possibility that something might happen afterward. Because we know there are investigations and such. So, I try to protect myself. It's not that I don't want to engage. I do want to do more, and when I can't, I sometimes feel disappointed." *(Participant 16)*

2.2.4.2.3. Feminist Collective Action Against Stranger Harassment

None of the participants had ever engaged in collective action specifically targeting stranger harassment, nor were they aware of any such action.

2.2.4.2.4. Impact of Engagement

Some of the participants talked about how engaging in feminist collective action helps them recognize that stranger harassment stems from a systemic gendered power imbalance. Engagement in these actions leads them to take greater ownership of the issue, increases their sensitivity toward it, intensifies their anger toward the system, and reinforces their solidarity with the victim. They also expressed that engaging in such movements makes them feel supported, as it helps them realize that if they were to experience a similar incident themselves, others would stand with them. This sense of solidarity makes them feel better and reduces feelings of helplessness.

> "Even if something happens to me, knowing that there are people I don't even know who would stand behind me or take action on my behalf gives me relief." *(Participant 4)*

> "When you engage in those kinds of actions, you realize how united women can be and how many people think like you. Those who've faced similar things tend to come together and support each other. Seeing that helps you internalize the issue more deeply. It helps you better understand what the other person went through. And not being engaged would make me feel worse." *(Participant 13)*

> "I do feel more supported in actions like these. As I mentioned earlier, even verbal harassment can make someone feel so alone and helpless. But in those actions, you see so many women who've experienced the same

thing. You see feminist women supporting each other, trying to lift each other up. Knowing that such a community exists makes me feel stronger and better." *(Participant 30)*

In contrast, other participants said that frequently encountering harassment posts motivates them to engage in feminist collective action in the first place. One participant expressed disappointment that, despite their engagement in these actions, harassment persists.

> "When I empathize with another woman, I feel a strong desire to take action, like joining organizations, to help prevent these things. But then I don't follow through, because I question what I could possibly change. That underlying thought stops me." *(Participant 2)*

> "It might have an effect, but I think the root cause is the mistreatment of women, stranger harassment, and how women are treated in general. If those things didn't exist, collective action wouldn't feel as necessary or powerful. So, I believe it's the injustices that fuel our emotions and drive these collective efforts." *(Participant 19)*

> "I think engagement in collective action feels like a result of these experiences. It feels like something we must do in response to what we've gone through, to create change." *(Participant 22)*

2.3. Discussion

The current study explored women's exposure to and responses to other women's stranger harassment experiences shared on social media, as well as their general perceptions of and direct experiences with stranger harassment in Türkiye. The findings are discussed below in relation to the literature and their implications for Study 2.

2.3.1. General Perceptions and Direct Experiences of Stranger Harassment

The first theme reveals that participants identified a wide range of behaviors as stranger harassment, including subtle forms such as whistling and catcalling. This is

consistent with conceptualizations of stranger harassment in the literature, which includes a broad spectrum of nonverbal, verbal, and physical behaviors, ranging from seemingly minor acts to more severe forms (Fairchild, 2023; Fileborn, 2013; Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023). This is also consistent with previous research indicating that women are more likely than men to identify a wider range of behaviors as sexual harassment since they are often the main targets of these behaviors (Rotundo et al., 2001). It should be noted that the present sample consisted of highly educated women, which may explain their greater awareness of behaviors constituting stranger harassment. Another possible explanation is that only women who are social media users participated in the study. Previous research suggests social media is an important tool for feminist education and raising awareness of gender-based violence (Gede et al., 2025; Mendes et al., 2019; Sills et al., 2016). Thus, social media use and familiarity with online feminist discussions might explain participants' awareness of stranger harassment.

However, some participants were unsure whether staring alone can be considered as stranger harassment. This uncertainty is also reflected in the literature, where less severe forms of stranger harassment are often perceived as normal and trivial due to their ambiguous nature. Despite feeling uncomfortable, women often question whether these actions are serious enough to be labeled harassment or whether they overreacted (Benard & Schlaffer, 1984; Fleming, 2018; Fileborn, 2019; Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023).

The findings suggest that women perceive stranger harassment as a widespread and significant societal problem in Türkiye. They described stranger harassment as a frequent experience in both their own lives and the lives of other women. This is consistent with the literature showing that stranger harassment is a highly prevalent experience among women worldwide (e.g., Bharucha & Khatri, 2018; Gekoski et al., 2017; Lenton et al., 1999; Macmillan et al., 2000). Participants also indicated that these experiences often begin at an early age. This pattern matches the findings of a global study conducted by Cornell University involving more than 16.000 women, which found that stranger harassment often begins around puberty (Cornell University, 2015). Together, these findings suggest that women's perceptions and experiences of stranger harassment in Türkiye closely resemble those reported in other countries and that stranger harassment may reflect similar gendered dynamics worldwide.

Consistent with previous conceptualizations of stranger harassment as sexual terrorism perpetrated by men (Kissling, 1991), participants consistently identified women as the victims and men as the perpetrators of stranger harassment. Further, many attributed men's motivation to a desire to exert power over women rather than to sexual satisfaction. This suggests that participants are aware that stranger harassment is a gendered form of violence rooted in broader power inequalities (Benard & Schlaffer, 1984; Kissling & Kramarae, 1991; Tuerkheimer, 1997; Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020). Yet, their higher awareness might be explained by their higher education level. Women with varying education levels may hold different perceptions, and it would be appropriate for future research to examine more diverse samples.

It is noteworthy that participants frequently described perpetrators not only as men but also as older men. This finding is consistent with Hindes and Fileborn's (2023) qualitative study in Australia, in which cisgender women similarly identified older men as common perpetrators of stranger harassment. This finding may reflect the possibility that middle-aged men engage in stranger harassment more frequently. Alternatively, age differences may create an additional power imbalance, leading women to perceive older perpetrators as more threatening and therefore remember them more. Consistent with this, Fairchild (2010) found that stranger harassment perpetrated by older men elicited greater fear among women. Future research might examine perpetrator characteristics, including age, and how they shape women's perceptions and experiences of stranger harassment.

Interestingly, although previous studies have found that younger women are targeted by stranger harassment more frequently than older women (e.g., Lenton et al., 1999), participants in the current study suggested that the victims do not share any specific characteristics other than being women. This difference may reflect the characteristics of the present sample, as the participants themselves were young women and were therefore more likely to be exposed to the experiences of other young women, both online and offline. Yet future research needs to examine whether the characteristics of stranger harassment targets vary across contexts.

Another noteworthy finding was that older women were also mentioned as perpetrators. However, unlike men, their behaviors were perceived not as sexual in

nature but rather as attempts to impose moral judgments on younger women. Although the literature acknowledges that women can also perpetrate stranger harassment, perpetrators have mostly been conceptualized as men (Hutson & Krueger, 2019; Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023). Yet, this finding is consistent with the broader conceptualization of stranger harassment as a means of exercising power and social control (Benard & Schlaffer, 1984; Hutson & Krueger, 2019; Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023; Fogg-Davis, 2006; Kissling & Kramarae, 1991). While male perpetrators may do so through sexually harassing behaviors, older women might be exercising power by policing younger women's appearance and behavior and asserting moral superiority. Future research can examine whether older women engage in such harassment and, if so, the motivations underlying it.

Regarding societal attitudes and the official stance toward stranger harassment in Türkiye, participants almost unanimously reported a lack of awareness. They believed that stranger harassment is not recognized as a serious form of gender-based violence by either society or authorities. Accordingly, such behaviors are often trivialized, normalized, or ignored in Türkiye, which encourages perpetrators to continue. This is consistent with previous conceptualizations of stranger harassment in which its underestimation makes it “the harm that has no name" (Davis, 1993). In addition, they mentioned that the difficulty of proving stranger harassment contributes to its impunity. This is a recognized issue in both the stranger harassment and legal literature since many incidents occur briefly, leave little evidence, and can easily be denied by perpetrators. Legal sanctions often do not reflect these characteristics of stranger harassment (Fairchild, 2023). This suggests that participants were aware of the limited legal and social recognition of stranger harassment as creating significant barriers for women, making it more difficult to validate their experiences and seek justice. Consistent with this, many participants stated either not reporting the stranger harassment they experienced or receiving an inadequate legal response. Likewise, previous research has shown that women often do not report stranger harassment, believing that authorities will not take them seriously and that perpetrators will not face legal consequences (e.g., Bowman, 1993; Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014; Fileborn, 2019; Lenton et al., 1999). Moreover, some participants suggested that governmental inaction is not merely a lack of awareness but a deliberate unwillingness to prevent stranger harassment. They also believed that the existing measures tend to restrict

women rather than deter perpetrators. This finding is similar to Boutros' (2018) finding that anti-harassment activists in Egypt perceived the government's failure to protect women from sexual violence in public spaces as reflecting not only a lack of capacity but also a lack of willingness to intervene. The author argued that these perceptions reflected the broader socio-political context in the country. A similar interpretation may also be relevant in the Turkish context, where there has been growing concern about the government's conservative stance toward women's rights in recent years, including debates over the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and the abolition of permanent alimony (BIA News Desk, 2026; Gümüş, 2021; ICJ, 2021). Recently, Şahin et al. (2025) found that perceiving women's protective actions as being supported by the government predicted lower willingness among women to engage in these actions. Thus, at least for some women, there may be a lack of trust in the government's commitment to protecting women's rights. Accordingly, participants' perceptions that the government is unwilling to protect women from stranger harassment may reflect this broader socio-political climate in Türkiye.

Taken together, women's general perceptions and direct experiences of stranger harassment suggest that it is a frequent experience in women's lives and is perceived by women as an important social problem in Türkiye. Consistent with the literature, participants conceptualized stranger harassment as a gendered form of violence. They also highlighted important legal, societal, and institutional barriers that may contribute to its persistence. These findings indicate that women's perceptions of stranger harassment in Türkiye largely align with the existing literature and suggest that stranger harassment constitutes an important avenue for future research in the Turkish context.

2.3.2. Exposure to and Responses to Stranger Harassment Posts

The second and third themes explored women's exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via social media and their responses to such exposure. Participants expressed that they frequently encounter other women's stranger harassment experiences on social media, with more frequent social media users experiencing greater exposure. Consistent with previous research highlighting Twitter's significant role in the feminist movement and sexual harassment disclosures

(Cobb & Horeck, 2018; Gede et al., 2025; Greijdanus et al., 2020; Jaffe et al., 2021; Mendes et al., 2019), Twitter was the most frequently mentioned platform for encountering other women's stranger harassment experiences online.

Notably, participants' descriptions and perceptions of stranger harassment incidents shared by other women on social media closely paralleled their general perceptions of stranger harassment. In both, stranger harassment involved a male perpetrator targeting a woman, typically in streets or public transportation, through a wide range of behaviors intended to exert power and dominance over women. Further, they also expressed that frequent exposure to such posts increased their perceptions of the prevalence of stranger harassment, heightened their fear and safety concerns, and led them to take more precautions. This finding is consistent with the arguments of cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1977; Gerbner et al., 1976) and the social amplification of risk framework (Kasperson et al., 1988), suggesting that repeated exposure to other women's stranger harassment posts may shape women's perceptions of stranger harassment, making such incidents seem more widespread and personally relevant. Alternatively, the similarity between participants' general perceptions of stranger harassment and their descriptions of incidents shared by other women may simply reflect the consistency of women's lived experiences across both direct and indirect forms of exposure.

Participants' responses suggest that exposure to other women's stranger harassment posts elicits strong cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological responses that often persist beyond the moment of exposure. Importantly, these responses closely resemble the symptoms of STS (Figley, 1995), including intrusive recollections, stress upon reminders, avoidance, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, anger, hypervigilance, and physiological arousal. They mentioned thinking about the incidents and the women in the posts, even after they had stopped viewing the posts. Many said these posts came to their mind in situations similar to those described, such as being on public transportation, walking alone, or seeing someone resembling the perpetrator. Some also mentioned recalling the posts during the day or before sleep without a specific trigger. Participants stated experiencing fear, anxiety, distress, sadness, helplessness, hopelessness, and anger when remembering the posts. Some participants talked about deliberately avoiding these posts or their comments, closing

the app, or ignoring such posts to protect their mental well-being. They mentioned becoming increasingly vigilant in their daily lives and perceiving public spaces as more dangerous. Some also described physiological reactions while viewing and later recalling these posts, such as increased heart rate, chest tightness, sweating, nausea, stomach cramps, trembling, tingling, goosebumps, chills, and crying. Hence, these findings suggest that women may develop STS through indirect exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences shared on social media.

Empathy and distress were among the most frequently reported emotional responses to other women's stranger harassment posts. Participants consistently talked about empathizing with the victims and imagining themselves in similar situations when they encounter the posts. They also said that they try to support the victims by liking, commenting on, or reposting their posts. However, many felt their efforts were insufficient and that there was little else they could do to help, which heightens their feelings of helplessness, guilt, frustration, distress, and sadness. These findings are consistent with Figley's (1986, 1998) argument that empathizing with traumatized individuals while feeling unable to help them is central to STS development. They also support previous research demonstrating that indirect exposure to traumatic events is associated with empathy (e.g., MacRitchie et al., 2010; Ogińska-Bulik & Bąk, 2025; Schleicher, 2026; Woodward et al., 2005). Accordingly, the unpleasant emotions participants felt from being unable to help victims they empathized with may suggest that empathy is one of the mechanisms through which women's indirect exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences relates to STS.

Participants also frequently mentioned experiencing distress in response to other women's stranger harassment posts. They talked about feelings of fear, anxiety, sadness, anger, helplessness, hopelessness, frustration, and emotional discomfort. Some said that these emotions persist after the exposure. They expressed distress not only about their own safety and that of their loved ones, but also about the current state of Turkish society and the direction Türkiye is heading. These findings are consistent with the literature suggesting that indirect exposure to others' traumatic experiences may evoke distressing emotions (e.g., Hensel, 2015; Holman et al., 2014; Liu & Liu, 2020; Ogińska-Bulik et al., 2022) and suggest that, together with empathy, distress

may be one of the emotional responses through which exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via social media relates to STS.

Participants also frequently mentioned feeling unsafe both during and after encountering other women's stranger harassment posts. Many stated that the more frequently they encountered such posts, the more concerned they became about their own safety and the possibility of experiencing a similar incident. Some mentioned that repeated exposure made these incidents feel more real and led them to perceive themselves as potential victims. They also reported perceiving public spaces as more dangerous as they encountered these posts. They felt unsafe not only in places similar to those described in the posts but also in public spaces more generally.

In line with their safety concerns, participants reported taking a wide range of precautions to protect themselves from stranger harassment. Importantly, when asked about their responses to other women's stranger harassment posts, many spontaneously began to talk about the precautions they take. They also said that the more often they encounter other women's stranger harassment posts, the more precautions they take in daily life. This finding matches previous research showing that women's direct experiences of stranger harassment are associated with their increased precautionary behaviors (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020) and suggests that indirect exposure to stranger harassment may also be linked to increased precautionary behaviors among women. These precautions were similar to those frequently mentioned in the literature (e.g., Farmer & Jordan, 2017; Stanko, 1990; Valentine, 1989) and included behaviors such as carrying items such as pepper spray, avoiding going out alone or at night, choosing safer routes, avoiding deserted or poorly lit streets, sharing their live location or taxi information with friends or family, dressing more conservatively in certain areas, and being constantly vigilant in public spaces. Some participants have integrated these behaviors into their daily lives so thoroughly that they initially claimed they take no precautions. Later, they realized they actually take many. These findings support previous arguments that stranger harassment is a routine part of and shapes women's lives. They socialize to live with it, and the precautions they take become habitual (Fileborn, 2016; Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023; Fleming, 2018; Gardner, 1980; Harris & Miller, 2000). Yet, participants' responses show that these behaviors require time, effort, and resources while restricting their freedom (Kelly, 2012). Interestingly, some

of them mentioned dressing more conservatively or carrying extra clothing to cover themselves as a precaution. In contrast, Mason-Bish and Zempi (2019) found that in the UK, some Muslim women remove their veil (niqab) to avoid stranger harassment. This difference suggests that cultural context may shape women's precautions against stranger harassment and highlights the need for further research into how culture affects women's safety work.

The findings also reflected not only fear of men as potential perpetrators of stranger harassment but also a broader generalization of this fear to men as a social group. Participants almost exclusively identified men as the perpetrators of stranger harassment, both in their general perceptions of stranger harassment and in the posts shared by other women. They believed that men who engage in stranger harassment do so intentionally to harm women and often do not regret their actions. Many participants mentioned that the more they encounter other women's stranger harassment posts, the more cautious they become around men. They talked about being vigilant around men in public spaces, staying close to other women, and avoiding men. Further, participants also mentioned that men frequently write victim-blaming or mocking comments under women's stranger harassment posts. These comments further increase women's fear and hopelessness by creating the perception that many men normalize, justify, or engage in stranger harassment. Consequently, exposure to such comments strengthens participants' belief that stranger harassment is widespread, thereby increasing their sense of vulnerability.

Taken together, these findings suggest that indirect exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via social media may be associated with fear of rape, including heightened safety concerns, precautionary behaviors, and fear of men. This is consistent with Carretta and Szymanski's (2020) findings that women's direct experiences of stranger harassment are associated with increased fear of rape, which in turn predicts greater PTSD symptoms. Therefore, fear of rape components may also link indirect exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via social media with STS.

2.3.3. Impact of Feminism

Participants rarely mentioned factors that protected them from the effects of exposure to other women's stranger harassment posts. Instead, many expressed feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, believing there was little they could do to change the situation and that taking precautions was their only means of protection. However, when asked specifically about feminism, their responses provided preliminary indications that both feminist identity and feminist collective action may serve protective functions. Accordingly, some participants explained that identifying as a feminist helped them recognize stranger harassment as a reflection of broader gender inequality and violence against women rather than as an individual problem. They also reported feeling stronger, more empowered, and supported by the solidarity of other women, particularly when encountering supportive comments under stranger harassment posts. Likewise, some participants stated that engaging in feminist collective action reduced their feelings of helplessness by making them feel supported and less alone, while increasing their confidence that they would receive support if they experienced a similar incident themselves. These findings align with literature suggesting feminist identity and collective action can protect women from negative mental health outcomes of harassment and violence (Ayres et al., 2009; Leaper & Arias, 2011; Leaper et al., 2013; Leavy & Adams, 1986; Murnen & Smolak, 2009; Moradi & Subich, 2002; Watson et al., 2018). They also suggest that feminism may similarly protect them from the negative effects of indirect exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences.

However, responses regarding the role of feminism were mixed. While some participants viewed feminist identity and collective action as protective, others suggested that repeated exposure itself strengthened their feminist identity and motivation to engage in feminist collective action. One possible explanation for this finding is provided by the feminist identity development model of Downing and Roush (1985). According to the model, experiences that increase women's awareness of sexism and gender inequality may facilitate the development of feminist identity. Consistent with this, some participants said that repeated exposure to other women's stranger harassment posts increased their awareness of how widespread such incidents are, strengthened their feminist identity, and motivated them to become more involved

in the women's movement and feminist collective action. The model further proposes that during the Revelation stage, women begin to recognize sexism as a systemic form of oppression, experience emotions such as anger and guilt, and question their previous beliefs and roles (Downing & Roush, 1985). Similarly, many participants reported feeling guilty about not engaging more actively in feminist action, questioned whether they were doing enough to consider themselves feminists, and expressed guilt about relying on precautions for their own safety while not doing enough to support victims of stranger harassment.

These findings are also consistent with SIMCA (van Zomeren et al., 2008), which proposes that perceiving group-based injustice and experiencing group-based emotions, such as anger, motivate collective action. Many participants mentioned feeling anger in response to other women's stranger harassment posts. Some stated that repeated indirect exposure to stranger harassment increased their motivation to engage in feminist collective action. They also described stranger harassment as a widespread problem affecting all women. This suggests that exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via social media may strengthen women's perceptions of group-based injustice, elicit anger, and increase their motivation to engage in feminist collective action.

Notably, none of the participants had engaged in or heard of collective action specifically targeting stranger harassment. This may suggest that stranger harassment has not yet been widely addressed as a distinct form of gender-based violence within feminist activism in Türkiye. Combined with participants' belief that authorities are unwilling to protect women, this may explain why women feel unprotected from stranger harassment and believe that there is little they can do besides taking precautions.

The mixed responses in the current study suggest that feminism's role in the proposed relationship between indirect exposure to stranger harassment and STS may be more complex than originally proposed. Rather than functioning as a protective factor, indirect exposure to stranger harassment may strengthen women's feminist identity and motivate them to engage in feminist collective action. Accordingly, Study 2 examined both possibilities by testing whether feminist identity and feminist collective

action buffer the relationship between indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS, while also examining an alternative model in which indirect exposure predicts feminist identity and feminist collective action.

CHAPTER 3

STUDY 2A: TURKISH ADAPTATION OF STRANGER HARASSMENT INDEX, INDIRECT EXPOSURE TO STRANGER HARASSMENT VIA TWITTER SCALE, FEAR OF RAPE SCALE AND IDENTIFICATION AS A FEMINIST SCALE

The qualitative examination of women's indirect exposure to stranger harassment via other women's social media posts in Study 1 showed that women are frequently exposed to other women's stranger harassment experiences online, mostly on Twitter. The findings further suggested that repeated exposure to these posts may negatively affect women by evoking cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses that were previously linked to direct experiences of stranger harassment. Specifically, participants described heightened safety concerns, fear of men, precautionary behaviors, empathy, and distress in response to these posts. Their responses also included reactions resembling symptoms of STS. Together, these findings provide preliminary support for the idea that not only collective traumas but also interpersonal forms of traumatic experiences may contribute to the development of STS through indirect exposure. Further, the findings of Study 1 suggest that while stranger harassment negatively affects women who directly experience it, its effects may extend beyond direct victims to women who are indirectly exposed to it. In addition, the findings suggested that the role of feminism may be more complex than initially proposed, with participants describing both its potentially protective role and the possibility that indirect exposure itself strengthens feminist identity and feminist collective action engagement. Overall, the findings of Study 1 provided preliminary support for the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter 1 and formed the basis for the quantitative investigation in Study 2.

Prior to the main study, Study 2A was conducted to adapt the measures used in Study 2B into Turkish. The Stranger Harassment Index (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008), the

Fear of Rape Scale (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020), and the Self-Identification as a Feminist Scale (Szymanski, 2004) were adapted using the back-translation method (Del Greco et al., 1987; Van de Vijver & Hambleton, 1996). Additionally, the Exposure to Stranger Harassment via Twitter Scale was developed by modifying the Stranger Harassment Index to assess women's exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences shared on Twitter.

It should be noted that although participants in Study 1 believed that all women are targeted for stranger harassment regardless of their characteristics other than being women, previous research suggests that young women experience stranger harassment more frequently than older women (Lenton et al., 1999). Considering this and to avoid potential confounding effects of age differences, only women aged 18 to 35 years were included in Studies 2A and 2B. Similarly, because both the literature and the findings of Study 1 suggest that Twitter is the main platform where women encounter other women's stranger harassment posts, and to avoid potential confounding effects associated with differences between social media platforms, only Twitter users were included in Studies 2A and 2B.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants

Participants were reached using convenience sampling through the METU-SONA system and social media announcements. Participation was voluntary. Participants from the METU-SONA system (N = 157) participated in exchange for extra points, while those from social media announcements (N = 27) did not receive anything for their participation. A total of 184 participants participated in the study. 27 participants who did not complete the survey, did not provide consent, were not women, were younger than 18 or older than 35, did not use Twitter, did not answer “yes” to the attention-check question assessing honest responding, gave the same response to more than 80% of the questions, or completed the survey in less than 300 seconds were excluded. After that, 157 participants (M_{age} = 22.69, SD_{age} = 3.26) remained. Demographic information for these participants is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographic Information of Participants in Study 2A

Variable	Labels	*f*	%
Occupation	Student	133	84.7
	Employed	21	13.4
	Unemployed	3	1.9
Year of study	Preparatory-year	1	0.6
	First-year	31	19.7
	Second-year	25	15.9
	Third-year	32	20.4
	Fourth-year	40	25.5
	Fifth-year	3	1.9
	Graduate	7	4.5
	Not reported/not a student	18	11.5
Daily time spent on Twitter	None	16	10.2
	Less than 15 minutes	28	17.8
	15–30 minutes	31	19.7
	30 minutes–1 hour	40	25.5
	1–2 hours	24	15.3
	2–3 hours	12	7.6
	3–4 hours	4	2.5
	4–5 hours	0	0
	5–6 hours	2	1.3
	6 hours or more	0	0
Daily time spent on other social media platforms	None	2	1.3
	Less than 15 minutes	5	3.2
	15–30 minutes	14	8.9
	30 minutes–1 hour	26	16.6
	1–2 hours	40	25.5
	2–3 hours	36	22.9
	3–4 hours	23	14.6
	4–5 hours	6	3.8
	5–6 hours	5	3.2
	6 hours or more	0	0
Economic status	1 (Low)	2	1.3
	2	15	9.6
	3	72	45.9
	4	59	37.6
	5	8	5.1
	6 (High)	1	0.6
Political view	1 (Extreme left)	18	11.5
	2	69	43.9
	3	59	37.6
	4	10	6.4
	5	1	0.6
	6 (Extreme right)	0	0

3.1.2. Procedure

The author adapted the Stranger Harassment Index (SHI; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008), the Fear of Rape Scale (FRS; Carretta & Szymanski, 2020), and the Self-Identification as a Feminist Scale (SIF; Szymanski, 2004) into Turkish using the back-translation method (Del Greco et al., 1987; Van de Vijver & Hambleton, 1996). To create the Indirect Exposure to Stranger Harassment via Twitter Scale (IESHT), SHI items were modified to assess how frequently participants encounter other women's tweets describing their experiences of stranger harassment. For the back-translation procedure, items were translated into Turkish. After that, a fluent English speaker holding undergraduate and graduate degrees in Psychology and currently pursuing a PhD in Sociology translated the items back into English. Then, the author compared the original and back-translated versions and finalized the Turkish versions of the scales.

After the back-translation process, translated versions of the scales were sent to seven judges to obtain content validity. Following Rubio and colleagues' (2003) recommendation, four of these were experts on women and gender issues. Two were from the targeted group, which is young women social media users, and they were not psychology majors. The last one was also from the targeted group, but a third-year psychology student. These judges were asked to evaluate the comprehensibility and clarity of the items to obtain content validity. Yusoff (2019)'s recommendations for calculation were followed. Accordingly, all items' I-CVIs for both comprehensibility and clarity were between .86 and 1. All scales' S-CVI/aves (based on both I-CVI and proportion) and S-CVI/UAs for both comprehensibility and clarity were between .89 and 1. According to Lynn (1986), these values should be at least .83 for six to eight experts. Therefore, it is concluded that the Turkish versions of the scales demonstrated adequate content validity.

Ethical permission was obtained from the METU Human Research Ethics Committee, and the study was conducted online via Qualtrics. After providing informed consent, participants completed the Demographic Information Form, Intention to Engage in Feminist Collective Action Scale, SIF, Past Feminist Collective Action Engagement Scale, FR, IESHT, SHI, Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale for Social Media Users,

Emotional Responsiveness Scale, and an attention-check question assessing honest responding, in that order. After completing SHI, participants were provided with the same definition of stranger harassment used in Study 1 and answered the remaining questions based on this definition. At the end of the study, participants were provided with contact information for support services related to different forms of violence in the debriefing form and were thanked for their participation.

3.1.3. Measures

3.1.3.1. Stranger Harassment Index

The original SHI is a 9-item scale, with each item comprising two questions (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). There are harassment behaviors perpetrated by strangers in every item. Participants first rate whether they have ever experienced this behavior, choosing "yes" or "no" (e.g., *"Have you ever experienced catcalls, whistles, or stares from a stranger?"* and "*Have you ever experienced unwanted sexual attention or interaction from a stranger?*"). After that, they rate how often they experience this behavior on a scale of 1 (*once*) to 5 (*every day*). However, for ease of responding, Carretta and Szymanski (2020) converted this two-part format into a single item by including the "*never*" response option. In the current study, the version developed by Carretta and Szymanski (2020) was used to simplify the response process. So, participants responded to items between 0 (*never*) and 5 (*everyday*) (see Appendix H). According to Fairchild and Rudman (2008), there are two factors in the scale: *verbal harassment*, which contains items that deal with behaviors verbally harassing, such as catcalls, and *sexual pressure*, which contains items that deal with behaviors aiming to put pressure on the woman to engage in sexual activities with the harasser, such as unwanted touching. Yet, they mentioned that these factors are highly correlated (r = .54, p < .001). Further, Carretta and Szymanski (2020) reported a unidimensional structure for the scale in their study. The findings of the current study regarding the scale's factor structure are discussed further below. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency in the original study (α = .85; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008) and the current study (α_{verbal} = .87; α_{sexual} = .85; α_{total} = .90).

3.1.3.2. Indirect Exposure to Stranger Harassment via Twitter Scale

To measure the frequency of participants' indirect exposure to other women's experiences of stranger harassment via Twitter, SHI (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008) was modified to assess how frequently participants encounter other women's tweets describing their experiences of stranger harassment. They were asked to rate how frequently they encounter other women's tweets about their stranger harassment experiences (e.g., *"Reading a woman's tweet about her experiencing catcalls, whistles, or stares from a stranger"* and *"Reading a woman's tweet about her experiencing unwanted touching, stroking, or hugging from a stranger"*) between 0 (*never*) and 5 (*everyday*) (see Appendix I). The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency (α = .95)

3.1.3.3. Fear of Rape Scale

The FRS scale was originally developed by Senn and Dzinas (1996), and Carretta and Szymanski (2020) developed a 16-item short version which was used in the current dissertation. Participants are asked to answer the first 13 items on a scale from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*always*), and the last 3 items on a scale from 0 (*very unsafe*) to 4 (*very safe*), which are reverse-coded (see Appendix J). The scale consists of 3 factors: *Taking precautions* refers to engaging in precautionary behaviors (e.g., *"I avoid going out alone at night"* and *"I ask friends to walk me to my car/the subway if it is late at night"*, for the original study α = .91; for the current study α = .88). *Fear of men* refers being afraid of men men (e.g., *"In general, I am suspicious of men"* and *"I am wary of men"*, for the original study α = .90; for the current study α = .75,). *Safety concerns* refers to being worried about personal safety (e.g., *"How safe do you feel being out alone in your neighborhood at night?"* and *"How safe do you feel being out alone in your apartment/house when you are by yourself?"*, for the original study α = .75; for the current study α = .73). The scale has a good overall internal consistency (for the original study α = .95; Carretta & Szymanski, 2020, for the current study α = .88).

3.1.3.4. Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale for Social Media Users

Secondary traumatic stress was measured with the Turkish-adapted version (Balcı-Çelik & Altınışık, 2021) of the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale for Social Media

Users (STSS-SM, Mancini, 2019). There are 17 items in the scale that measure social media-induced STS within seven days (e.g., *"I felt emotionally numb after using social media"* and *"I thought about upsetting things I've seen on social media when I didn't intend to"*) (see Appendix K). For the purposes of the current study, participants were first provided with a definition of stranger harassment and then instructed to answer the items by thinking about times when they had read other women's tweets describing their experiences of stranger harassment. Participants rated each item on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). While Mancini (2019) reported a three-factor structure, the Turkish adapted version showed a better fit with a one-factor structure (Balcı-Çelik & Altınışık, 2021) and was therefore used as a single-factor measure in the current study as well. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency in both the adaptation study (α = .95; Balcı-Çelik & Altınışık, 2021) and the current study (α = .91)

3.1.3.5. Emotional Responsiveness Questionnaire

Participants' empathic responses to other women's stranger harassment tweets were measured using a short Turkish-adapted version (Hajraj, 2019) of the Emotional Responsiveness Questionnaire (Batson, 1991). The scale consists of 14 emotion adjectives reflecting emotional responses in two factors: *empathy* (e.g., *"softhearted"*) and *distress* (e.g., *"alarmed"*). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they experienced these responses when viewing other women's stranger harassment tweets, on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) (see Appendix L). The scale showed good internal consistency in the adaptation study (α = .83; Hajraj, 2019) and excellent in the current study ($\alpha_{empathy}$ = .90, $\alpha_{distress}$ = .94, $\alpha_{overall}$ = .95).

3.1.3.6. Intention to Engage in Feminist Collective Action Scale

Participants' intention to engage in feminist collective action was measured using four items adapted from Uysal et al. (2021). In the original study, the items assessed participants' intention to engage in collective action in support of LGBTQ+ rights. For the purposes of the current study, the items were modified to assess feminist collective action intentions (e.g., *"I would be willing to attend meetings, forums, or discussion groups of a feminist organization"* and "*I would be willing to add my name to the signature page for a collective protest related to the feminist movement by e-mail or*

other ways"). Participants rated items between 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 5 *(strongly agree*) (see Appendix M). The scale demonstrated good internal consistency in both the original study (α = .78; Uysal et al., 2021) and the current study (α = .88).

3.1.3.7. Past Feminist Collective Action Engagement Scale

Participants' past engagement in feminist collective action as an indicator of their actual engagement was measured using the same four-item scale employed to assess intentions to engage in feminist collective action (Uysal et al., 2021). The items were modified to assess participants' engagement in feminist collective action during the past year rather than their future intentions (e.g., *"I attended meetings, forums, or discussion groups of a feminist organization"* and *"I added my name to the signature page for a collective protest related to the feminist movement via e-mail or other means").* Participants rated the items on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*6 or more times*) (see Appendix N). The scale demonstrated good internal consistency in the current study (α = .76).

3.1.3.8. Self-Identification as a Feminist Scale

SIF (Szymanski, 2004) comprises 4 items that measure participants' feminist identification (e.g., *"I consider myself a feminist"* and *"I support the goals of the feminist movement"*). Participants are asked to rate these items on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) (see Appendix O). The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency in both the original study (α = .93; Szymanski, 2004) and the current study (α = .93).

3.1.3.9. Demographic Information Form

Gender, age, occupation, year of study, whether they had a Twitter account, daily time spent on Twitter, daily time spent on other social media platforms, economic status, and political views were measured as demographics (see Appendix G).

3.2. Results

Since all study variables were measured using self-report scales in a single survey, Harman's single-factor test was conducted using IBM SPSS (Version 31.0) to assess

potential common method bias before further analyses (Podsakoff et al., 2003). A principal component analysis (PCA) including all self-report scale items yielded 16 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The first factor accounted for 24.73% of the total variance, suggesting that common method variance was unlikely to have substantially influenced the findings.

3.2.1. Exploratory Factor Analyses

To examine the factor structure of the scales adapted into Turkish, Exploratory Factor Analyses (EFA) were conducted using IBM SPSS (Version 31.0).

3.2.1.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis for Stranger Harassment Index

An EFA was conducted using Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) with Direct Oblimin rotation to examine the Turkish-adapted version of SHI. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .86, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 (36) = 861.05, $p < .001$), indicating that the data were suitable for the analysis.

Based on Kaiser's criterion (eigenvalues > 1), the analysis yielded a two-factor solution, with all items loading on their originally proposed factors and factor loadings ranging from .55 to .89. The two-factor solution explained 60.09% of the total variance (see Table 4). Yet, as in the original study (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008), correlation between the two factors was high ($r = .70$, $p < .001$), suggesting substantial overlap between the factors.

3.2.1.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis for Indirect Exposure to Stranger Harassment via Twitter Scale

An EFA was conducted using PAF with Direct Oblimin rotation to examine the factor structure of IESHT. KMO was .91, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 (36) = 1299.624, $p < .001$), suggesting that the data were appropriate for the analysis.

The analysis yielded a one-factor solution with eigenvalues > 1, which explained 67.75% of the total variance. All items loaded on a single factor, with factor loadings ranging from .74 to .89 (see Table 5).

Table 4. Communalities and Factor Loadings for SHI

Items	Communalities	Factor 1	Factor 2
Catcalls, whistles, or stares from a stranger.	.45	.72	
Unwanted sexual attention or interaction from a stranger.	.63	.78	
Crude and offensive sexual remarks, jokes, or actions from a stranger.	.78	.89	
Sexist remarks or behaviors from a stranger.	.56	.68	
Seductive behavior, remarks, or "come ons" from a stranger.	.59	.55	
Unwanted touching, stroking, or hugging from a stranger.	.51		.58
Subtle pressure or coercion to cooperate sexually from a stranger.	.77		.77
Direct or explicit pressure to cooperate sexually from a stranger.	.63		.81
Direct or forceful fondling or grabbing from a stranger.	.50		.75

Note. All items were presented following the stem "How often do you experience…?" Participants rated each item between 0 (*never*) and 5 (*everyday*). Factor 1 = Verbal Harassment; 2 = Sexual Pressure.

Table 5. Communalities and Factor Loadings for IESHT

Items	Communalities	Factor Loading
Catcalls, whistles, or stares from a stranger.	.68	.83
Unwanted sexual attention or interaction from a stranger.	.72	.85
Crude and offensive sexual remarks, jokes, or actions from a stranger.	.69	.83
Sexist remarks or behaviors from a stranger.	.54	.74
Seductive behavior, remarks, or "come ons" from a stranger.	.63	.79
Unwanted touching, stroking, or hugging from a stranger.	.69	.83
Subtle pressure or coercion to cooperate sexually from a stranger.	.79	.89
Direct or explicit pressure to cooperate sexually from a stranger.	.70	.84
Direct or forceful fondling or grabbing from a stranger.	.61	.78

Note. All items were presented following the stem "How often do you see a woman's tweet describing her experience of…?" Participants rated each item between 0 (*never*) and 5 (*everyday*).

3.2.1.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis for Fear of Rape Scale

An EFA was conducted using PAF with Direct Oblimin rotation to examine the factor structure of the Turkish adaptation of FR. KMO was .85, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 (120) = 1088.68, $p < .001$), indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis.

Table 6. Communalities and Factor Loadings for FRS

Items	Communalities	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
I think twice before going out for a walk late at night.	.65	.81		
When I'm walking out alone at night, I am very cautious.	.57	.77		
If it was dark and I had to walk to my car, I would make sure I was accompanied by someone I trusted.	.53	.70		
If I have to walk outside late at night I take precautions.	.62	.70		
If I have to take the subway/bus alone at night I feel anxious.	.50	.70		
I avoid going out alone at night.	.50	.69		
I ask friends to walk me to my car/the subway if it is late at night.	.35	.58		
If I was driving alone and I had to park my car I would try to park on a well-lit street.	.33	.55		
If I am going out late at night, I avoid certain parts of town.	.26	.50		
In general, I am suspicious of men.	.81		-.90	
I am wary of men.	.63		-.77	
I am afraid of men.	.30		-.37	
I am afraid of being sexually assaulted.	.27		-.37	
How safe do you feel being out alone in your apartment/house when you are by yourself? *	.66			.82
In general, how safe do you feel at night? *	.56			.68
How safe do you feel being out alone in your neighborhood at night? *	.43			.55

Note. Participants rated each item on Factor 1 and Factor 2 between 0 *(never)* and 4 *(always),* and items on Factor 3 between *0 (very unsafe)* and 4 *(very safe)*. Factor 1 = Taking Precautions; Factor 2 = Fear of Men; Factor 3 = Safety Concerns. * = reverse-coded.

The analysis suggested a three-factor solution based on Kaiser's criterion (eigenvalues > 1), explaining 49.76% of the total variance. All items loaded on their originally proposed factors (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020), with factor loadings ranging from .37 to .90 (see Table 6).

3.2.1.4. Exploratory Factor Analysis for Self-Identification as a Feminist Scale

An EFA was conducted using PAF with Direct Oblimin rotation to examine the factor structure of SIF. KMO was .80, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 (6) = 624.327, $p < .001$), which indicated that the data were appropriate for the analysis.

The analysis yielded a one-factor solution with eigenvalue > 1 which explained 80.07% of the total variance. All items loaded on the single factor, with factor loadings ranging from .86 to .93 (see Table 7).

Table 7. Communalities and Factor Loadings for SIF

Items	Communalities	Factor Loading
I consider myself a feminist.	.86	.93
I identify myself as a feminist to other people.	.78	.89
Feminist values and principles are important to me.	.83	.91
I support the goals of the feminist movement.	.73	.86

Note. Participants rated each item between 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 5 (*strongly agree*).

3.2.2. Construct Validity

According to the standards for educational and psychological testing developed by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), construct validity is supported by multiple sources of evidence such as evidence based on test content, response processes, internal structure, relations with other variables, and consequences of testing (AERA et al., 2014). In the current study, evidence based on test content was established through translation, back-translation, and expert evaluations. Evidence based on internal structure was examined through EFA. To further support this, evidence based on relations with other variables was examined by investigating whether the adapted measures demonstrated the expected pattern of associations with theoretically relevant variables. This approach is consistent with the

concept of the nomological network, which proposes that construct validity is supported when a measure exhibits the expected pattern of associations with variables that are theoretically expected to be related to the construct being measured (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955).

Table 8. Bivariate Correlations Between Variables of Study 2A

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Daily time spent on Twitter	3.59	1.64	-											
2. Daily time spent on other social media platforms	5.27	1.62	-.12	-										
3. Indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter	3.38	1.01	.16*	.08	-									
4. Taking precautions	2.97	.71	.02	.23**	.23**	-								
5. Fear of men	2.82	.76	.10	.11	.39**	.48**	-							
6. Safety concerns	1.55	.81	.01	.08	.26**	.34**	.42**	-						
7. Secondary traumatic stress	3.02	.71	.18*	.14	.44**	.41**	.51**	.40**	-					
8. Empathy	5.06	1.41	.18*	.11	.30**	.21**	.31**	.09	.52**	-				
9. Distress	5.69	1.20	.23**	.17*	.46**	.34**	.44**	.23**	.67**	.73**	-			
10. Feminist collective action engagement	2.19	.99	.15	-.04	.26**	-.08	.17*	.03	.22**	.11	.18*	-		
11. Intention to engage in feminist collective action	3.61	.99	.18*	-.04	.11	-.02	.23**	.04	.18*	.18*	.27**	.54**	-	
12. Feminist identity	4.03	.99	.08	.10	.25**	.05	.30**	.07	.17*	.11	.24**	.43**	.63**	-
13. Direct experiences of stranger harassment	.95	.77	.01	.07	.32**	.06	.25**	.22**	.30**	.16*	.23**	.41**	.27**	.34**

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Accordingly, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine associations between the adapted measures and theoretically related variables. Table 8 presents bivariate correlations. Overall, the adapted measures exhibited the expected pattern of relationships. Specifically, feminist identity was positively associated with both intention to engage in feminist collective action ($r = .63$, $p < .001$) and feminist

collective action engagement (r = .43, p < .001). Indirect exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter was positively associated with daily time spent on Twitter (r = .16, p = .046), taking precautions (r = .23, p = .004), fear of men (r = .39, p < .001), safety concerns (r = .26, p < .001), distress (r = .46, p < .001), empathy (r = .30, p < .001) and STS (r = .44, p < .001). Similarly, direct experiences of stranger harassment were positively associated with taking precautions (r = .28, p < .001), fear of men (r = .37, p < .001), and safety concerns (r = .34, p < .001). Overall, these findings provide additional evidence for the construct validity of the adapted measures.

3.3. Discussion

Study 2A aimed to adapt the Stranger Harassment Index (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008), the Fear of Rape Scale (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020), and the Self-Identification as a Feminist Scale (Szymanski, 2004) into Turkish and to examine the psychometric properties of the modified Indirect Exposure to Stranger Harassment via Twitter Scale. The findings provided evidence for content validity, construct validity, and reliability of all four measures, indicating that they are appropriate for use in Study 2B.

The Turkish versions of all adapted scales demonstrated factor structures that were consistent with those of the original measures. While the EFA results supported the original two-factor structure of the SHI, the two factors were highly correlated. This finding is consistent with the original study, which recommended using the total mean score (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008), and with Carretta and Szymanski's (2020) findings supporting a unidimensional structure. Consistent with this, the modified IESHT demonstrated a unidimensional structure in the EFA, providing further support for using the total score for both scales. Nevertheless, confirmatory factor analyses were conducted in Study 2B to further evaluate the factor structures of all adapted scales.

Overall, the findings of Study 2A suggest that the Turkish adaptations of the scales demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties. Therefore, these scales were considered appropriate to use in Study 2B.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY 2B: TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS THAT WOMEN'S FREQUENCY OF INDIRECT EXPOSURE TO STRANGER HARASSMENT VIA TWITTER WILL PREDICT THEIR SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS LEVELS

The qualitative findings of Study 1 provided preliminary support for the theoretical model proposed in Chapter 1. Following the adaptation of the study measures into Turkish in Study 2A, Study 2B quantitatively examined the proposed relationships. Based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 1 and the findings of Study 1, it was hypothesized that the frequency of women's exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter would predict their STS levels. The three components of fear of rape (i.e., safety concerns, fear of men, and taking precautions) and emotional responses (i.e., empathy and distress) were expected to mediate this relationship, whereas feminist identity, feminist collective action engagement, and intention to engage in feminist collective action were expected to moderate it. Consistent with previous collective action research (e.g., Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995; Liss et al., 2004; Miron et al., 2022; Nelson et al., 2008; Szymanski, 2004), past engagement in feminist collective action was used as an indicator of actual engagement. In addition, considering that feminist identity, engagement in feminist collective action, and intention to engage in feminist collective action represent conceptually distinct aspects of feminism, their moderating roles were examined in separate models. This approach allowed the unique moderating effect of each construct to be estimated while avoiding an unnecessarily complex model with multiple simultaneous interaction terms. Further, given the mixed findings regarding the role of feminism in Study 1, an alternative model was tested in which exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter was examined as a predictor of the feminism variables (see Figures 6, 7, and 8 for hypothesized models).

H1. The frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter will directly and positively predict STS.

H2a. The frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter will positively predict taking precautions.

H2b. Taking precautions will negatively predict STS.

H2c. The frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter will indirectly and negatively predict STS through taking precautions.

H3a. The frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter will positively predict fear of men.

H3b. Fear of men will positively predict STS.

H3c. The frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter will indirectly and positively predict STS through fear of men.

H4a: The frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter will positively predict safety concerns.

H4b: Safety concerns will positively predict STS.

H4c: The frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter will indirectly and positively predict STS through safety concerns.

H5a. The frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter will positively predict empathy.

H5b. Empathy will positively predict STS.

H5c. The frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter will indirectly and positively predict STS through empathy.

H6a. The frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter will positively predict distress.

H6b. Distress will positively predict STS.

H6c. The frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter will indirectly and positively predict STS through distress.

H7: Feminist collective action engagement will moderate the direct relationship between the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS.

H8: Intention to engage in feminist collective action will moderate the direct relationship between the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS.

H9: Feminist identity will moderate the direct relationship between the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS.

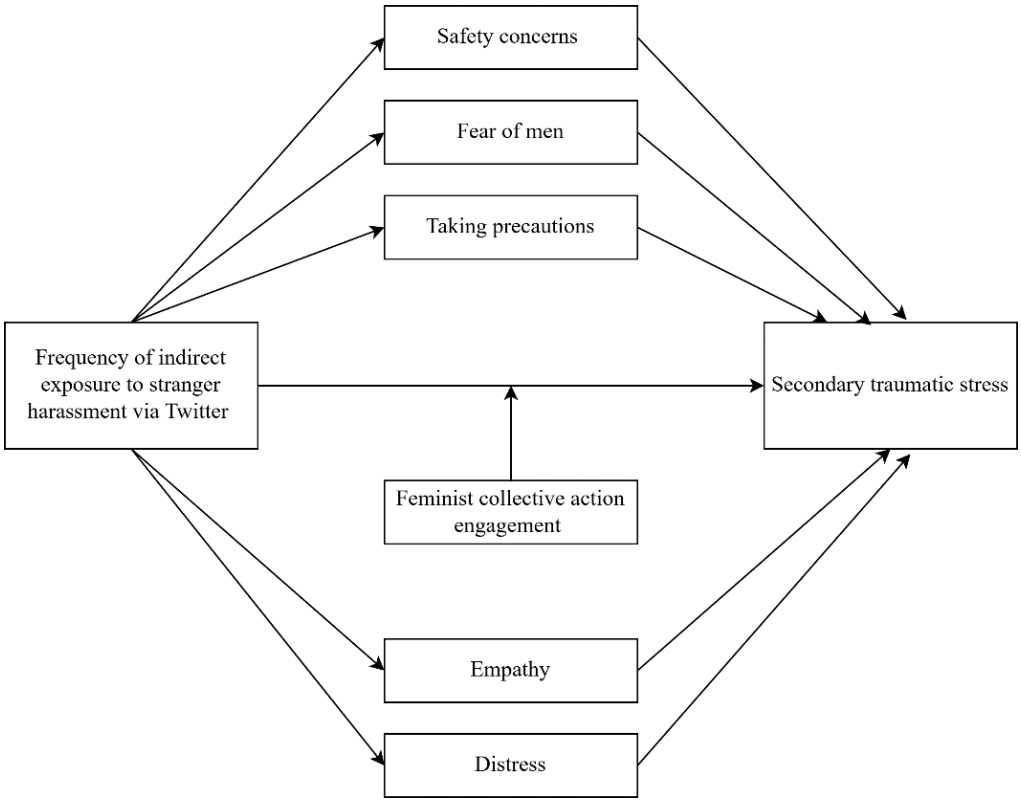

Figure 6. Hypothesized Model 1

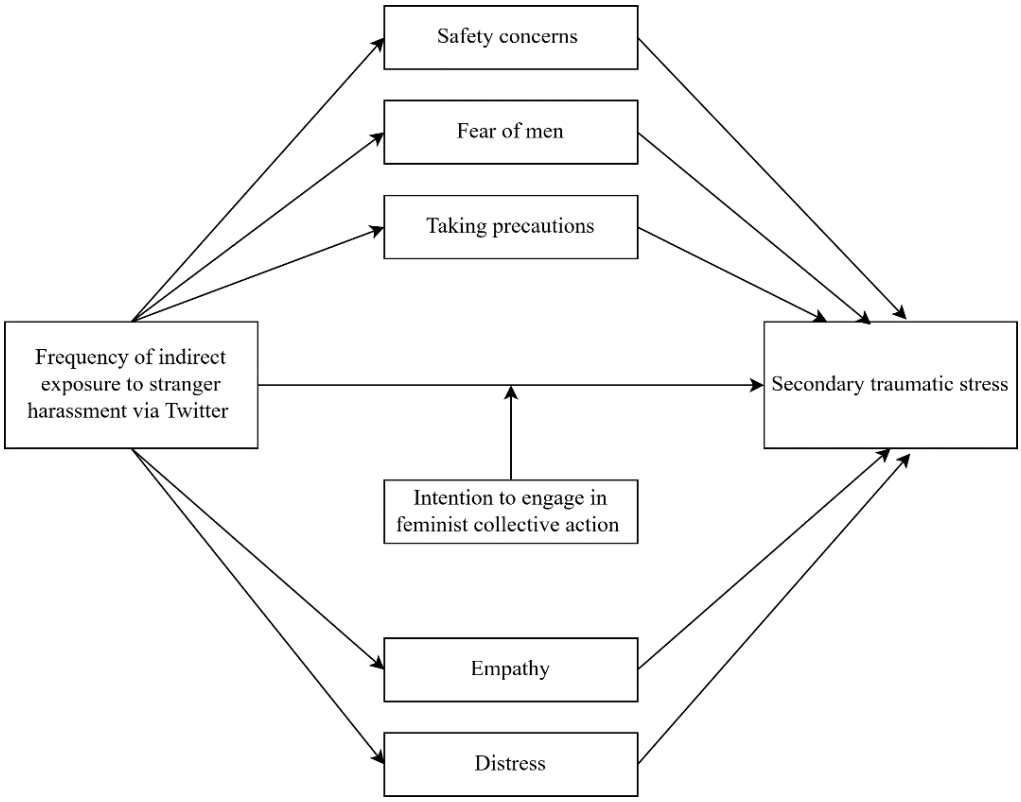

Figure 7. Hypothesized Model 2

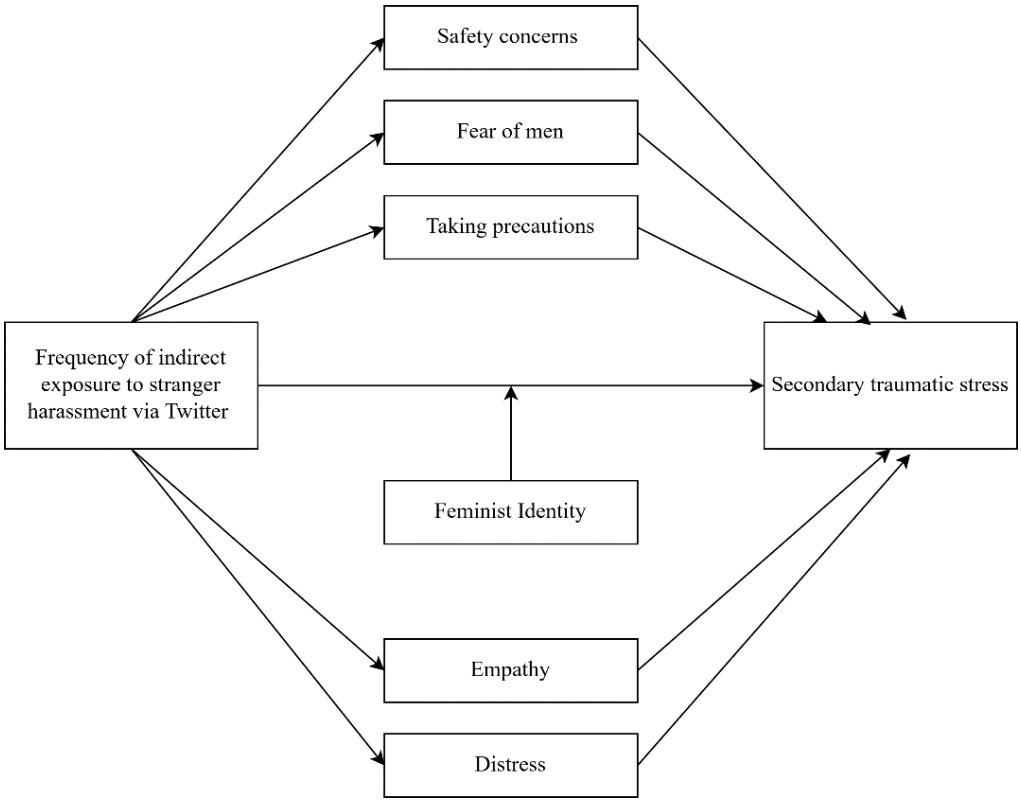

Figure 8. Hypothesized Model 3

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants

Participants were reached using convenience sampling through the METU-SONA system and social media announcements. Participation was voluntary. Participants from the METU-SONA system (N = 505) participated in exchange for extra points, while those from social media announcements (N = 132) did not receive anything for their participation. A total of 637 participants participated in the study. 134 participants who did not complete the survey, did not provide consent, were not women, were younger than 18, did not use Twitter, did not answer "yes" to the attention-check question assessing honest responding, gave the same response to more than 80% of the questions, or completed the survey in less than 300 seconds were excluded. After that, 503 participants (M_{age} = 21.81, SD_{age} = 2.12) remained. Demographic information for these participants is presented in Table 9.

4.1.2. Procedure

Ethical permission was obtained from the METU Human Research Ethics Committee, and the study was conducted online via Qualtrics. After providing informed consent, participants completed the Demographic Information Form, Intention to Engage in Feminist Collective Action Scale, SIF, Past Feminist Collective Action Engagement Scale, FR, IESHT, SHI, Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale for Social Media Users, Emotional Responsiveness Scale, and an attention-check question assessing honest responding, in that order. After completing SHI, participants were provided with the same definition of stranger harassment used in Study 1 and answered the remaining questions based on this definition. At the end of the study, they were provided with contact information for support services related to different forms of violence in the debriefing form and were thanked for their participation.

Table 9. Demographic Information of Participants in Study 2B

Variable	Labels	*f*	%
Occupation	Student	459	91.3
	Employed	31	6.2
	Unemployed	10	2.0
	Not reported	3	0.6
Year of study	Preparatory-year	3	0.6
	First-year	109	21.7
	Second-year	112	22.3
	Third-year	89	17.7
	Fourth-year	157	31.2
	Graduate	7	1.4
	Not reported/not a student	26	5.2
Daily time spent on Twitter	None	20	4.0
	Less than 15 minutes	81	16.1
	15–30 minutes	105	20.9
	30 minutes–1 hour	124	24.7
	1–2 hours	100	19.9
	2–3 hours	51	10.1
	3–4 hours	17	3.4
	4–5 hours	4	0.8
	5–6 hours	1	0.2
	6 hours or more	0	0
Daily time spent on other social media platforms	None	4	0.8
	Less than 15 minutes	19	3.8
	15–30 minutes	31	6.2
	30 minutes–1 hour	89	17.7
	1–2 hours	159	31.6
	2–3 hours	123	24.5
	3–4 hours	54	10.7
	4–5 hours	17	3.4
	5–6 hours	4	0.8
	6 hours or more	3	0.6
Economic status	1 (Low)	7	1.4
	2	68	13.5
	3	190	37.8
	4	216	42.9
	5	22	4.4
	6 (High)	0	0
Political view	1 (Extreme left)	33	6.6
	2	227	45.1
	3	190	37.8
	4	46	9.1
	5	7	1.4
	6 (Extreme right)	0	0

4.1.3. Measures

4.1.3.1. Stranger Harassment Index

SHI was used to measure participants' direct experiences of stranger harassment. The scale consists of nine items (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008) and was adapted into Turkish in Study 2A. Each item describes a form of stranger harassment (*e.g., "How often do you experience catcalls, whistles, or stares from a stranger?"* and *"How often do you experience unwanted sexual attention or interaction from a stranger?"*) and participants are asked to rate how frequently they have experienced each behavior on a scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 5 (*every day*) (see Appendix H). In the original development study, the scale was found to consist of two highly correlated factors: verbal harassment and sexual pressure (r = .54, p < .001; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). Similarly, EFA conducted in the current study revealed the same two highly correlated factors (r = .70, p < .001). The *verbal harassment* factor includes items referring to verbally harassing behaviors, such as catcalls, while the *sexual pressure* factor includes items referring to behaviors intended to pressure women into unwanted sexual interactions, such as unwanted touching. Further, Carretta and Szymanski (2020) found a unidimensional structure for the scale in their study. Given the high correlation between these two factors in the current study (r = .84, p < .001) and in Study 2A (r = .70, p < .001), the total mean score was used in the further analyses. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency in both the original study (α = .85; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008) and the current study (α = .87).

4.1.3.2. Indirect Exposure to Stranger Harassment via Twitter Scale

To measure the frequency of participants' exposure to other women's experiences of stranger harassment via Twitter, the SHI (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008) was modified to assess how frequently participants read other women's tweets about their experiences of stranger harassment. Participants were asked to rate how frequently they encounter other women's tweets about their stranger harassment experiences (e.g., *"Reading a woman's tweet about her experiencing catcalls, whistles, or stares from a stranger"* and *"Reading a woman's tweet about her experiencing unwanted touching, stroking, or hugging from a stranger"*) between 0 (*never*) and 5 (*everyday*) (see Appendix I). While EFA showed a unidimensional

structure for the scale, CFA showed a better model fit with a two-factor structure, which is the same structure as SHI, consisting of verbal harassment and sexual pressure factors. Given the high correlation between these two factors in the current study (r = .84, p < .001), the total mean score was used in subsequent analyses. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency in the current study (α = .94).

4.1.3.3. Fear of Rape Scale

To measure participants' fear of rape, the 16-item short version of FRS (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020; Senn & Dzinas, 1996) was adapted to Turkish in Study 2A and used in the current study. Participants are asked to answer the first 13 items on a scale from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*always*), and the last 3 items on a scale from 0 (*very unsafe*) to 4 (*very safe*), which are reverse-coded (see Appendix J). The scale has 3 factors: *Taking precautions* refers to engaging in precautionary behaviors (e.g., *"I avoid going out alone at night"* and *"I ask friends to walk me to my car/the subway if it is late at night",* for the original study α = .91; for the current study α = .88). *Fear of men* refers being afraid of men (e.g., *"In general, I am suspicious of men"* and *"I am wary of men"*, for the original study α = .90; for the current study α = .78). *Safety concerns* refers to being worried about personal safety (e.g., *"How safe do you feel being out alone in your neighborhood at night?"* and *"How safe do you feel being out alone in your apartment/house when you are by yourself?",* for the original study α = .75; for the current study α = .70). The scale demonstrated good internal consistency in both the original study (α = .95; Carretta & Szymanski, 2020) and the current study (α = .87).

4.1.3.4. Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale for Social Media Users

Secondary traumatic stress was measured with the Turkish-adapted version (Balcı-Çelik & Altınışık, 2021) of the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale for Social Media Users (STSS-SM, Mancini, 2019). There are 17 items in the scale that measure social media-induced STS within seven days (e.g., *"I felt emotionally numb after using social media"* and *"I thought about upsetting things I've seen on social media when I didn't intend to"*) (see Appendix K). For the purposes of the current study, participants were first provided with a definition of stranger harassment and then instructed to answer the items by thinking about times when they had read other women's tweets describing

their experiences of stranger harassment. Participants rated each item on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). While Mancini (2019) reported a three-factor structure, the Turkish adapted version showed a better fit with a one-factor structure (Balcı-Çelik & Altınışık, 2021) and was therefore used as a single-factor measure in the current study as well. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency in both the adaptation study (α = .95; Balcı-Çelik & Altınışık, 2021) and the current study (α = .89)

4.1.3.5. Emotional Responsiveness Questionnaire

Participants' empathic responses to the stranger harassment tweets were measured using a short Turkish-adapted version (Hajraj, 2019) of the Emotional Responsiveness Questionnaire (Batson, 1991). The scale consists of 14 adjectives reflecting emotional responses in two factors: *empathy* (e.g., *"softhearted"*) and *distress* (e.g., *"alarmed"*). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they experienced these responses when viewing other women's tweets about their experiences of stranger harassment, on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) (see Appendix L). The scale showed good internal consistency in both the adaptation study (α = .83; Hajraj, 2019) and the current study ($\alpha_{empathy}$ = .86, $\alpha_{distress}$ = .89, $\alpha_{overall}$ = .89).

4.1.3.6. Intention to Engage in Feminist Collective Action Scale

Participants' intention to engage in feminist collective action was measured using four items adapted from Uysal et al. (2021). In the original study, the items assessed participants' intention to engage in collective action in support of LGBTQ+ rights. For the purposes of the current study, the items were adapted to assess feminist collective action intentions (e.g., *"I would be willing to attend meetings, forums, or discussion groups of a feminist organization"* and "*I would be willing to add my name to the signature page for a collective protest related to the feminist movement by e-mail or other ways"*). Participants rated items between 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 5 *(strongly agree*) (see Appendix M). The scale demonstrated good internal consistency in both the original study (α = .78; Uysal et al., 2021) and the current study (α = .85).

4.1.3.7. Past Feminist Collective Action Engagement Scale

Participants' past engagement in feminist collective action as an indicator of their actual engagement was measured using the same four-item scale employed to assess intentions to engage in feminist collective action (Uysal et al., 2021). The items were modified to assess participants' engagement in feminist collective action during the past year rather than their future intentions (e.g., *"I attended meetings, forums, or discussion groups of a feminist organization"* and *"I added my name to the signature page for a collective protest related to the feminist movement via e-mail or other means").* Participants rated the items on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*6 or more times*) (see Appendix N). The scale demonstrated good internal consistency in the current study (α = .78).

4.1.3.8. Self-Identification as a Feminist Scale

Participants' identification as a feminist was measured using the SIF (Szymanski, 2004), which was adapted into Turkish in Study 2A. The scale includes 4 items that measure self-identification as a feminist (e.g., *"I consider myself a feminist"* and *"I support the goals of the feminist movement"*). Participants are asked to rate these items between 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 5 (*strongly agree*) (see Appendix O). The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency in both the original study (α = .93; Szymanski, 2004) and the current study (α = .92).

4.1.3.9. Demographic Information Form

Gender, age, occupation, year of study, whether they had a Twitter account, daily time spent on Twitter, daily time spent on other social media platforms, economic status, and political view were measured as demographics (see Appendix G).

4.2. Results

Given that all study variables were measured using self-report scales in a single survey, Harman's single-factor test was conducted using IBM SPSS (Version 31.0) to assess potential common method bias before further analyses (Podsakoff et al., 2003). An unrotated PCA including all self-report scale items yielded 16 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The first factor accounted for 20.08% of the total variance, suggesting

that common method variance was unlikely to have substantially influenced the findings.

4.2.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using Jamovi (Version 2.4.8) to validate the factor structures of the scales adapted into Turkish in Study 2A.

The measurement model included eight correlated latent factors: verbal harassment and sexual pressure for the SHI; verbal harassment and sexual pressure for the IESHT; safety concerns, taking precautions, and fear of men for the FRS; and self-identification as a feminist for the SIF. The model was estimated using diagonally weighted least squares (DWLS) with robust standard errors.

The hypothesized eight-factor measurement model showed a good fit with the data, χ^2 (637) = 1583, $p < .001$, CFI = .97, TLI = .97, RMSEA = .05, 95% CI [.05, .06], and SRMR = .06. All items loaded significantly on their respective factors (all ps < .001; see Figure 9 for standardized factor loadings). These findings supported the proposed factor structure of the measures and indicated that the eight theoretically specified constructs were adequately represented by their respective items.

However, the verbal harassment and sexual pressure factors were strongly correlated for both the IESHT (r = .85) and the SHI (r = .83). This is consistent with previous research suggesting substantial overlap between the verbal and sexual components of stranger harassment and recommending the use of an overall score (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Carretta & Szymanski, 2020). Therefore, total mean scores were used for the IESHT and SHI in the subsequent analyses. The original three-factor scoring of the FRS and the unidimensional scoring of the SIF were retained.

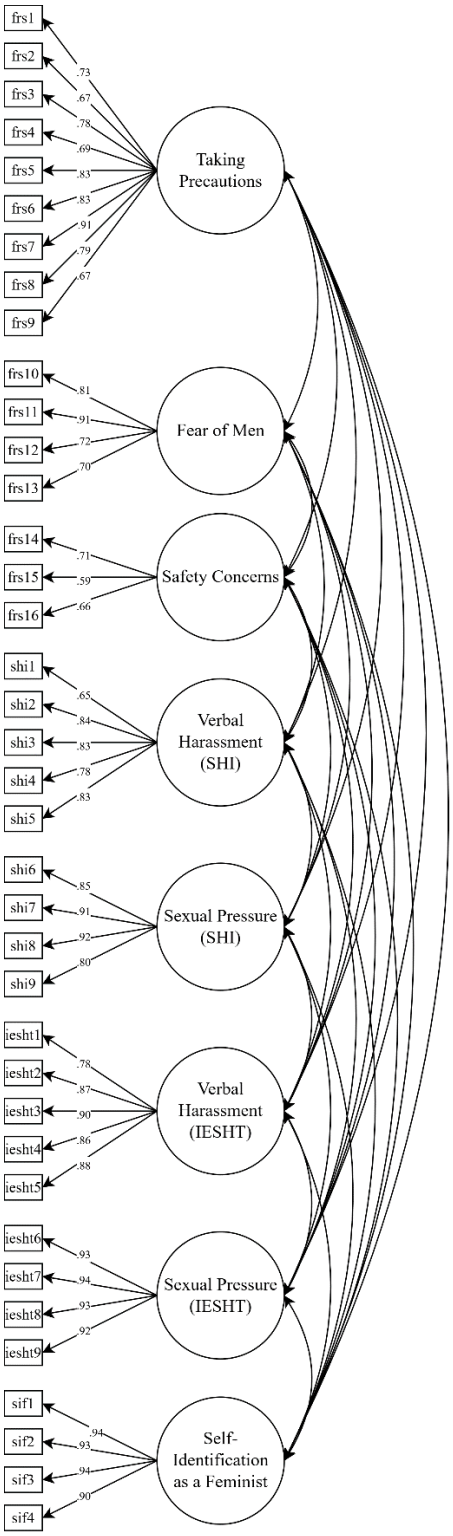

Figure 9. Standardized Factor Loadings for the CFA

Note. All latent factors were allowed to correlate. Latent factor correlations are omitted from the figure for clarity and are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Latent Factor Correlations in the CFA

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Taking precautions	-							
2. Fear of men	.50***	-						
3. Safety concerns	.44***	.37***	-					
4. Verbal harassment (SHI)	.14**	.26***	.28***	-				
5. Sexual harassment (SHI)	−.02	.21***	.19**	.83***	-			
6. Verbal harassment (IESHT)	.28***	.27***	.18***	.47***	.28***	-		
7. Sexual harassment (IESHT)	.24***	.32***	.26***	.44***	.28***	.85***	-	
8. Self-identification as a feminist	.20***	.31***	.18**	.33***	.22***	.27***	.24***	-

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

4.2.2. Main Analyses

4.2.2.1. Analysis Strategy

All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS (Version 31.0). Prior to the main analyses, data screening was performed, and the assumptions of linear regression were examined. The primary hypotheses were tested using conditional process analyses with PROCESS Model 5. Subsequently, alternative models were tested using PROCESS Model 80.

4.2.2.2. Data Screening and Descriptive Findings

Prior to the main analyses, the assumptions of regression were checked following the recommendations of Field (2024), Hayes (2022), and Kline (2015). Linearity of the relationships between the predictors and the outcome was examined by inspecting scatterplots of standardized residuals against predicted values for each regression equation, and the assumption of linearity was met for all predictors. Similarly, homoscedasticity was assessed using these plots, and the residuals showed constant variance for all three models. Normality of residuals was examined using standardized residuals (ZRESID), which indicated an approximately normal distribution across all three models. No influential cases were detected in any of the models (all Cook's

distance values < .053). Residuals were independent in all three models, as indicated by Durbin-Watson values ranging between 2.11 and 2.13. Multicollinearity was assessed by examining correlations among variables, variance inflation factors (VIF), and tolerance values. It was concluded that the assumption was met for all three models (maximum $|r|$ = .56, maximum VIF = 1.47, minimum tolerance = .68). Considering that all regression assumptions were met, the main analyses were conducted without excluding any cases.

According to the descriptive findings, participants frequently experienced both direct and indirect stranger harassment. Regarding direct experiences, catcalling, whistling, and unwanted staring were the most frequently reported behaviors. Overall, 65.5% of participants reported experiencing these behaviors at least once a month, including 38.3% two to four times a month or more frequently, 10.7% every few days, and 1.2% every day. Sexist remarks or behaviors were also common. Overall, 56.8% of participants reported experiencing these behaviors at least once a month, including 33.9% two to four times a month or more frequently, 8.2% every few days, and 3.4% every day. Other forms of stranger harassment were less common but still frequently reported. Overall, 28.9% of participants experienced unwanted sexual attention or interaction, 26.3% crude and offensive sexual remarks, jokes, or actions, and 17.5% seductive behavior, remarks, or "come-ons" from a stranger at least once a month. More severe forms of stranger harassment, including unwanted touching, stroking, or hugging, subtle pressure or coercion to cooperate sexually, direct or explicit pressure to cooperate sexually, and direct or forceful fondling or grabbing, were experienced at least once a month by 3.0% to 7.2% of participants.

Regarding indirect experiences, participants reported frequent exposure to other women's tweets about their stranger harassment experiences across all forms of stranger harassment. Importantly, even tweets about severe forms of stranger harassment were frequently reported. For example, 90% of participants reported encountering tweets about unwanted touching, stroking, or hugging at least once a month, including 72.5% two to four times a month or more frequently, 30% every few days, and 12.1% every day. Similarly, 92% reported encountering tweets about subtle pressure or coercion to engage in sexual activity at least once a month, including 75.7% two to four times a month or more frequently, 32.2% every few days, and 15.3%

every day. Further, 88% reported encountering tweets about direct or explicit pressure to engage in sexual activity at least once a month, including 70.7% two to four times a month or more frequently, 29.2% every few days, and 14.9% every day. Lastly, 85.2% reported encountering tweets about direct or forceful fondling or grabbing at least once a month, including 62.5% two to four times a month or more frequently, 25.6% every few days, and 8.5% every day. Encountering tweets about less severe forms of stranger harassment was also common. Tweets about crude and offensive sexual remarks, jokes, or actions were the most frequently reported type of indirect exposure. Overall, 97.7% of participants reported encountering these tweets at least once a month, including 92.7% two to four times a month or more frequently, 37% every few days, and 38.8% every day. In addition, 98.8% of participants reported encountering tweets about sexist remarks or behaviors at least once a month, including 95.2% two to four times a month or more frequently, 34% every few days, and 49.9% every day. 97.3% of participants reported encountering tweets about unwanted sexual attention or interaction at least once a month, including 89.9% two to four times a month or more frequently, 44.9% every few days, and 21.5% every day. Similarly, 96.6% reported encountering tweets about catcalling, whistling, or unwanted staring at least once a month, including 89.2% two to four times a month or more frequently, 42.5% every few days, and 21.3% every day. Finally, 93.4% reported encountering tweets about seductive behaviors, remarks, or "come-ons" at least once a month, including 81.9% two to four times a month or more frequently, 40% every few days, and 15.9% every day.

Participants also reported significant safety concerns, precautionary behavior, and fear of men. For instance, 55.9% of them reported not feeling safe at night at least sometimes, including 3.8% who never feel safe. Similarly, 72.2% of the participants reported not feeling safe when they are alone in their neighborhood, including 9.9% who never feel safe. Further, 99.4% of participants reported at least sometimes avoiding certain areas of the city when going out late at night, including 80.3% always doing so. 97.2% of participants reported being very cautious at least sometimes when walking alone at night, including 62.4% who were always very cautious. 91.4% reported at least sometimes feeling anxious when using public transportation alone at night, including 51.5% who reported always feeling anxious. Moreover, 82.7% reported fear of being sexually assaulted at least sometimes, with 48.5% reporting that

they always fear being sexually assaulted. 82.7% of participants reported being cautious around men at least sometimes, including 44.1% who reported always being cautious. Similarly, 71.8% reported being suspicious of men at least sometimes, with 40% reporting always being suspicious. Lastly, 32.2% reported being afraid of men at least sometimes, including 9.1% always afraid of men.

4.2.2.3. Mediation Analyses with Moderated Direct Effects

Prior to the main analyses, bivariate correlations among the study variables were examined. As expected, frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was positively and significantly correlated with STS ($r = .41$, $p < .001$). It was also positively and significantly correlated with taking precautions ($r = .25$, $p < .001$), fear of men ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), safety concerns ($r = .19$, $p < .001$), empathy ($r = .14$, $p = .002$), distress ($r = .27$, $p < .001$), feminist collective action engagement ($r = .30$, $p < .001$), intention to engage in feminist collective action ($r = .30$, $p < .001$), and feminist identity ($r = .25$, $p < .001$).

Table 11. Bivariate Correlations Between Variables of Study 2B

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter	3.51	.94	-									
2. Taking precautions	3.04	.68	.25***	-								
3. Fear of men	2.88	.73	.28***	.43***	-							
4. Safety concerns	1.61	.76	.19***	.33***	.29***	-						
5. Secondary traumatic stress	3.15	.68	.41**	.32***	.34***	.30***	-					
6. Empathy	5.04	1.31	.14**	.23***	.14**	.02	.31***	-				
7. Distress	5.90	.88	.27***	.34***	.24***	.17***	.56***	.46***	-			
8. Feminist collective action engagement	2.17	.98	.30***	-.07	.14**	.06	.19***	.06	.05	-		
9. Intention to engage in feminist collective action	3.65	.91	.30***	.05	.21***	.14**	.27***	.15**	.20***	.60***	-	
10. Feminist identity	4.06	.96	.25***	.16***	.27***	.14**	.21***	.14**	.19***	.38***	.53***	-
11. Direct experiences of stranger harassment	.93	.67	.39***	.11*	.24***	.21***	.36***	.09*	.11*	.42***	.29***	.25***

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

STS was positively and significantly correlated with taking precautions ($r = .32$, $p < .001$), fear of men ($r = .34$, $p < .001$), safety concerns ($r = .30$, $p < .001$), empathy ($r = .31$, $p < .001$), distress ($r = .56$, $p < .001$), feminist collective action engagement ($r = .19$, $p < .001$), intention to engage in feminist collective action ($r = .27$, $p < .001$), and feminist identity ($r = .21$, $p < .001$). All bivariate correlations are presented in Table 10.

4.2.2.3.1. Mediation Analysis with a Moderated Direct Effect for Model 1

Model 1 was tested using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 5) with 5.000 bootstrap resamples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. In the model, frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was added as the predictor; STS as the outcome; safety concerns, fear of men, taking precautions, empathy, and distress as mediators; feminist collective action engagement as the moderator; and direct experiences of stranger harassment as the control variable. The model explained 46.26% of the variance in STS ($R^2 = .4626$, $F(9, 493) = 50.86$, $p < .001$). Supporting H2a, H3a, H4a, H5a and H6a, frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter significantly and positively predicted all proposed mediators including safety concerns ($b = .10$, $SE = .04$, $t = 2.32$, $p = .021$, 95% CI [.01, .18], fear of men ($b = .17$, $SE = .04$, $t = 4.47$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.09, .24]), taking precautions ($b = .18$, $SE = .04$, $t = 4.74$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.10, .25]), empathy ($b = .17$, $SE = .07$, $t = 2.38$, $p = .018$, 95% CI [.03, .30]) and distress ($b = .24$, $SE = .05$, $t = 4.61$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.14, .35]). In line with H3b, H4b and H6b, safety concerns ($b = .10$, $SE = .03$, $t = 3.28$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [.04, .16]), fear of men ($b = .09$, SE = .03, $t = 2.54$, $p = .012$, 95% CI [.02, .16]), and distress ($b = .32$, $SE = .04$, $t = 8.83$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.25, .39]) were significant and positive predictors of STS. Contrary to H2b and H5b, taking precautions ($b = .03$, $SE = .04$, $p = .46$, $t = .74$, 95% CI [-.05, .11]) and empathy ($b = .03$, $SE = .02$, $p = .17$, $t = 1.38$, 95% CI [-.01, .07]) did not significantly predict STS. Supporting H1, the direct effect of frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter on STS was significant and positive ($b = .11$, $SE = .03$, $t = 4.08$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.06, .17]). The total indirect effect of frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter on STS was significant and positive ($b = .11$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI [.07, .15]. In line with H3c, H4c, Hand H6c, frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter predicted STS through safety concerns (b

= .01, *SE* = .01, 95% CI [.00, .02]), fear of men (*b* = .01, *SE* = .01, 95% CI [.00, .03]), and distress (*b* = .08, *SE* = .02, 95% CI [.04, .11]). Contrary to H2c and H5c, taking precautions (*b* = .01, *SE* = .01, 95% CI [−.01, .02]) and empathy (b = .00, *SE* = .00, 95% CI [−.00, .02]) did not mediate the relationship between frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS.

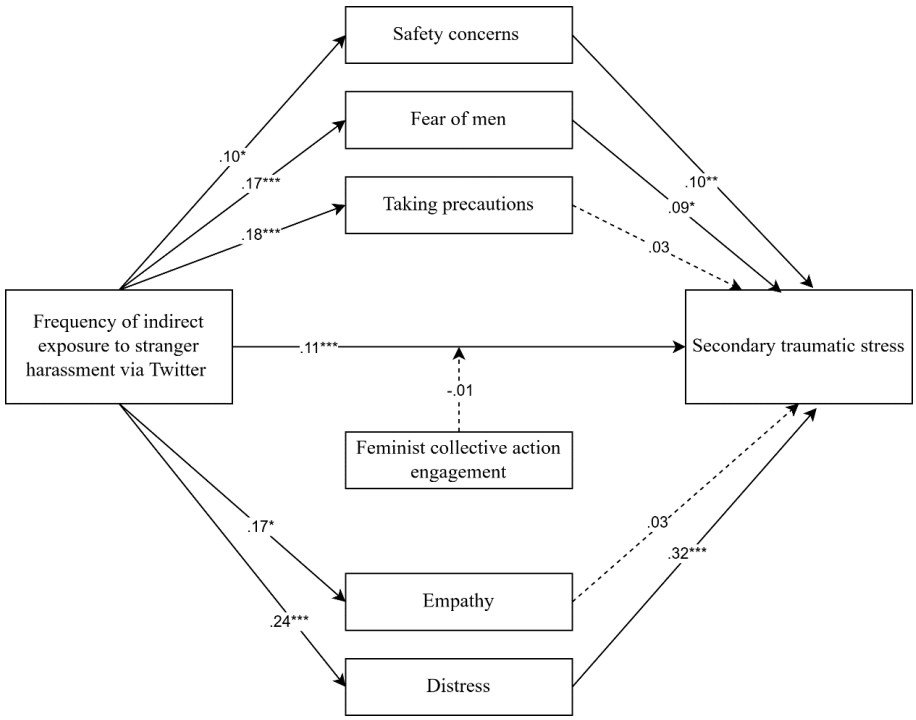

Figure 10. Mediation Analysis with a Moderated Direct Effect for Model 1

Note. Numbers represent unstandardized coefficients. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

As the moderator feminist collective action engagement explained only 0.03% additional variance in STS ($\Delta R^2 = .0003$, F(1, 493) = 0.27, $p = .60$) and the interaction between frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and feminist collective action engagement on STS was not significant ($b = -.01$, $SE = .02$, $t = -0.52$, $p = .60$, 95% CI [-.06, .03]). Frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter predicted STS significantly and positively at low ($b = .13$, $SE = .03$, $t = 3.64$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.06, .19]), mean ($b = .11$, $SE = .03$, $t = 4.08$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.06, .17]), and high ($b = .10$, $SE = .04$, $t = 2.63$, $p = .009$, 95% CI [.03, .18]) levels of feminist collective action engagement. Therefore, contrary to H7, feminist collective action did not moderate the relationship between frequency of indirect

exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS. STS levels remained high among participants with greater indirect exposure to stranger harassment tweets, even among those who had engaged highly in feminist collective action in the past.

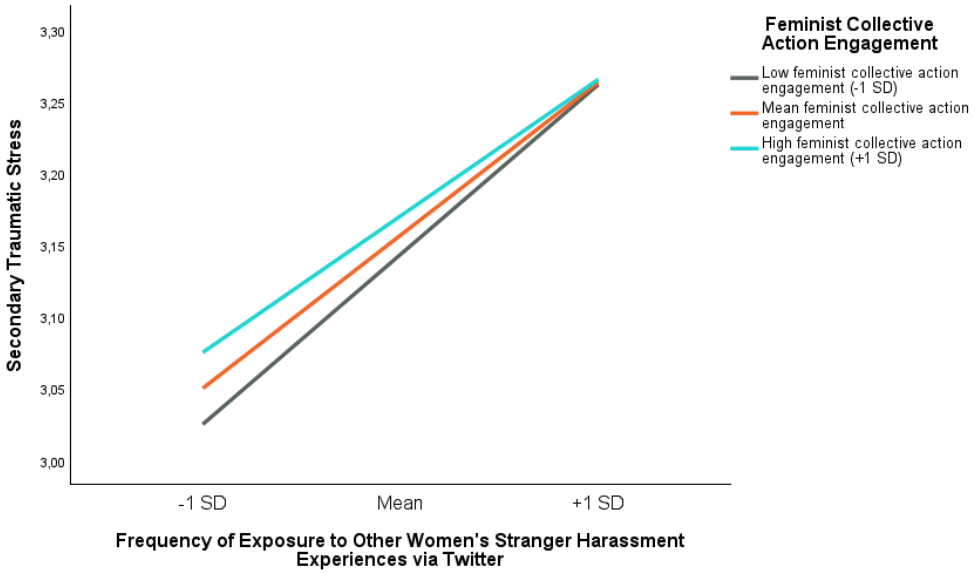

Figure 11. The Moderating Effect of Feminist Collective Action Engagement Between Frequency of Indirect Exposure to Stranger Harassment via Twitter and STS

4.2.2.3.2. Mediation Analysis with a Moderated Direct Effect for Model 2

Model 2 was tested using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 5) with 5.000 bootstrap resamples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. In the model, frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was added as the predictor, STS as the outcome, safety concerns, fear of men, taking precautions, empathy, and distress as mediators, intention to engage in feminist collective action as the moderator, and direct experiences of stranger harassment as the control variable. The model explained 46.40% of the variance in STS (R^2 = .4640, F (9, 493) = 52.46, p < .001). Supporting H2a, H3a, H4a, H5a and H6a, frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter significantly and positively predicted all mediators including safety concerns (b = .10, SE = .04, t = 2.32, p = .021, 95% CI [.01, .18], fear of men (b = .17, SE = .04, t = 4.47, p < .001, 95% CI [.09, .24]), taking precautions (b = .18, SE = .04, t = 4.74, p < .001, 95% CI [.10, .25]), empathy (b = .17, SE = .07, t = 2.38, p = .02, 95% CI [.03, .30]) and distress (b = .24, SE = .05, t = 4.61, p < .001, 95% CI [.14,

.35]). In line with H3b, H4b and H6b, safety concerns (b = .10, SE = .03, t = 3.27, p = .001, 95% CI [.04, .16]), fear of men (b = .09, SE = .03, t = 2.49, p = .013, 95% CI [.02, .15]), and distress (b = .32, SE = .04, t = 8.87, p < .001, 95% CI [.25, .39]) significantly and positively predicted STS. Contrary to H2b and H5b, taking precautions (b = .03, SE = .04, t = 0.72, p = .473, 95% CI [−.05, .11]) and empathy (b = .03, SE = .02, t = 1.31, p = .189, 95% CI [−.01, .07]) were not significant predictors of STS. Supporting H1, the direct effect of frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter on STS was significant and positive (b = .12, SE = .03, t = 4.27, p < .001, 95% CI [.06, .17]). The total indirect effect of frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter on STS was significant and positive (b = .11, SE = .02, 95% CI [.07, .15]. In line with H3c, H4c, Hand H6c, frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter predicted STS through safety concerns (b = .01, 95% CI [.00, .02]), fear of men (b = .01, SE = .01, 95% CI [.00, .02]), and distress (b = .08, SE = .02, 95% CI [.04, .11]). Contrary to H2c and H5c, taking precautions (b = .01, SE = .01, 95% CI [−.01, .02]) and empathy (b = .01, SE = .00, 95% CI [−.00, .01]) did not mediate the relationship between frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS.

As the moderator intention to engage in feminist collective action explained only 0.1% additional variance in STS (ΔR^2 = .0010, F (1, 493) = .90, p = .34) and the interaction between frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and intention to engage in feminist collective action on STS was not significant (b = .02, SE = .02, t =.95, p = .34, 95% CI [-.03, .07]). Frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter predicted STS significantly and positively at low (b = .10, SE = .03, t = 2.97, p = .003, 95% CI [.03, .16]), mean (b = .12, SE = .03, t = 4.27, p < .001, 95% CI [.06, .17]), and high (b = .14, SE = .04, t = 3.66, p < .001, 95% CI [.06, .22]) levels of intention to engage in feminist collective action. Therefore, contrary to H8, intention to engage in feminist collective action did not moderate the relationship between frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS. STS levels remained high among participants with greater exposure to other women's tweets about stranger harassment, even among those who had a high intention to engage in feminist collective action.

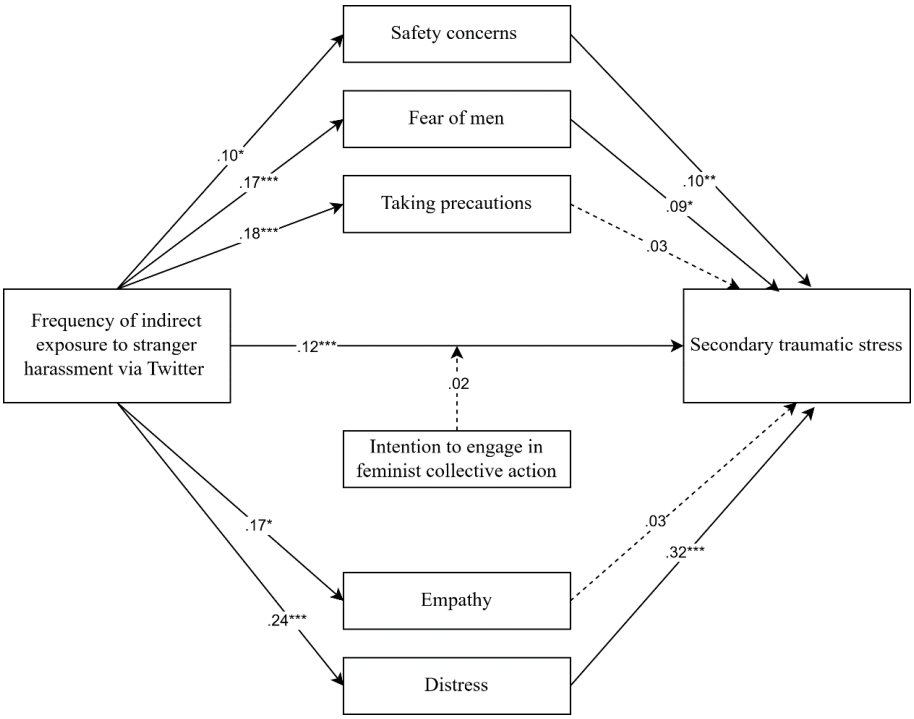

Figure 12. Mediation Analysis with a Moderated Direct Effect for Model 2

Note. Numbers represent unstandardized coefficients. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

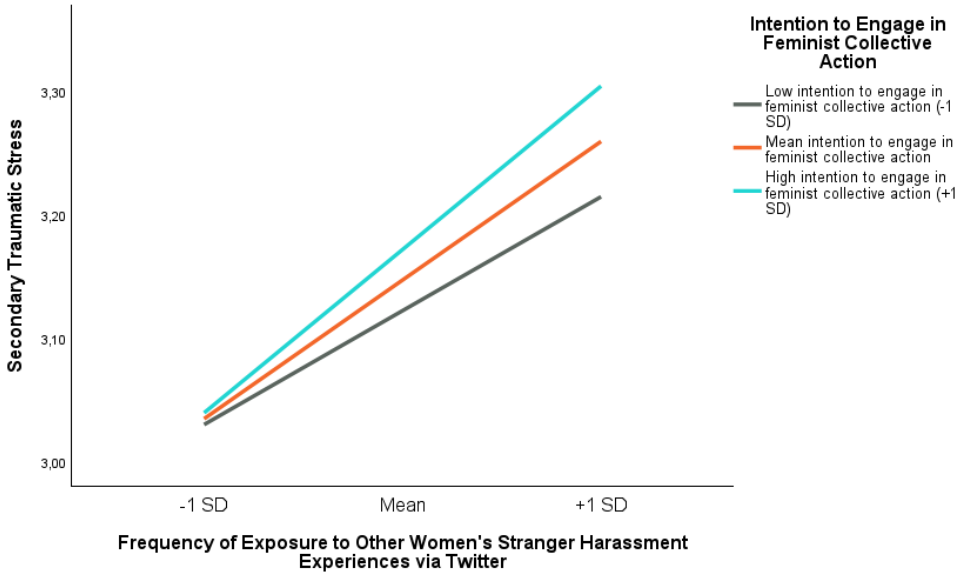

Figure 13. The Moderating Effect of Intention to Engage in Feminist Collective Action Between Frequency of Indirect Exposure to Stranger Harassment via Twitter and STS

4.2.2.3.3. Mediation Analysis with a Moderated Direct Effect for Model 3

Model 3 was tested using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 5) with 5.000 bootstrap resamples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. In the model, frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was added as the predictor, STS as the outcome, safety concerns, fear of men, taking precautions, empathy, and distress as mediators, feminist identity as the moderator, and direct experiences of stranger harassment as the control variable. The model explained 46.24% of the variance in STS (R^2 = .4624, F(9, 493) = 51.07, p < .001). Supporting H2a, H3a, H4a, H5a and H6a, frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter significantly and positively predicted all proposed mediators including safety concerns (b = .10, SE = .04, t = 2.32, p = .021, 95% CI [.01, .18], fear of men (b = .17, SE = .04, t = 4.47, p < .001, 95% CI [.09, .24]), taking precautions (b = .18, SE = .04, t = 4.74, p < .001, 95% CI [.10, .25]), empathy (b = .17, SE = .07, t = 2.38, p = .018, 95% CI [.03, .30]) and distress (b = .24, SE = . 05, t = 4.61, p < .001, 95% CI [.14, .35]). In line with H3b, H4b and H6b, safety concerns (b = .10, SE = .03, t = 3.30, p = .001, 95% CI [.04, .17]), fear of men (b = .09, SE = .03, t = 2.68, p = .008, 95% CI [.02, .16]), and distress (b = .32, SE = .04, t = 8.87, p < .001, 95% CI [.25, .39]) significantly and positively predicted STS. Contrary to H2b and H5b, taking precautions (b = .03, SE = .04, t = 0.65, p = .52, 95% CI [-.05, .10]) and empathy (b = .03, SE = .02, t = 1.39, p = .17, 95% CI [-.01, .07]) did not significantly predict STS. Supporting H1, the direct effect of frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter on STS was significant and positive (b = .12, SE = .03, t = 4.33, p < .001, 95% CI [.07, .18]). The total indirect effect of frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter on STS was significant and positive (b = .11, SE = .02, 95% CI [.07, .16]. In line with H3c, H4c, Hand H6c, frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter predicted STS through safety concerns (b = .01, 95% CI [.01, .02]), fear of men (b = .02, SE = .01, 95% CI [.00, .03]), and distress (b = .08, SE = .02, 95% CI [.04, .12]). Contrary to H2c and H5c, taking precautions (b = .00, SE = .01, 95% CI [−.01, .02]) and empathy (b = .00, SE = .00, 95% CI [−.00, .02]) did not mediate the relationship between frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS. Feminist identity as the moderator explained only .01% additional variance in STS (ΔR^2 = .0001, F(1, 493) = .11, p = .745). The interaction between frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and feminist identity on STS was

not significant (b = .01, SE = .02, t =.33, p = .74, 95% CI [-.04, .05]). Frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter predicted STS significantly and positively at low (b = .11, SE = .03, t = 3.41, p < .001, 95% CI [.05, .18]), mean (b = .12, SE = .03, t = 4.33, p < .001, 95% CI [.07, .18]), and high (b = .13, SE = .04, t = 3.40, p < .001, 95% CI [.05, .20]) levels of feminist identity. So, contrary to H9, feminist identity did not moderate the relationship between frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS. STS levels remained high among participants with greater exposure to other women's tweets about stranger harassment, even among those who highly identify as feminist.

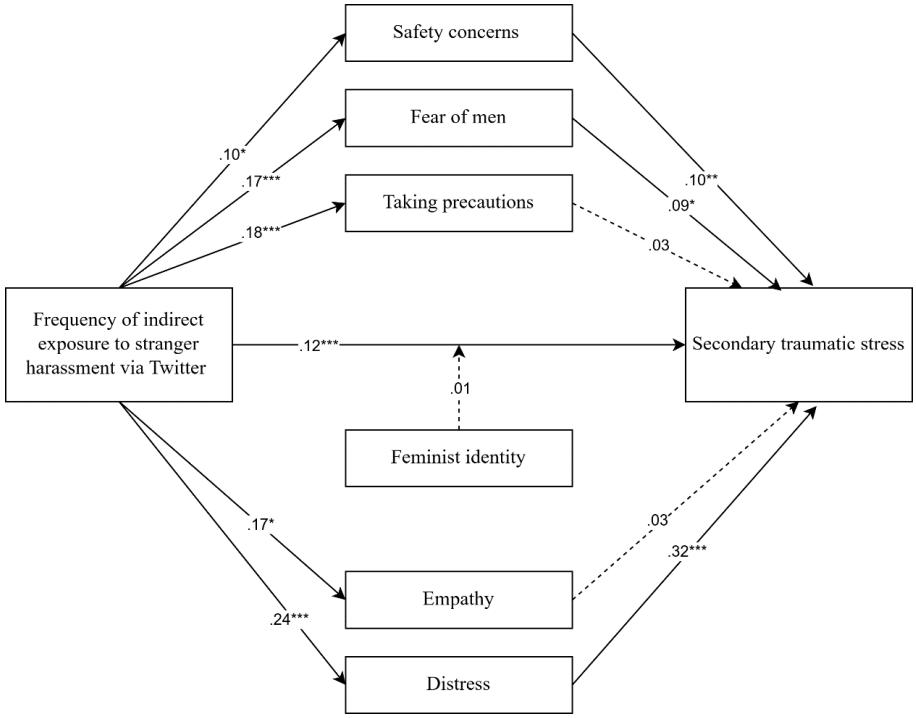

Figure 14. Mediation Analysis with a Moderated Direct Effect for Model 3

Note. Numbers represent unstandardized coefficients. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

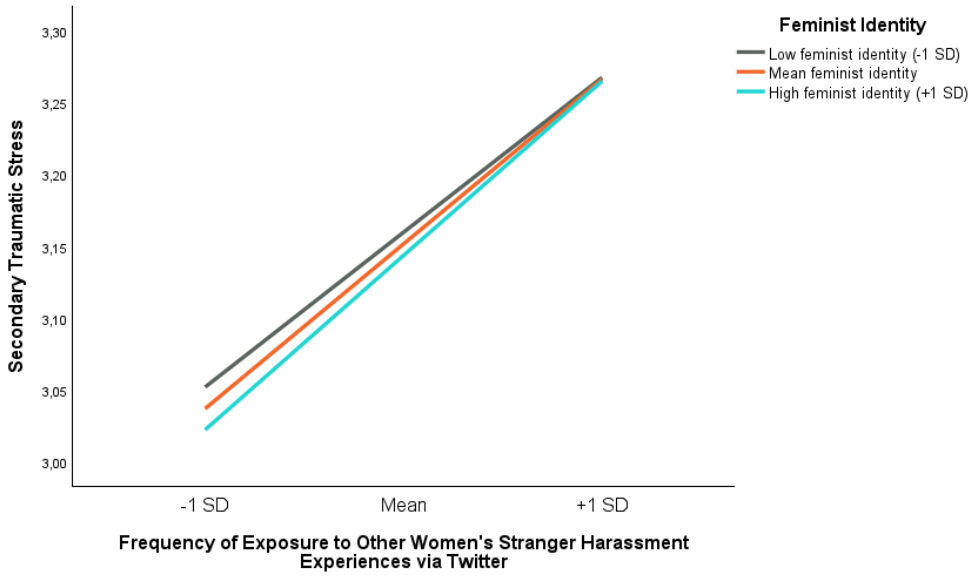

Figure 15. The Moderating Effect of Feminist Identity Between Frequency of Exposure to Stranger Harassment Experiences of Other Women via Twitter and STS

4.2.2.4. Alternative Model Testing

Contrary to prior assumptions, mediation analyses with moderated direct effects indicated that none of the feminism variables significantly moderated the relationship between the frequency of exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter and STS. Instead, indirect exposure significantly and positively predicted STS at low, mean, and high levels of feminist collective action engagement, intention to engage in feminist collective action, and feminist identity. Given the mixed findings regarding the role of feminism in Study 1, an alternative model was also tested to examine whether exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter predicts feminist collective action engagement, intention to engage in feminist collective action, and feminist identity. As these variables represent conceptually distinct potential outcomes of exposure, each was examined in a separate alternative model to estimate the unique predictive effect of exposure on each outcome and avoid an unnecessarily complex model.

4.2.2.4.1. Testing Alternative Model 1

Alternative Model 1 was tested using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 80) with 5.000 bootstrap resamples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. In the model,

frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was added as the predictor, and feminist collective action engagement as the outcome variable. Safety concerns, fear of men, taking precautions, empathy, and distress were included in the first set of mediators, while STS was included as the second mediator. Direct experiences of stranger harassment were added as a control variable.

As in the previous analysis, the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter significantly and positively predicted first group of mediators including safety concerns (b = .10, SE = .04, t = 2.32, p = .021, 95% CI [.01, .18], fear of men (b = .17, SE = .04, t = 4.47, p < .001, 95% CI [.09, .24]), taking precautions (b = .18, SE = .04, t = 4.74, p < .001, 95% CI [.10, .25]), empathy (b = .17, SE = .07, t = 2.38, p = .018, 95% CI [.03, .30]) and distress (b = .24, SE = .05, t = 4.61, p < .001, 95% CI [.14, .35]). Safety concerns (b = .10, SE = .03, t = 3.33, p = .001, 95% CI [.04, .16]), fear of men (b = .09, SE = .03, t = 2.63, p = .010, 95% CI [.02, .16]), and distress (b = .32, SE = .04, t = 8.87, p < .001, 95% CI [.25, .39]) were significant and positive predictors of STS while taking precautions (b = .03, SE = .04, t = .64, p = .52, 95% CI [-.05, .10]) and empathy (b = .03, SE = .02, t = 1.39, p = .17, 95% CI [-.01, .07]) did not significantly predict STS.

The total effect of the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter on feminist collective action engagement was significant and positive (b = .17, SE = .04, t = 3.89, p < .001, 95% CI [.08, .25]). The model explained 22.42% of the variance in feminist collective action engagement (R^2 = .2242, F (8, 494) = 18.39, p < .001). While taking precautions significantly and negatively predicted (b = -.27, SE = .07, t = -3.85, p < .001, 95% CI [-.41, -.13]) feminist collective action engagement; safety concerns (b = -.01, SE = .06, t = -.24, p = .81, 95% CI [-.12, -.10]), fear of men (b = .11, SE = .06, t = 1.85, p = .07, 95% CI [-.01, .23]), empathy (b = .02, SE = .03, t = .67, p = .50, 95% CI [-.04, .09]) and distress (b = -.02, SE = .06, t = -.28, p = .78, 95% CI [-.13, .10]) did not.

The direct effect of the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter on feminist collective action engagement was also significant and positive (b = .19, SE = .05, t = 4.21, p < .001, 95% CI [.10, .28]).

For the indirect effects, taking precautions significantly and negatively mediated the relationship between the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and feminist collective action engagement (b = -.05, SE = .02, 95% CI [-.08, -.02]); while fear of men (b = .02, SE = .01, 95% CI [.00, .04]), safety concerns (b = .00, SE = .01, 95% CI [-.01, .01]), empathy (b = .00, SE = .01, 95% CI [-.01, .02]) and distress (b = .00, SE = .01, 95% CI [-.03, .03]) did not. Thus, greater exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter was associated with greater precautionary behaviors, which in turn were associated with lower engagement in feminist collective action.

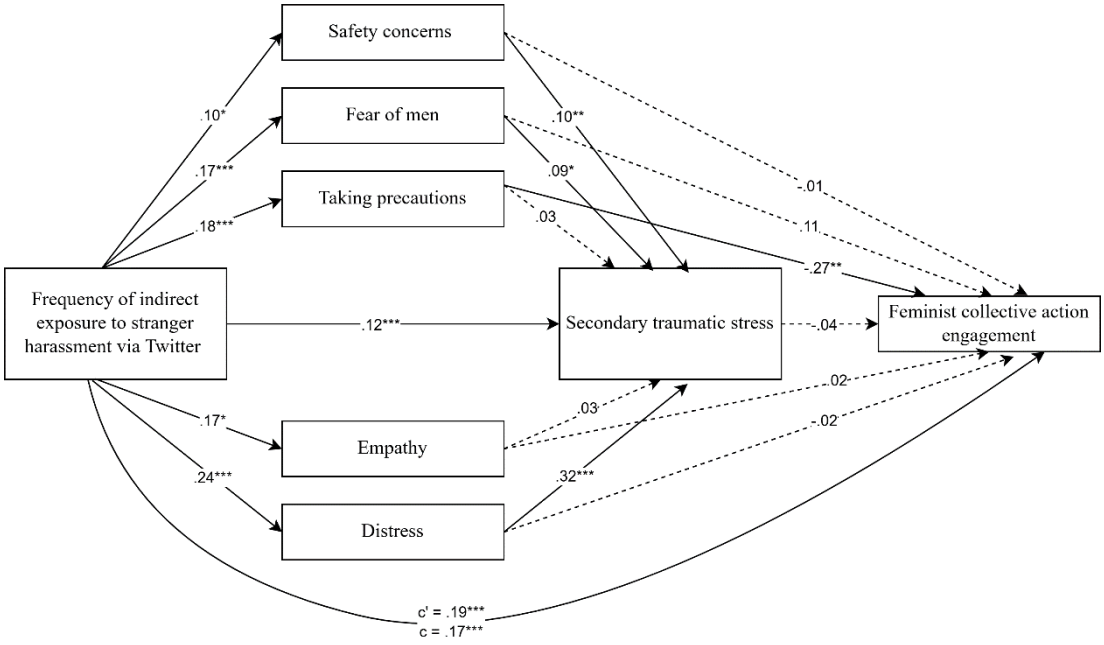

Figure 16. Unstandardized Coefficients for Alternative Model 1

Note. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

4.2.2.4.2. Testing Alternative Model 2

Alternative Model 2 was tested using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 80) with 5.000 bootstrap resamples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. In the model, frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was added as the predictor, and intention to engage in feminist collective action as the outcome variable. Safety concerns, fear of men, taking precautions, empathy, and distress were included

in the first set of mediators, while STS was included as the second mediator. Direct experiences of stranger harassment were added as a control variable.

As in the previous analysis, the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter significantly and positively predicted first group of mediators including safety concerns (b = .10, SE = .04, t = 2.32, p = .021, 95% CI [.01, .18], fear of men (b = .17, SE = .04, t = 4.47, p < .001, 95% CI [.09, .24]), taking precautions (b = .18, SE = .04, t = 4.74, p < .001, 95% CI [.10, .25]), empathy (b = .17, SE = .07, t = 2.38, p = .020, 95% CI [.03, .30]) and distress (b = .24, SE = .05, t = 4.61, p < .001, 95% CI [.14, .35]). Safety concerns (b = .10, SE = .03, t = 3.33, p = .001, 95% CI [.04, .16]), fear of men (b = .09, SE = .03, t = 2.63, p = .010, 95% CI [.02, .16]), and distress (b = .32, SE = .04, t = 8.87, p < .001, 95% CI [.25, .39]) were significantly and positively predicted STS; whereas taking precautions (b = .03, SE = .04, t = .64, p = .52, 95% CI [−.05, .10]) and empathy (b = .03, SE = .02, t = 1.39, p = .17, 95% CI [−.01, .07]) did not.

The total effect of the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter on intention to engage in feminist collective action was significant and positive (b = .22, SE = .05, t = 4.85, p < .001, 95% CI [.13, .31]). The model explained 16.75% of the variance in intention to engage in feminist collective action (R^2 = .1675, F(8, 494) = 10.69, p < .001). While taking precautions significantly and negatively (b = -.19, SE = .07, t = -2.60, p = .010, 95% CI [-.34, -.05]) and fear of men significantly and positively (b = .15, SE = .06, t = 2.48, p = .010, 95% CI [.03, .26]) predicted intention to engage in feminist collective action; safety concerns (b = .07, SE = .05, t = .1.38, p = .17, 95% CI [-.03, .17]), empathy (b = .05, SE = .04, t = 1.35, p = .18, 95% CI [-.02, .12]) and distress (b = .09, SE = .06, t = 1.50, p = .13, 95% CI [-.03, .20]) did not.

The direct effect of the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter on intention to engage in feminist collective action was also significant and positive (b = .18, SE = .04, t = 3.95, p < .001, 95% CI [.09, .26]).

For the indirect effects, taking precautions significantly and negatively (b = -.03, SE = .01, 95% CI [-07., -.01]) and fear of men (b = .02, SE = .01, 95% CI [.00, .05]) significantly and positively mediated the relationship between the frequency of

indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and intention to engage in feminist collective action while safety concerns (b = .01, SE = .01, 95% CI [.00, .02]), empathy (b = .01, SE = .01, 95% CI [.00, .02]) and distress (b = .02, SE = .02, 95% CI [-.01, .06]) did not. Hence, greater exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter was associated with greater precautionary behaviors, which in turn were associated with lower intentions to engage in feminist collective action. At the same time, greater indirect exposure was associated with greater fear of men, which in turn was associated with higher intentions to engage in feminist collective action.

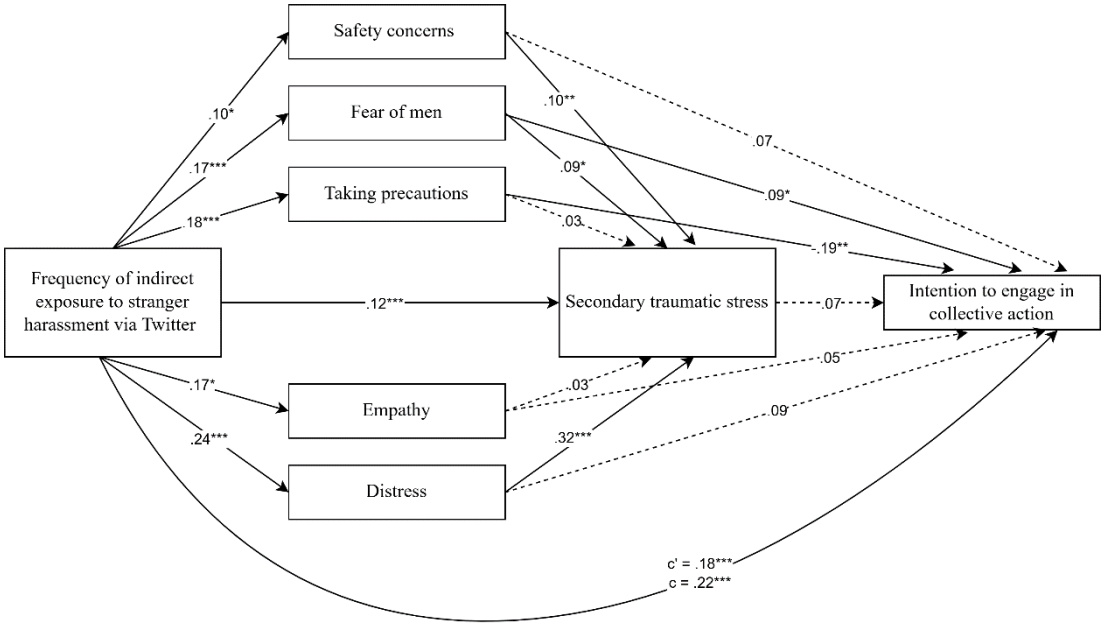

Figure 17. Unstandardized Coefficients for Alternative Model 2

Note. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

4.2.2.4.3. Testing Alternative Model 3

Alternative Model 3 was tested using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 80) with 5.000 bootstrap resamples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. In the model, frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was added as the predictor, and feminist identity as the outcome variable. Safety concerns, fear of men, taking precautions, empathy, and distress were included in the first set of mediators, and STS as the second mediator. Direct experiences of stranger harassment were added as a control variable. As in the previous analysis, the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter significantly and positively predicted first group of

mediators including safety concerns (b = .10, SE = .04, t = 2.32, p = .020, 95% CI [.01, .18], fear of men (b = .17, SE = .04, t = 4.47, p < .001, 95% CI [.09, .24]), taking precautions (b = .18, SE = .04, t = 4.74, p < .001, 95% CI [.10, .25]), empathy (b = .17, SE = .07, t = 2.38, p = .020, 95% CI [.03, .30]) and distress (b = .24, SE = . 05, t = 4.61, p < .001, 95% CI [.14, .35]). Safety concerns (b = .10, SE = .03, t = 3.33, p = .001, 95% CI [.04, .17]), fear of men (b = .09, SE = .03, t = 2.63, p = .010, 95% CI [.02, .16]), and distress (b = .32, SE = .04, t = 8.87, p < .001, 95% CI [.25, .39]) significantly and positively predicted STS while taking precautions (b = .03, SE = .04, t = .64, p = .52, 95% CI [-.05, .10]) and empathy (b = .03, SE = .02, t = 1.39, p = .17, 95% CI [-.01, .07]) did not.

Total effect of the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter on feminist identity was significant and positive (b = .18, SE = .05, t = 3.35, p < .001, 95% CI [.07, .28]). The model explained 13.50% of the variance in feminist identity (R^2 = .1350, F(8, 494) = 9.53, p < .001). While fear of men significantly and positively (b = .22, SE = .07, t = 3.23, p = .0013, 95% CI [.09, .36]) predicted feminist identity; taking precautions (b = -.003, SE = .07, t = -.05, p = .96, 95% CI [-.15, .14]), safety concerns (b = .03, SE = .06, t = .55, p = .58, 95% CI [-.08, .14]), empathy (b = .04, SE = .04, t = .99, p = .32, 95% CI [-.04, .12]) and distress (b = .09, SE = .07, t = 1.37, p = .17, 95% CI [-.04, .22]) did not.

The direct effect of the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter on feminist identity was significant and positive (b = .12, SE = .05, t = 2.20, p = .03, 95% CI [.01, .22]).

For the indirect effects, fear of men (b = .04, SE = .01, 95% CI [.01, .07]) significantly and positively mediated the relationship between the frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and feminist identity while taking precautions (b = .00, SE = .01, 95% CI [-.03, .03]), safety concerns (b = .00, SE = .01, 95% CI [-.01, .02]), empathy (b = .01, SE = .01, 95% CI [-.01, .02]) and distress (b = .02, SE = .02, 95% CI [-.01, .06]) did not. Thus, the greater women's exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter, the more they feared men, which in turn was associated with stronger feminist identification.

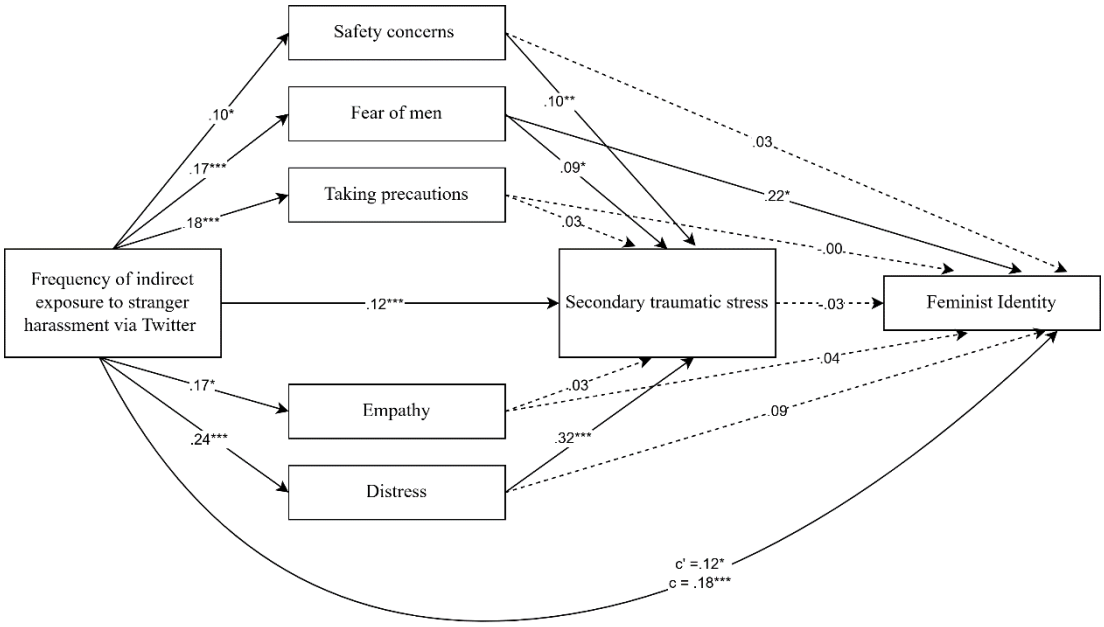

Figure 18. Unstandardized Coefficients for Alternative Model 3

Note. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

4.3. Discussion

This study examined whether women's frequency of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter predicts their STS levels. The results supported this hypothesis, showing that more frequent exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter was associated with higher STS levels, even after controlling for women's direct experiences of stranger harassment. This finding is consistent with previous research demonstrating that individuals may develop STS through indirect exposure to others' traumatic experiences via social media (e.g., Goodwin et al., 2013; Holman et al., 2020; Liu & Liu, 2020; Zhao & Zhou, 2020). Further, it extends this literature by suggesting that the relationship between indirect exposure and STS is not limited to collective traumas but may also apply to interpersonal forms of trauma. Specifically, the findings indicate that frequent indirect exposure to stranger harassment, a form of gender-based violence that is often perceived as relatively less severe than other forms of sexual violence, is nevertheless associated with STS symptoms. This finding highlights the role of social media as a source of indirect trauma exposure and emphasizes the need for further research examining whether

indirect exposure to other forms of traumatic events shared on social media similarly relates to STS development.

Findings of the current study also support previous conceptualizations of stranger harassment as an important form of gender-based violence against women (Benard & Schlaffer, 1984; Kissling, 1991; Kissling & Kramarae, 1991; Tuerkheimer, 1997; Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020). Participants reported frequently experiencing behaviors such as catcalling, whistling, unwanted staring, and sexist remarks or behaviors from strangers in their daily lives. Moreover, although less severe forms of stranger harassment were more commonly reported as direct experiences, participants reported frequently encountering posts describing more severe forms of stranger harassment, including unwanted touching, stroking, hugging, subtle pressure or coercion to engage in sexual activity, direct or explicit pressure to engage in sexual activity, and direct or forceful fondling or grabbing. These findings illustrate that although women may not directly experience more severe forms of stranger harassment, they are still frequently exposed to them through other women's posts on Twitter. Along with the finding that greater indirect exposure predicted higher STS levels, this pattern is consistent with the social amplification of risk framework (Kasperson et al., 1988), suggesting that repeated exposure to stranger harassment posts may amplify women's perceptions of the prevalence and severity of such incidents. These findings also support previous research linking women's direct experiences of stranger harassment to adverse mental health outcomes (e.g., Davidson et al., 2016; DelGreco & Christensen, 2020; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Moya-Garofano et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2017). More importantly, the current study adds another dimension to previous research by showing that the effects of stranger harassment may extend beyond direct victims to women indirectly exposed to it through others' experiences, even after accounting for their direct experiences. Hence, stranger harassment should not be regarded merely as an unpleasant everyday incident but rather as a form of sexual violence with adverse outcomes that may extend beyond the women directly targeted.

Regarding the mechanisms underlying the relationship between indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS, consistent with the hypotheses, safety concerns, fear of men, and distress emerged as significant mediators. Women who more frequently encountered other women's stranger harassment experiences on

Twitter reported greater safety concerns, heightened fear of men, and greater distress, which in turn were associated with higher levels of STS. These findings align with previous research showing that safety concerns and fear of men underlie the relationship between direct experiences of stranger harassment and PTSD symptoms (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020), suggesting that similar mechanisms may also operate for indirect exposure. These findings are also consistent with cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 1977), the social amplification of risk framework (Kasperson et al., 1988), and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001). Repeated exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences on social media may shape women's perceptions of stranger harassment as a common, severe, and personally relevant threat while fostering a generalized fear that any man could be a potential perpetrator. Consequently, women may increasingly perceive themselves as potential future victims, resulting in heightened safety concerns, fear of men, and distress, which are associated with higher levels of STS. This interpretation is further supported by the qualitative findings of Study 1, in which participants described becoming more concerned about their safety, more fearful of men, and distressed in response to indirect exposure to stranger harassment via social media.

Moreover, the present findings extend previous research by identifying distress as an additional mechanism linking indirect exposure to STS. This is consistent with the intergroup emotions theory (Mackie et al., 2000; Mackie & Smith, 2018), which proposes that individuals may experience group-based emotions in response to events affecting members of groups with which they identify. Therefore, it is possible that exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences may evoke distress because women perceive victims as members of their own social group. Notably, distress emerged as the strongest predictor of STS in the current study. This suggests that among women's responses to indirect exposure to stranger harassment, distress may play a central role in STS development.

The hypotheses regarding the roles of taking precautions and empathy were partially supported. Although more frequent indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter predicted greater precautionary behaviors and higher levels of empathy, neither mediated its relationship with STS.

Regarding taking precautions, it was initially hypothesized that engaging in precautionary behaviors would be associated with lower STS, based on previous findings showing that taking precautions was associated with lower PTSD levels (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020). However, taking precautions was positively associated with STS in bivariate analyses, and this association became non-significant after other variables were entered into the model. This suggest that although women who are more frequently exposed to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter engage in more precautionary behavior, these behaviors do not appear to protect them from developing STS. Instead, precautionary behaviors may primarily reflect heightened perceptions of threat and vulnerability rather than reducing the impact of indirect exposure. This interpretation is also consistent with the qualitative findings of Study 1, in which some participants said that precautionary behaviors became habitual responses to feeling unsafe. Indeed, some participants initially mentioned taking no precautions but later realized that many of their everyday behaviors were, in fact, precautions.

While more frequent indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was associated with greater empathy, empathy did not mediate its relationship with STS. This finding appears inconsistent with both the qualitative findings of Study 1 and previous literature suggesting that empathy plays a central role in STS development (Figley, 1986, 1998). One possible explanation is that empathy alone may not be sufficient for STS development in response to indirect exposure to stranger harassment. Instead, one's perceived threat and vulnerability may play a more significant role. Supporting that, distress emerged as a significant mediator and the strongest predictor of STS. Alternatively, previous research identifying empathy as an important mechanism in STS development has largely focused on close interpersonal or caregiving relationships, whereas the present study examined women’s exposure to unfamiliar women’s traumatic experiences via social media. Thus, it is possible that empathy toward strangers is less important in STS development. Although participants in Study 1 frequently described themselves as empathizing with victims, the feelings they labeled as empathy may instead have reflected fear, distress, and heightened safety concerns.

Contrary to the hypotheses, neither feminist identity nor feminist collective action moderated the relationship between indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS. These findings suggest that indirect exposure to stranger harassment may be associated with STS regardless of women's feminist identity or engagement in feminist collective action. This finding is inconsistent with previous research suggesting that feminism may be a protective factor for women's mental health against gender-based violence (Ayres et al., 2009; Leaper & Arias, 2011; Leaper et al., 2013; Leavy & Adams, 1986; Murnen & Smolak, 2009; Moradi & Subich, 2002; Watson et al., 2018). One possible explanation is that indirect exposure to stranger harassment constitutes a strong psychological stressor that feminist identity or engagement in feminist collective action alone is insufficient to buffer its association with STS. In other words, although feminism may influence how women interpret or respond to gendered violence, it may not reduce the adverse effects of repeated indirect exposure to stranger harassment. This is also consistent with the qualitative findings of Study 1, in which participants described feminist identity and collective action as sources of empowerment and solidarity, yet continued to report fear, distress, and feelings of vulnerability in response to exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences on Twitter.

Another possible explanation may be related to the Turkish context. As reflected in the qualitative findings of Study 1, participants expressed feelings of hopelessness and helplessness in response to stranger harassment incidents. Although they reported engaging in feminist collective action, some stated that they did so despite doubting that such efforts would produce meaningful social change, as they saw no alternative. In addition, as discussed previously, there has been an ongoing debate about the government's conservative stance toward women's rights in Türkiye (Gümüş, 2021). Women have been found to be less willing to engage in protective actions when they perceive these actions as being supported by the government (Şahin et al., 2025). Consistent with this, participants in Study 1 expressed the belief that the government intentionally fails to protect women from stranger harassment. Taken together, these findings suggest that women may not perceive feminism as effective enough to protect them from stranger harassment within the current socio-political context. They may perceive being a feminist or engaging in feminist collective action as a futile effort in a country where they believe the government is unwilling to protect women.

Consequently, regardless of their feminist identity or engagement in feminist collective action, women may be equally vulnerable to developing STS following exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences.

Although the hypotheses about the protective role of feminism were not supported, the alternative models developed from the mixed findings in Study 1 regarding feminism's role yielded interesting insights. Specifically, the qualitative findings suggested that indirect exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences may strengthen women's feminist identity and motivate them to engage in feminist collective action. Consistent with this, the alternative models showed that more frequent exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter was associated with stronger feminist identity, greater intentions to engage in feminist collective action, and greater engagement in feminist collective action. Further, findings from alternative model testing suggested that these associations were explained by women's responses to indirect exposure, providing insight into the mechanisms through which indirect exposure to stranger harassment may contribute to feminist identity development and collective action. Specifically, taking precautions and fear of men mediated the relationship between indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and intention to engage in feminist collective action. More frequent indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was associated with greater precautionary behaviors, which, in turn, were associated with lower intention to engage in feminist collective action. In contrast, more frequent indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was also associated with greater fear of men, which, in turn, was associated with stronger intention to engage in feminist collective action. Similarly, taking precautions mediated the relationship between indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and engagement in feminist collective action. More frequent indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was associated with greater precautionary behaviors, which, in turn, were associated with lower engagement in feminist collective action. Finally, fear of men mediated the relationship between indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and feminist identity. More frequent indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was associated with greater fear of men, which, in turn, was associated with stronger feminist identification.

Taken together with the findings of the main models, these results suggest a pattern that is consistent with both the qualitative findings of Study 1 and the feminist identity development model (Downing & Roush, 1985). Specifically, indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter may increase women's perceptions of gender-based threat and generalized fear toward men, which in turn strengthen their feminist identity and increase intention to and actual engagement in feminist collective action. In the Turkish context, where participants expressed feelings of hopelessness regarding the official stance toward stranger harassment, feminism may be perceived as one of the few remaining ways of responding to it despite doubts about its effectiveness. On the other hand, women who respond to indirect exposure to stranger harassment by relying more on individual precautionary behaviors reported lower intentions and engagement in feminist collective action. This may suggest that women who rely more on individual precautionary behaviors see less need for collective action. Yet in Study 1, some participants mentioned engaging in feminist action despite questioning its effectiveness, as they felt there was no alternative. This may explain why feminist identity and collective action increased with the frequency of indirect exposure, but did not buffer its association with STS. In other words, indirect exposure to stranger harassment may simultaneously increase women's engagement in feminist collective action and strengthen feminist identification while still failing to buffer the association between indirect exposure to stranger harassment and STS.

On the other hand, STS did not predict feminist identity or collective action, nor did it mediate the associations between indirect exposure to stranger harassment and feminism variables. A possible explanation is that since STS is characterized by symptoms such as intrusive thoughts, avoidance, and emotional numbing (Figley, 1995), it may reduce women's psychological resources and lead to withdrawal instead of engagement in emotionally demanding activities, such as feminist collective action and adopting a feminist identity. Supporting this, some participants in Study 1 mentioned intentionally avoiding other women’s stranger harassment posts, sometimes even closing the app or putting away their phones to protect their well-being. Thus, experiencing STS symptoms related to frequent exposure to other women's stranger harassment might lead to avoidance and psychological withdrawal rather than strengthening feminist identity or motivating collective action.

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The main objective of the current dissertation was to examine whether exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter is associated with women's STS. With this aim, a mixed-methods design consisting of two complementary studies was conducted. Study 1 qualitatively explored women's exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences shared on social media, their responses to such exposure, the role of feminism in shaping these responses, and their general perceptions and direct experiences of stranger harassment. Study 2A aimed to adapt the study measures into Turkish for use in Study 2B. Then, building on the findings of Study 1 and previous literature, Study 2B quantitatively examined the proposed theoretical model. Specifically, it was examined whether the frequency of exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter was associated with women's STS, as well as the mediating roles of fear of rape (i.e., safety concerns, taking precautions, and fear of men) and emotional responses (i.e., empathy and distress), and the moderating and alternative roles of feminism (i.e., feminist collective action engagement, intention to engage in feminist collective action, and feminist identity).

Qualitative examination in Study 1 revealed that women perceive stranger harassment as a widespread and important societal issue in Türkiye that begins early in women's lives. Their responses reflected an awareness of the gendered nature of stranger harassment, viewing it as a means through which men exert power, control, and dominance over women. Participants believed that perpetrators rarely face adequate legal consequences and that the government is unwilling to protect women from stranger harassment. Furthermore, they reported frequent indirect exposure to stranger harassment via other women's posts on Twitter. These indirect exposures were associated with increased safety concerns, generalized fear of men, precautionary

behaviors, empathy toward victims, and distress. Their cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological responses suggested that they may experience STS symptoms as a result of repeated indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter. Participants' responses also reflected mixed views regarding the role of feminism. Some suggested that feminism serves as a protective factor against the negative impact of indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter. Others believed that repeated exposure to such posts strengthened their feminist identity and encouraged them to engage in feminist collective action in response.

The quantitative findings of Study 2 largely supported the qualitative findings of Study 1. Accordingly, more frequent indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was associated with greater safety concerns, precautionary behaviors, fear of men, empathy, and distress. Further, indirect exposure predicted STS both directly and indirectly through greater safety concerns, fear of men, and distress. Although the hypothesized protective role of feminism was not supported, more frequent indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter was associated with stronger feminist identification, greater intentions to engage in feminist collective action, and greater engagement in feminist collective action. Further, the findings suggested that women who experienced greater fear of men in relation to frequent indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter reported stronger feminist identification and greater intentions to engage in feminist collective action. In contrast, women who responded to such indirect exposure by adopting precautionary behaviors reported lower intentions to engage in feminist collective action and lower engagement.

Since the specific findings and their implications have been discussed in detail in the previous discussion sections, the general discussion focuses on the overall contributions, practical implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

5.1. Contributions and Practical Implications

Findings of the present dissertation contribute to both the STS and stranger harassment literatures in several ways.

First, research examining social media-induced STS remains limited. Existing studies have often focused either on the association between general social media use and STS

or on STS following exposure to large-scale collective traumatic events through social media, such as wars, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks (e.g., Goodwin et al., 2013; Holman et al., 2020; Meral et al., 2025; Özdemir, 2023; Zhong et al., 2021). Moreover, few studies have examined the mechanisms by which social media exposure relates to STS development. The findings of the present dissertation extend the STS literature by demonstrating that not only large-scale collective traumas but also interpersonal forms of trauma may relate to STS development through social media exposure. Specifically, indirect exposure to stranger harassment experiences via other women's Twitter posts was associated with higher STS levels. This suggests that the impact of social media use should be considered more carefully. Although it provides important opportunities for raising awareness, sharing experiences, and mobilizing collective action (Cobb & Horeck, 2018; Gede et al., 2025; Mendes et al., 2019; Sills et al., 2016), repeated indirect exposure to traumatic events shared online may also have unintended adverse impacts on users' mental health. Accordingly, mental health professionals, educators, and organizations should recognize exposure to traumatic content on social media, including different forms of traumatic incidents, as a potential source of trauma development.

Further, contrary to prior literature identifying empathy as a central mechanism in STS development (Figley, 1995), empathy did not mediate the association between indirect exposure to stranger harassment and STS in the present study. Instead, safety concerns, fear of men, and distress emerged as the mechanisms underlying this relationship. These findings suggest that the processes involved in STS development may differ depending on the source and context of indirect trauma exposure. Accordingly, social media-induced STS may not operate through the same psychological processes as STS related to indirect exposure to trauma experienced by close others or from professional work with traumatized individuals. Notably, distress emerged as the strongest predictor of STS, suggesting that emotional reactions to indirect trauma exposure may play a particularly important role in understanding social media-induced STS. Therefore, prevention efforts addressing social media-induced STS may be more effective if they focus not only on empathy but also on reducing distress.

Another important contribution of the present dissertation is that it demonstrates that although stranger harassment has received limited academic attention both globally

and in the Turkish context and is frequently normalized and trivialized in public discourse (Benard & Schlaffer, 1984; Fleming, 2018; Fileborn, 2019; Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023), it was a highly prevalent experience among women in both studies. Participants in Study 1 described stranger harassment as a frequent experience of their everyday lives beginning at a very early age, whereas participants in Study 2 reported frequently experiencing a wide range of stranger harassment behaviors. More importantly, while previous studies have found that direct experiences of stranger harassment are associated with adverse mental health outcomes for women (e.g., Betts et al., 2019; Carretta & Szymanski, 2020; Davidson et al., 2016; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; MacMillan et al., 2000; Moya-Garofano et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2017), the present dissertation extends this literature by demonstrating that its impacts might extend to women who are indirectly exposed. Specifically, more frequent indirect exposure to stranger harassment was associated with higher levels of STS both directly and indirectly through greater safety concerns, fear of men, and distress. This suggests that the impact of stranger harassment may extend beyond directly targeted women. In the context of social media, stranger harassment may have a broader impact on those indirectly exposed to it, even when they are not themselves the direct targets of harassment. These findings highlight the importance of recognizing stranger harassment not only as a threat to women who directly experience it but also as a broader public mental health concern in digital environments.

Moreover, although social media provides women with important opportunities to disclose experiences of sexual harassment, receive social support, raise awareness, expose perpetrators, and mobilize collective action (Gede et al., 2025; Mendes et al., 2019; Sills et al., 2016), the present findings suggest that indirect exposure to such disclosures may also have unintended psychological costs. Thus, the very platforms that enable women to support one another and collectively challenge gender-based violence may simultaneously expose them to indirect trauma. It is also noteworthy that, although women in Study 2 reported experiencing less severe forms of stranger harassment more frequently in their own lives, they reported frequent exposure via Twitter to posts describing more severe forms of stranger harassment. This might relate to platform characteristics. Social media algorithms often prioritize emotionally arousing and sensational content because it generates greater engagement (Milli et al., 2025). Also, recent changes to Twitter following Elon Musk's acquisition, including

monetization features, have been accompanied by heightened concerns about engagement farming, rage-baiting, bots, AI-generated content, and misinformation, all of which may influence the content users are repeatedly exposed to (Sillat, 2026). Hence, women may also be exposed to stranger harassment posts that do not reflect genuine disclosures but are instead created or amplified primarily to generate engagement. Therefore, it is important to recognize both the dynamics of social media platforms and the potential psychological impact of indirect exposure to sexual harassment disclosures on these platforms. Digital feminist activism and online disclosure practices should consider not only the benefits of sharing such experiences but also the potential psychological impact associated with indirect exposure. Accordingly, greater efforts should be devoted to developing strategies that preserve the benefits of online platforms while minimizing their unintended psychological consequences.

One possible strategy is to reconsider how stranger harassment disclosures are shared online. Platforms specifically designed to document and prevent stranger harassment, such as Right to Be (https://righttobe.org/), may be more effective at addressing stranger harassment than social media platforms like Twitter (Fairchild, 2023). Expanding such platforms and developing similar initiatives in Türkiye may help protect women's mental health while preserving the benefits of technology for women’s solidarity. Compared to social media, such platforms might be more effectively moderated, reducing the risk of abusive comments, misinformation, and re-victimization. Compared with social media platforms, such initiatives may provide stronger moderation, reduce misinformation and re-victimization, and offer reliable information about legal rights, reporting procedures, available support services, practical guidance, and updates regarding case outcomes.

Another important strategy might be to improve women's social media literacy. Enhancing women’s ability to understand how social media algorithms shape the content they are exposed to and interact with, recognize engagement farming and rage-baiting, and critically evaluate the credibility of online information may reduce the chance that frequent indirect exposure increases their perceived risk of victimization and negatively affects mental health. In addition, feminist organizations could help by

establishing systems to verify posts about stranger harassment and inform viewers whether the posts were from a real victim.

Importantly, the findings of the present dissertation point to a more complex role of feminism in women's responses to indirect exposure to stranger harassment. Although feminist identity and feminist collective action did not buffer the association between indirect exposure and STS, the alternative models showed that more frequent exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences was associated with stronger feminist identification and greater intention to and engagement in feminist collective action. Taken together, these findings suggest that indirect exposure may involve different processes at the individual and collective levels. While frequent exposure was associated with greater psychological distress at the individual level, it was also associated with greater feminist identification and collective action, which are directed toward addressing gender-based inequalities at a broader social level.

Women's disclosures on social media may make experiences that are often normalized or treated as isolated incidents more visible as a shared gender-based problem. In turn, recognizing stranger harassment as a problem affecting women collectively may strengthen feminist identification and motivate collective responses to challenge it. This interpretation is consistent with previous research suggesting that women may view collective action as a particularly meaningful response to stranger harassment because it addresses the broader social structures that sustain it rather than placing responsibility for preventing harassment on individual women (Fileborn & Vera-Gray, 2017). Thus, the absence of an individual-level protective effect of feminist collective action should not obscure its potential significance at the collective level. Although collective action may not reduce the STS associated with indirect exposure, it may contribute to increasing the visibility of stranger harassment, challenging its normalization, and mobilizing efforts toward broader social change.

This distinction is also important when considering the practical implications of the present findings. The association between indirect exposure and STS should not be interpreted as suggesting that reducing the visibility of women's disclosures is a desirable response. Women's online disclosures can serve important functions by making stranger harassment visible, facilitating solidarity, and creating opportunities

for collective mobilization (Gede et al., 2025; Greijdanus et al., 2020; Keller et al., 2018; Li et al., 2021; Mendes et al., 2019; Zisan & Jhara, 2025). Therefore, rather than limiting such disclosures, efforts should focus on reducing the psychological burden associated with repeated indirect exposure while preserving their potential role in raising awareness and mobilizing collective responses to stranger harassment.

At the same time, the qualitative findings showed that many participants did not feel adequately protected by authorities against stranger harassment and perceived governmental responses as ineffective. Although participants described feminism and collective action as ways of responding to stranger harassment, some reported engaging in such actions despite doubting their effectiveness because they felt there was no alternative. These findings suggest that feminist organizations and initiatives may benefit from emphasizing the effectiveness and achievements of collective action by highlighting successful advocacy efforts, legal reforms, and other positive outcomes, thereby strengthening women's belief that collective action can produce meaningful change. Policymakers, lawmakers, and public institutions should also strengthen legal protections, improve reporting and response mechanisms, and ensure the effective implementation of existing measures against stranger harassment. Such efforts may help reduce stranger harassment, increase women's sense of protection and trust in public institutions, and mitigate the adverse mental health outcomes that might be associated with exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, several limitations of the current dissertation should be acknowledged. First, although employing a mixed-method approach was one of the strengths of the current dissertation, it relied on qualitative and cross-sectional designs. Hence, causal conclusions cannot be drawn from the identified relationships. To further examine these relationships, future studies can adopt experimental or longitudinal designs. Diary studies may also be especially fruitful for understanding indirect exposure to stranger harassment through social media and its impact on women.

In addition, all variables were assessed using self-report measures. Although Harman's single-factor test suggested that common method variance was unlikely to have

influenced the findings, this procedure alone cannot definitively rule out common method bias and has been criticized as an insensitive diagnostic test. Therefore, future research may further address this issue by incorporating multiple data sources or applying more advanced statistical approaches, such as common latent factor or marker variable techniques (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Another limitation is that most participants in both studies were university students, and their political views predominantly leaned left. This may have influenced their responses and limited the generalizability of the findings. Thus, future studies might replicate the findings of the current dissertation using more demographically diverse samples across age, education, and political views.

Exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences was examined only in the context of Twitter. Yet, platform characteristics may influence both the nature of exposure and its effects. For example, participants in Study 1 mentioned that videos in which the victims themselves described the incidents had the greatest impact on them. Previously, Holman et al. (2020) found that exposure to graphic, bloody images via media was more strongly associated with acute stress symptoms, PTSD symptoms, fear of future terrorism, and functional impairment than exposure to non-graphic images. Accordingly, more visual-based platforms, such as TikTok, may evoke stronger responses and be associated with higher STS than text-based platforms. Future studies can examine whether the impact of indirect exposure varies across social media platforms.

In addition, indirect exposure was operationalized as frequency of exposure. Future research may benefit from examining not only how frequently women are exposed to stranger harassment posts but also how characteristics of the platform, post, victim, perpetrator, and incident influence the impact of indirect exposure and women's responses. For example, participants in Study 1 reported being more affected when the victim was a young woman or a child, when the victim was perceived as similar to themselves, when the perpetrator was someone expected to ensure public safety (e.g., a police officer), and when the perpetrator faced no legal or social consequences for the harassment. Future research can also examine post characteristics, such as emotional intensity, vividness, and perceived credibility, and whether algorithmic

recommendation systems influence the frequency of exposure, the types of stranger harassment posts women encounter, and their impact on women and their responses.

Another limitation of the current dissertation is that engagement in feminist collective action was measured retrospectively, as past engagement. Although this is a common practice in collective action research (e.g., Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995; Liss et al., 2004; Miron et al., 2022; Nelson et al., 2008; Szymanski, 2004), retrospective measurements may be influenced by recall bias. Therefore, it would be better for future studies to measure actual engagement in real time or prospectively. In addition, because participants in Study 1 did not distinguish between the effects of online and offline feminist collective action, this distinction was not examined in the quantitative study. However, previous research suggests that online and offline collective action may be driven by different psychological processes (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002; Greijdanus et al., 2020; Guillard, 2016). Therefore, future research can examine whether online and offline feminist collective action engagement differentially relates to women's responses to indirect exposure to stranger harassment.

The role of comments in the relationship between exposure to other women's stranger harassment experiences via Twitter and STS was not examined in the current dissertation. Yet, the qualitative findings of Study 1 suggest that comments may also influence women's perceptions of the prevalence of stranger harassment incidents and their perceived likelihood of victimization. Therefore, future studies may benefit from examining the nature and impact of comments, including supportive, victim-blaming, and dismissive comments.

Finally, although previous literature suggests that empathy is an important mechanism in STS development (Figley, 1995), it did not emerge as a significant mediator of the relationship between indirect exposure to stranger harassment via Twitter and STS. Future research needs to examine how empathy relates to STS development in relation to indirect exposure to different forms of traumatic events through social media. It may also be valuable to examine whether identification with the victim, or self-identification as a woman, better explains the relationship between indirect exposure to stranger harassment and STS than empathy. Sharing a common gender identity with the victim may increase the personal relevance of the incident and contribute to STS

development. In addition, future research can examine whether contextual factors, such as perceived institutional protection or trust in government and perceived collective action efficacy, shape women's responses to indirect exposure to stranger harassment through social media.

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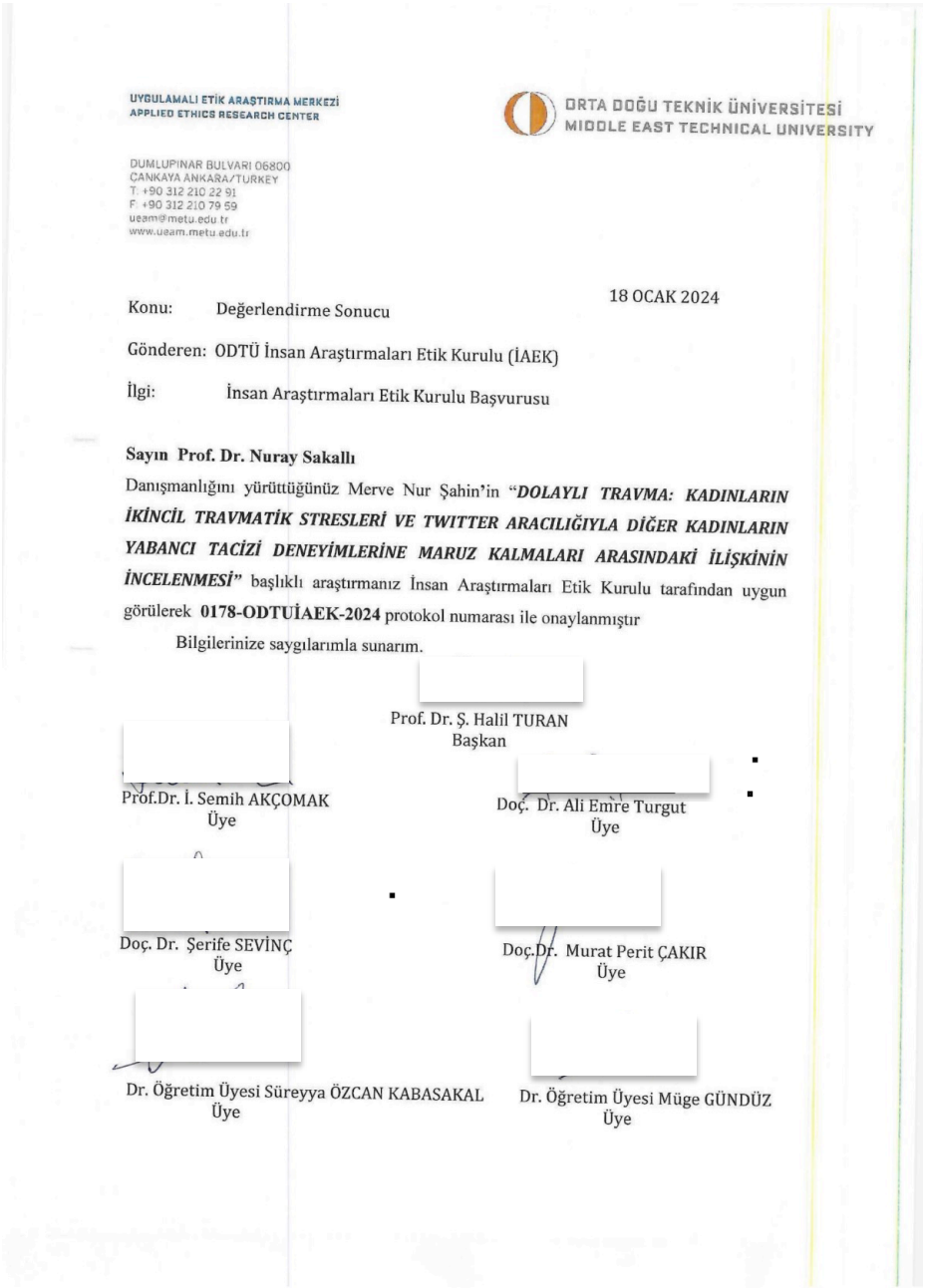
APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE



UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

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Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Prof. Dr. Nuray Sakallı

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Merve Nur Şahin'in "***DOLAYLI TRAVMA: KADINLARIN İKİNCİL TRAVMATİK STRESLERİ VE TWITTER ARACILIĞIYLA DİĞER KADINLARIN YABANCI TACİZİ DENEYİMLERİNE MARUZ KALMALARI ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİNİN İNCELENMESİ"*** başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek **0178-ODTUİAEK-2024** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

Prof.Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Ali Emre Turgut
Üye

Doç. Dr. Şerife SEVİNÇ
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Üye

B. INFORMED CONSENT FORM (STUDY 1)

Bu araştırma ODTÜ Psikoloji Bölümü araştırma görevlisi ve doktora öğrencisi Merve Nur Şahin tarafından Prof. Dr. Nuray Sakallı danışmanlığında yürütülen bir tez çalışması kapsamında gerçekleştirilmektedir. Bu form sizi araştırma koşulları hakkında bilgilendirmek için hazırlanmıştır.

Çalışmanın Amacı Nedir?

Sosyal medya üzerinde diğer kadınların sokak tacizine uğradıklarına dair paylaşımlarını okumalarının kadınlar üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektir.

Sokak ya da yabancı tacizi, kadınların tanımadıkları bir kişi tarafından sokak, toplu taşıma ve mağazalar gibi kamuya açık alanlarda maruz bırakıldıkları cinsel şiddet türüdür (örn. ıslık çalma, hayır cevabını aldıktan sonra ısrarla kişinin adını, telefon numarasını ya da gittiği yeri sormak vb.).

Bize Nasıl Yardımcı Olmanızı İsteyeceğiz?

Yüz yüze gerçekleştirilecek çalışmada sizden araştırmacı tarafından sorulan açık uçlu soruları yanıtlamanız istenecektir. Çalışma yaklaşık olarak 20 dakika sürecektir.

Katılımınızla ilgili bilmeniz gerekenler:

Bu çalışmaya katılmak tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. Herhangi bir yaptırıma veya cezaya maruz kalmadan çalışmaya katılmayı reddedebilir veya herhangi bir sebeple çalışmayı bırakabilirsiniz. Araştırma esnasında cevap vermek istemediğiniz soruları cevapsız bırakabilirsiniz.

Görüşmeler sırasında daha sonra istatistiksel olarak analiz edebilmek amacıyla ses kaydı alınacaktır. Toplanan veriler tamamen gizli tutulacak ve kimlik bilgileri herhangi bir şekilde eşleştirilmeyecektir. Katılımcıların isimleri bağımsız bir listede toplanacaktır. Ayrıca toplanan verilere sadece araştırmacılar ulaşabilecektir. Bu

araştırmanın sonuçları bilimsel ve profesyonel yayınlarda veya eğitim amaçlı kullanılabilir, fakat katılımcıların kimliği gizli tutulacaktır.

Araştırmayla ilgili daha fazla bilgi almak isterseniz:

Çalışmayla ilgili soru ve yorumlarınızı araştırmacıya _____ adresinden iletebilirsiniz.

Yukarıdaki bilgileri okudum, bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve görüşme esnasında ses ve görüntü kaydı alınmasını onaylıyorum.

İsim - Soyad **Tarih** **İmza**

C. INFORMED CONSENT FORM (STUDY 2A)

Bu araştırma ODTÜ Psikoloji Bölümü araştırma görevlisi ve doktora öğrencisi Merve Nur Şahin tarafından Prof. Dr. Nuray Sakallı danışmanlığındaki tez çalışması kapsamında yürütülmektedir. Bu form sizi araştırma koşulları hakkında bilgilendirmek için hazırlanmıştır.

Araştırmanın Amacı Nedir?

Kadınların sokak tacizine dair görüşlerini incelemektir.

Kimler Katılabilir?

18-35 yaş aralığındaki Twitter (yeni adıyla X) kullanıcısı kadınlar katılabilir.

Bize Nasıl Yardımcı Olmanızı İsteyeceğiz?

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz sizden beklenen, ankette yer alan bir dizi soruyu yanıtlamanızdır. Katılım ortalama olarak 10 dakika sürmektedir.

Katılımınızla ilgili bilmeniz gerekenler

Araştırmaya katılım tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. Herhangi bir yaptırıma veya cezaya maruz kalmadan katılmayı reddedebilir veya herhangi bir sebeple bırakabilirsiniz. Katılımınız esnasında cevap vermek istemediğiniz soruları cevapsız bırakabilirsiniz.

Ankette sizden kimlik belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Cevaplarınız tamamıyla gizli tutulacak, sadece araştırmacılar tarafından değerlendirilecektir. Katılımcılardan elde edilecek bilgiler yalnızca toplu halde değerlendirilecek ve bilimsel yayınlarda kullanılacaktır. Sağladığınız veriler kimlik bilgileri ile eşleştirilmeyecektir.

Araştırmaya dair daha fazla bilgi almak isterseniz

İlgili soru ve yorumlarınızı araştırmacıya _____ adresinden iletebilirsiniz.

D. INFORMED CONSENT FORM (STUDY 2B)

Bu araştırma ODTÜ Psikoloji Bölümü araştırma görevlisi ve doktora öğrencisi Merve Nur Şahin tarafından Prof. Dr. Nuray Sakallı danışmanlığındaki tez çalışması kapsamında yürütülmektedir. Bu form sizi araştırma koşulları hakkında bilgilendirmek için hazırlanmıştır.

Araştırmanın Amacı Nedir?

Kadınların sokak tacizine dair görüşlerini incelemektir.

Kimler Katılabilir?

18-35 yaş aralığındaki Twitter (yeni adıyla X) kullanıcısı kadınlar katılabilir.

Bize Nasıl Yardımcı Olmanızı İsteyeceğiz?

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz sizden beklenen, ankette yer alan bir dizi soruyu yanıtlamanızdır. Katılım ortalama olarak 15-20 dakika sürmektedir.

Katılımınızla ilgili bilmeniz gerekenler

Araştırmaya katılım tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. Herhangi bir yaptırıma veya cezaya maruz kalmadan katılmayı reddedebilir veya herhangi bir sebeple bırakabilirsiniz. Katılımınız esnasında cevap vermek istemediğiniz soruları cevapsız bırakabilirsiniz.

Ankette sizden kimlik belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Cevaplarınız tamamıyla gizli tutulacak, sadece araştırmacılar tarafından değerlendirilecektir. Katılımcılardan elde edilecek bilgiler yalnızca toplu halde değerlendirilecek ve bilimsel yayınlarda kullanılacaktır. Sağladığınız veriler kimlik bilgileri ile eşleştirilmeyecektir.

Araştırmaya dair daha fazla bilgi almak isterseniz

İlgili soru ve yorumlarınızı araştırmacıya [redacted] adresinden iletebilirsiniz.

E. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (STUDY 1)

1. Sokak tacizi denince aklına ne geliyor?

2. Fail nasıl biri oluyor bu olaylarda?

3. Mağdur nasıl biri oluyor bu olaylarda?

4. Türkiye'de sokak tacizi önemli bir sorun mu sence?

5. Daha önce sokak tacizine hiç maruz kaldın mı?

Sokak tacizi *(ya da yabancı tacizi de deniyor), kadınların tanımadıkları bir kişi tarafından sokak, toplu taşıma ve mağazalar gibi kamuya açık alanlarda maruz bırakıldıkları cinsel şiddet türüne verilen ad. Bunun içerisinde ıslık çalma, rahatsız edici şekilde bakmak, laf atmak, hayır denilmesine rağmen ısrarla ad, telefon numarası ya da gittiği yeri sormak, takip etme, teşhircilik ve ellemek yer alıyor.* Tanım senin için net mi?

6. Sosyal medyada diğer kadınların sokak tacizine uğradıklarına dair paylaşımlarını hiç görüyor musun (Evet ise en çok hangi platformda)?

7. Bu paylaşımların içerikleri genelde nasıl oluyor?

8. Bu paylaşımları gördüğünde sen neler düşündürüyorsun/hissediyorsun?

9. Bu paylaşımları gördüğünde ne yapıyorsun?

10. Paylaşımdaki olay başka zamanlarda hiç aklına geliyor mu? Yani o sosyal medya uygulamasını kullanmıyorken. Neler yapıyorsun?

11. Kendini bir feminist olarak adlandırır mısın?

12. (Evet ise) Az önce bahsettiğimiz tür paylaşımları gördüğünde kendini feminist olarak adlandırman sence düşünce/duygu/davranışlarını, paylaşıma verdiğin tepkiyi etkiliyor mu?

13. Feminist kolektif hareketlere katılıyor musun?

14. (Evet ise) Az önce bahsettiğimiz tür paylaşımları gördüğünde, feminist kolektif hareketlere katılıyor olman sence düşünce/duygu/davranışlarını, paylaşıma verdiğin tepkiyi etkiliyor mu?

15. Sokak tacizinin yaşanmaması için bir kolektif harekete katıldın mı daha önce hiç?

F. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM (STUDY 1)

1. Cinsiyetiniz: _____

2. Yaşınız: _____

3. Eğitim durumunuz: _____

4. Öğrenciyseniz bölümünüz: _____

5. Öğrenciyseniz kaçıncı sınıfsınız: _____

6. Ekonomik açıdan kendinizi aşağıdaki ölçek üzerinde nereye yerleştireceğinizi işaretleyiniz.

Alt sınıf 1 2 3 4 5 6 *Üst sınıf*

7. Siyasi görüş açısından kendinizi aşağıdaki ölçek üzerinde nereye yerleştireceğinizi işaretleyiniz.

Radikal Sol 1 2 3 4 5 6 *Radikal Sağ*

8. Sosyal medya kullanıyor musunuz?

Evet Hayır

9. Bir Twitter hesabınız var mı?

Evet Hayır

G. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM (STUDY 2A AND 2B)

1. Cinsiyetiniz: _____
2. Yaşınız: _____
3. Eğitim durumunuz: _____
4. Öğrenciyseniz bölümünüz: _____
5. Öğrenciyseniz kaçıncı sınıfsınız: _____
6. Ekonomik açıdan kendinizi aşağıdaki ölçek üzerinde nereye yerleştireceğinizi işaretleyiniz.

Alt sınıf 1 2 3 4 5 6 *Üst sınıf*

7. Siyasi görüş açısından kendinizi aşağıdaki ölçek üzerinde nereye yerleştireceğinizi işaretleyiniz.

Radikal Sol 1 2 3 4 5 6 *Radikal Sağ*

8. Bir Twitter hesabınız var mı?

   Evet Hayır

9. Bir gün içerisinde Twitter (X)'da tahmini olarak ne kadar vakit geçiriyorsunuz?
   - Hiç geçirmiyorum
   - 15 dakikadan daha az
   - 15–30 dakika arası
   - 30 dakika–1 saat arası
   - 1–2 saat arası
   - 2–3 saat arası
   - 3–4 saat arası
   - 4–5 saat arası
   - 5–6 saat arası
   - 6 saat ve üzeri.
10. Bir gün içerisinde Twitter (X) dışındaki diğer sosyal medya uygulamalarında tahmini olarak ne kadar vakit geçiriyorsunuz?
    - Hiç geçirmiyorum
    - 15 dakikadan daha az

- 15–30 dakika arası
- 30 dakika–1 saat arası
- 1–2 saat arası
- 2–3 saat arası
- 3–4 saat arası
- 4–5 saat arası
- 5–6 saat arası
- 6 saat ve üzeri.

H. STRANGER HARASSMENT INDEX (STUDY 2A AND 2B)

Aşağıda sokak, toplu taşıma, mağazalar ve dükkanlar gibi kamuya açık alanlarda yaşamış olabileceğiniz bazı durumlar verilmiştir. Lütfen bunları deneyimleme sıklığınızı değerlendiriniz.

	Hiç maruz kalmadım	**Geçtiğimiz yıl içerisinde sadece bir kere maruz kaldım**	**Ayda bir kez maruz kalıyorum**	**Ayda 2 - 4 kez maruz kalıyorum**	**Birkaç günde bir maruz kalıyorum**	**Her gün maruz kalıyorum**
Tanımadığınız birinin size laf atmasına, ıslık çalmasına ya da dik bir şekilde bakmasına.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Tanımadığınız birinin istemediğiniz halde size karşı cinsel ilgisine ya da etkileşimine.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Tanımadığınız birinin size karşı kaba ve saldırganca cinsel içerikli yorumlarına, şakalarına ya da davranışlarına.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Tanımadığınız birinin size karşı cinsiyetçi yorumlarına ya da davranışlarına.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Tanımadığınız birinin sizi baştan çıkarmaya çalışan davranışlarına, yorumlarına ya da "hadi ama"larına.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Tanımadığınız birinin size istemediğiniz halde dokunmasına, okşamasına ya da sarılmasına.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Tanımadığınız birinin size karşı cinsellik yaşamaya yönelik üstü kapalı baskısına ya da zorlamasına.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Tanımadığınız birinin size karşı cinsellik yaşamaya yönelik direkt ya da apaçık baskısına.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Tanımadığınız birinin sizi direkt olarak ya da zorla okşamasına ya da sizi kavramasına.	0	1	2	3	4	5

I. INDIRECT EXPOSURE TO STRANGER HARASSMENT VIA TWITTER SCALE (STUDY 2A AND 2B)

Aşağıda kadınların sokak, toplu taşıma, mağazalar ve dükkanlar gibi kamuya açık alanlarda yaşayabilecekleri bazı durumlar verilmiştir. Lütfen bunları Twitter (X) üzerinde gördüğünüz, kadınların yaşadıkları olayları anlattıkları tweetlerini düşünerek değerlendiriniz.

	Hiç görmedim	**Geçtiğimiz yıl içerisinde sadece bir kere gördüm**	**Ayda bir kez görüyorum**	**Ayda 2 - 4 kez görüyorum**	**Birkaç günde bir görüyorum**	**Her gün görüyorum**
Bir kadının tanımadığı birinin ona laf atmasına, ıslık çalmasına ya da dik bir şekilde bakmasına dair bir tweetini.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Bir kadının tanımadığı birinin istemediği halde ona karşı cinsel ilgisine ya da etkileşimine maruz kaldığına dair bir tweetini.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Bir kadının tanımadığı birinin ona karşı kaba ve saldırganca cinsel içerikli yorumlarına, şakalarına ya da davranışlarına maruz kaldığına dair bir tweetini.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Bir kadının tanımadığı birinin ona karşı cinsiyetçi yorumlarına ya da davranışlarına maruz kaldığına dair bir tweetini.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Bir kadının tanımadığı birinin onu baştan çıkarmaya çalışan davranışlarına, yorumlarına ya da "hadi ama"larına maruz kaldığına dair bir tweetini.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Bir kadının tanımadığı birinin ona istemediği halde dokunmasına, okşamasına ya da sarılmasına maruz kaldığına dair bir tweetini.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Bir kadının tanımadığı birinin ona karşı cinsellik yaşamaya yönelik üstü kapalı baskısına ya da zorlamasına maruz kaldığına dair bir tweetini.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Bir kadının tanımadığı birinin ona karşı cinsellik yaşamaya yönelik direkt ya da apaçık baskısına maruz kaldığına dair bir tweetini.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Bir kadının tanımadığı birinin onu direkt olarak ya da zorla okşamasına ya da onu kavramasına maruz kaldığına dair bir tweetini.	0	1	2	3	4	5

J. FEAR OF RAPE SCALE (STUDY 2A AND 2B)

Lütfen aşağıdaki maddelerin sizin için geçerliliğini 0 (Asla) ve 4 (Her zaman) aralığında değerlendiriniz.

	Asla				**Her zaman**
Gece saat geç ise arkadaşlarımdan bineceğim taşıta kadar benimle yürümelerini isterim.	0	1	2	3	4
Gece tek başıma dışarı çıkmaktan kaçınırım.	0	1	2	3	4
Eğer hava karanlık olsaydı ve aracıma doğru yürümek zorunda kalsaydım güvendiğim birinin bana eşlik etmesini sağlardım.	0	1	2	3	4
Eğer tek başıma araba kullanıyor olsaydım ve arabamı park etmem gerekseydi, iyi aydınlatılmış bir sokağa park etmeye çalışırdım.	0	1	2	3	4
Gece geç saatte yürüyüşe çıkmadan önce iki kez düşünürüm.	0	1	2	3	4
Gece geç saatte dışarıda yürümek zorundaysam önlemler alırım.	0	1	2	3	4
Gece tek başıma dışarıda yürürken çok dikkatli olurum.	0	1	2	3	4
Gece tek başıma metroya/otobüse binmek zorunda kalırsam kaygılı hissederim.	0	1	2	3	4
Gece geç saatte dışarı çıkacaksam şehrin belirli yerlerinden uzak dururum.	0	1	2	3	4
Erkeklere karşı temkinliyimdir.	0	1	2	3	4
Genel olarak, erkeklere karşı kuşkucuyumdur.	0	1	2	3	4
Erkeklerden korkuyorum.	0	1	2	3	4
Cinsel saldırıya uğramaktan korkuyorum.	0	1	2	3	4

Lütfen aşağıdaki maddelerin sizin için geçerliliğini 0 (Hiç güvende hissetmiyorum) ve 4 (Çok güvende hissediyorum) aralığında değerlendiriniz.

	Hiç güvende hissetmiyorum				**Çok güvende hissediyorum**
Gece mahallenizde tek başınıza dışarıdayken kendinizi ne kadar güvende hissediyorsunuz?	0	1	2	3	4
Evinizde tek başınızayken kendinizi ne kadar güvende hissediyorsunuz?	0	1	2	3	4
Genel olarak, geceleri kendinizi ne kadar güvende hissediyorsunuz?	0	1	2	3	4

K. SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS SCALE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USERS (STUDY 2A AND 2B)

Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadeleri Twitter (X) üzerinde, diğer kadınların sokak tacizine uğradıklarına dair tweetlerini okuduktan sonraki 7 gününüzü düşünerek 1 (*Hiçbir zaman*) ve 5 (*Çok sık*) aralığında yanıtlayınız.

Twitter üzerinde, diğer kadınların sokak tacizine uğradıklarına dair tweetlerini okuduktan sonraki 7 gün içerisinde…

	Hiçbir zaman	**Nadiren**	**Bazen**	**Sık sık**	**Çok sık**
Duygusal olarak hissizleştim.	1	2	3	4	5
Gördüğüm o tweetleri düşündüğüm zaman kalbim çarpmaya başladı.	1	2	3	4	5
Tweetlerini okuduğum kadınların tecrübe ettiği travmaları tekrar yaşıyormuşum gibi geldi.	1	2	3	4	5
Uyumakta güçlük çektim.	1	2	3	4	5
Gelecek konusunda cesaretimin kırıldığını hissettim.	1	2	3	4	5
Gördüğüm o tweetleri hatırlatan şeyler beni üzdü.	1	2	3	4	5
Çevremde bulunan insanlarla pek birlikte olmak istemedim.	1	2	3	4	5
Kendimi gergin hissettim.	1	2	3	4	5
Her zamankinden daha az aktiftim.	1	2	3	4	5
İstemediğim halde, gördüğüm o tweetlerdeki üzücü şeyleri düşündüm.	1	2	3	4	5
Dikkatimi toplamakta zorlandım.	1	2	3	4	5
Bana, o tweetlerde gördüğüm üzücü şeyleri hatırlatan insanlar, mekânlar ya da olaylardan uzak durdum.	1	2	3	4	5
Gördüğüm o tweetlerle ilgili rahatsız edici rüyalar gördüm.	1	2	3	4	5
Twitter'dan uzaklaşmak istedim.	1	2	3	4	5
Çok çabuk öfkelendim.	1	2	3	4	5
Kötü bir şeyin olmasını bekledim.	1	2	3	4	5
Twitter ile ilgili hafızamda boşluklar olduğunu fark ettim.	1	2	3	4	5

L. EMOTIONAL RESPONSIVENESS QUESTIONNAIRE (STUDY 2A AND 2B)

Lütfen aşağıdaki duygusal tepkileri Twitter (X) üzerinde diğer kadınların sokak tacizine uğradıklarına dair tweetlerini okurken ne derecede hissettiğinizi belirtiniz. Deneyiminizi 1 (*Hiç*) ve 7 (*Aşırı*) aralığında değerlendiriniz.

	Hiç						**Aşırı**
Tetikte	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hüzünlü	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Anlayışlı	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Şefkatli	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Dertli	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Samimi	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kederli	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Merhametli	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Üzgün	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Rahatsız	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hassas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Endişeli	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Duygulu	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kaygılı	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

M. INTENTION TO ENGAGE IN FEMINIST COLLECTIVE ACTION SCALE (STUDY 2A AND 2B)

Aşağıda kadın hareketiyle ilgili gelecekte katılabileceğiniz birtakım eylemlere ilişkin ifadeler yer almaktadır. Lütfen bu ifadelerin sizin için geçerliliğini 1 (*Kesinlikle katılmıyorum*) ve 5 (*Kesinlikle katılıyorum*) aralığında değerlendiriniz.

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				**Kesinlikle katılıyorum**
Kadın haklarını savunan bir organizasyonun toplantı, forum ya da tartışma gruplarına katılmaya istekliyim.	1	2	3	4	5
İnternet üzerinden sosyal medya ya da diğer ağlar yoluyla kadın hareketiyle ilişkili bir protestoya katılmaya istekliyim.	1	2	3	4	5
İsmimi e-posta ya da başka yollarla kadın hareketiyle ilişkili bir toplu protesto için imza sayfasına eklemeye istekliyim.	1	2	3	4	5
Kadın haklarını savunan bir yürüyüş veya eyleme katılmaya istekliyim.	1	2	3	4	5

N. PAST FEMINIST COLLECTIVE ACTION ENGAGEMENT SCALE (STUDY 2A AND 2B)

Aşağıda bazı eylemler listelenmiştir. Lütfen bunları geçtiğimiz 1 yıl içerisinde ne sıklıkta yaptığınızı belirtiniz.

	Hiç	**1 kez**	**2-3 kez**	**4-5 kez**	**6 ve üzeri kez**
Kadın haklarını savunan bir organizasyonun toplantı, forum ya da tartışma gruplarına katıldım.	1	2	3	4	5
İnternet üzerinden sosyal medya ya da diğer ağlar yoluyla kadın hareketiyle ilişkili bir protestoya katıldım.	1	2	3	4	5
İsmimi e-posta ya da başka yollarla kadın hareketiyle ilişkili bir toplu protesto için imza sayfasına ekledim.	1	2	3	4	5
Kadın haklarını savunan bir yürüyüş veya eyleme katıldım.	1	2	3	4	5

O. SELF-IDENTIFICATION AS A FEMINIST SCALE (STUDY 2A AND 2B)

Lütfen aşağıdaki maddelerin sizin için geçerliliğini 1 (*Kesinlikle katılmıyorum*) ve 5 (*Kesinlikle katılıyorum*) aralığında değerlendiriniz.

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum				**Kesinlikle katılıyorum**
Kendimi bir feminist olarak görüyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
Kendimi diğer insanlara feminist olarak tanımlıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
Feminist değerler ve ilkeler benim için önemlidir.	1	2	3	4	5
Feminist hareketin hedeflerini destekliyorum.	1	2	3	4	5

P. CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Merve Nur Şahin Sevinç

email:

EDUCATION

Degree	Institution/Program	Year
Ph.D.	Middle East Technical University/Social Psychology	2020 - 2026
M.S.	Hacettepe University/General (Social) Psychology	2017 - 2020
B.S.	Işık University (100% Scholarship)/Psychology	2012 - 2017

WORK EXPERIENCE

Position	Organization/City	Year
Intern	Vizyon Hospital/Mersin	2013
Intern	Toros Hospital/Mersin	2016
Psychologist	İzem Special Education and Rehabilitation Center/Mersin	2020
Research Assistant	Tarsus University/Mersin	2020
Research Assistant	Middle East Technical University/Ankara	2020 - 2026

PROJECTS

Role	Project	PI	Year
Ph.D. Scholar	*Investigating the Antecedents of Climate Change Denial and Reactions to Climate Change Messages from a Social Psychological Perspective* (TÜBİTAK 1001, Project No. 323K082)	Assoc. Prof. Gözde Kıral Uçar (Çanakkale University)	2025 - Present

TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP EXPERIENCE

Year	Semester	Course
2020-2021	Fall	PSY452 Psychology of Women & Gender
	Spring	PSY452 Psychology of Women & Gender
		PSY1020 Ethics in Research and Practice of Psychology
2021-2022	Fall	PSY4404 Psychology of Women & Gender
	Spring	PSY4404 Psychology of Women & Gender
		PSY1020 Ethics in Research and Practice of Psychology
2022-2023	Fall	PSY4404 Psychology of Women & Gender
		PSY3492 Workshop in Social Psychology
	Spring	PSY651 Attitudes & Attitude Change (grad.)
		PSY4404 Psychology of Women & Gender
		PSY6101 Statistics, Methods & Ethics in Psychological Research II (grad.)
		PSY3492 Workshop in Social Psychology
2023-2024	Fall	PSY4404 Psychology of Women & Gender
		PSY2102 Statistics for Psychology
		PSY5101 Statistics, Methods, and Ethics in Psychological Research (grad.)
	Spring	PSY4404 Psychology of Women & Gender
		PSY450 Changing Sexism through Intervention
		PSY150 Topics in Quantitative Methods and Statistics in Psychology
		PSY405 Stereotypes, Prejudice and Discrimination
2024-2025	Fall	PSY4404 Psychology of Women & Gender
		PSY450 Changing Sexism through Intervention
		PSY5101 Statistics, Methods, and Ethics in Psychological Research (grad.)
	Spring	PSY4404 Psychology of Women & Gender
		PSY6405 Intergroup Relations (grad.)
		PSY1410 Understanding Social Behavior
2025 - 2026	Fall	PSY4404 Psychology of Women & Gender
		PSY5402 Psychology of Women & Gender (grad.)
		PSY5101 Statistics, Methods, and Ethics in Psychological Research (grad.)
		PSY6403 Social Psychological Aspects of Legal Processes (grad.)
	Spring	PSY4404 Psychology of Women & Gender
		PSY2201 Learning
		PSY6401 Attitudes & Attitude Change (grad.)

PUBLICATIONS

In International Refereed Journals

Obioma, I. F., **Şahin**, M. N., Rumeli, Y., van Dick, R., & Hernandez-Bark, A. S. (2025). Gender, self-stereotyping, and life goals predict career interest in Germany, Nigeria, and Turkey. *Sex Roles, 91*(6), 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-025-01579-1

Şahin, M. N. (2025). Uncovering the hairlessness norm: A review on women's body hair from a social-psychological perspective. *Sexuality & Culture, 30*(1), 357-381. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-025-10429-x

Şahin, M. N., Rumeli, Y., & Sakallı, N. (2025). An application of the theory of planned behavior to women's feminist and protective action in Türkiye. *Current Psychology, 44*(17), 14368-14382. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-025-08179-y

In National Refereed Journals

Akkaya, E. C., Sarı, E., **Şahin**, M. N., Rumeli, Y., Darıcı, E., Kayıklık, H. İ., & Sayılan, G. (2025). Pro-environmental behaviors in Türkiye: A scale development study. *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi, 65*(1), 157-187. https://doi.org/10.33171/dtcfjournal.2025.65.1.6

Sakallı, N., Rumeli, Y., & **Şahin**, M. N. (2022). Erkeklerin cinsiyetçiliğe tepkileri: Meşrulaştırma, kendini suskunlaştırma, yüzleşme ve kolektif hareket. *Nesne, 10*(23), 105-130. https://doi.org/10.7816/nesne-10-23-07

Şahin, M. N., & Abayhan, Y. (2024). Instagram kullanımı, nesneleştirme ve kilo damgalaması: Korelatif ve deneysel bir çalışma. *Kalem Uluslararası Eğitim ve İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi, 14*(1), 95-127. https://doi.org/10.23863/kalem.2023.265

Papers Presented at International Congresses

Rumeli, Y., **Şahin**, M. N., Gül, D., Şengün, E. S., Akay, A., Tekkelioğlu, C., Ozan, Z. D., & Sakallı, N. (2024, July 21-26). *The Silence of the Men: Effects of Normative Male Alexithymia and Self-Silencing on Life and Relationship Satisfaction* [Oral presentation]. 33rd International Congress of Psychology, Prague, Czech Republic.

Şahin, M. N., Rumeli, Y., Sesli, A. E., Gündoğdu, A. A., Topçu, Z., Baştürk, E., Ozan, Z. D., Yağcı, E. D., & Sakallı, N. (2024, July 21-26). *Development of the Attitudes Toward Feminist Activism Scale* [Oral presentation]. 33rd International Congress of Psychology, Prague, Czech Republic.

Papers Presented at National Congresses

Akkaya, E. C., Darıcı, E., Kayıklık, H. İ., Rumeli, Y., Sarı, E., **Şahin**, M. N., & Sayılan, G. (2023, July 25). *Türkiye çevreci davranış ölçeği: Ölçek geliştirme çalışması* [Oral presentation]. II. Ulusal Çevreci Beşerî Bilimler Konferansı.

Şahin, M. N., & Abayhan, Y. (2022, June 11-12). *Instagram kullanımı, nesneleştirme ve kilo damgalaması arasındaki ilişkinin korelatif ve deneysel olarak incelenmesi* [Poster presentation]. IV. Sosyal Psikoloji Kongresi, İzmir.

Şahin, M. N., & Sakallı, N. (2022, June 11-12). *Planlanmış davranış kuramının kadınların kolektif hareketine uyarlanması* [Poster presentation]. IV. Sosyal Psikoloji Kongresi, İzmir.

Şahin, M. N., Rumeli, Y., Obioma, I. F., Hernandez-Bark, A. S., & van Dick, R. (2022, October 13-16). *İdeal meslek seçimi ve kendini cinsiyete göre tanımlama arasındaki ilişkide sosyal psikolojik değişkenlerin aracı ve moderatör rolünün incelenmesi* [Poster presentation]. 21. Ulusal Psikoloji Kongresi, İstanbul.

R. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

BÖLÜM 1

GİRİŞ

Sosyal medyanın günlük yaşamın ayrılmaz bir parçası haline gelmesiyle birlikte kadınlar cinsiyet temelli şiddet ve taciz deneyimlerini giderek daha fazla sosyal medya platformları aracılığıyla paylaşmaya başlamıştır. Özellikle #MeToo hareketi ile birlikte Twitter, kadınların yaşadıkları deneyimleri görünür kıldıkları, diğer kadınlarla dayanışma kurdukları ve kamuoyu oluşturdukları başlıca platformlardan biri haline gelmiştir (Bogen ve ark., 2021; Fileborn ve Loney-Howes, 2019; Mendes ve ark., 2019). Bu paylaşımlar arasında, kamusal alanlarda yabancı bir fail tarafından gerçekleştirilen yabancı tacizi deneyimleri önemli bir yer tutmaktadır (Fileborn, 2013, 2017).

Bu paylaşımlar kadınlara önemli bireysel ve toplumsal yararlar sağlamakla birlikte, Twitter'da diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine sıklıkla maruz kalmanın olumsuz etkileri olabilir. Önceki çalışmalar, kadınların kendi yaşadıkları yabancı tacizi deneyimlerinin travma sonrası stres bozukluğu (TSSB) belirtileriyle hem doğrudan hem de tecavüz korkusu aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir (Carretta ve Szymanski, 2020). Mevcut doktora tezinde ise, yabancı tacizini kendileri deneyimlememiş olsalar bile, Twitter üzerinden diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine tekrar eden biçimde maruz kalan kadınların da ikincil travmatik stres belirtileri geliştirebilecekleri öne sürülmektedir.

Figley'e (1986, 1995) göre bireyler, yalnızca travmatik olayları doğrudan deneyimleyerek değil, travmatize olmuş kişilerin deneyimlerine dolaylı olarak maruz kalarak da travma belirtileri geliştirebilirler. Bu durum ikincil travmatik stres (İTS) olarak adlandırılmaktadır. Alan yazındaki çalışmalar, travmatize olmuş bireylerin aile

üyeleri, yakınları ve onlarla çalışan ruh sağlığı profesyonelleri başta olmak üzere çeşitli meslek gruplarının İTS geliştirebildiğini göstermektedir (Bride ve Figley, 2009; Buchanan ve ark., 2006; Figley, 1986; Figley ve McCubbin, 1983; Foreman ve ark., 2018; Gates ve Gillespie, 2008). Son yıllarda ise İTS araştırmaları, sosyal medya aracılığıyla terör saldırıları, doğal afetler ve COVID-19 pandemisi gibi kitlesel travmatik olaylara dolaylı olarak maruz kalmanın daha yüksek İTS düzeyleriyle ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymuştur (Goodwin ve ark., 2013; Holman ve ark., 2014; Liu ve Liu, 2020). Benzer şekilde, genel sosyal medya kullanım sıklığının da daha yüksek İTS düzeyleriyle ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur (Özdemir, 2023; Taşkın ve ark., 2024). Bununla birlikte, kişilerarası travma biçimlerine sosyal medya aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak maruz kalmanın İTS gelişimiyle ilişkisini inceleyen araştırmalar oldukça sınırlıdır. Alan yazın incelendiğinde, sosyal medyada bıçaklı saldırılara ilişkin haberlere maruz kalmanın daha yüksek İTS düzeyleriyle ilişkili olduğunu gösteren bir çalışma dışında (Secker ve Braithwaite, 2021), kişilerarası travmalara dolaylı maruziyet ile İTS arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyen herhangi bir araştırmaya rastlanmamıştır. Oysa kadınlar Twitter'da maruz kaldıkları yabancı tacizi deneyimlerini yaygın biçimde paylaşmalarına rağmen, bu paylaşımlara maruz kalmanın diğer kadınların İTS düzeyleriyle ilişkili olup olmadığı henüz bilinmemektedir.

Bunun yanı sıra, yabancı tacizi, kadınların gündelik yaşamlarını önemli ölçüde etkileyen yaygın bir cinsiyet temelli şiddet biçimi olmasına rağmen, alan yazında görece sınırlı düzeyde incelenmiştir (Benard ve Schlaffer, 1984; DelGreco ve Christensen, 2020; Fairchild ve Rudman, 2008; Fileborn ve O'Neill, 2023; Kissling, 1991; Lenton ve ark., 1999; Macmillan ve ark., 2000). Bu durum Türkiye bağlamında daha da belirgindir. Türkiye'de yabancı tacizini doğrudan ele alan çalışmalar oldukça sınırlıdır. Bu nedenle, Türkiye bağlamında kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerinin ve bu deneyimlere sosyal medya aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak maruz kalmanın psikolojik etkilerinin incelenmesine ihtiyaç bulunmaktadır.

Bu doğrultuda, mevcut tez çalışmasında kadınların Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmalarının İTS düzeyleriyle ilişkisi incelenmiştir. Ayrıca, bu ilişkide tecavüz korkusu (güvenlik kaygısı, önlem alma ve erkek korkusu) ve duygusal tepkinin (empati ve sıkıntı) aracı, feminizmin (feminist

kolektif hareketlere katılım, feminist kolektif hareketlere katılma niyeti ve feminist kimlik) ise düzenleyici rolü incelenmiştir. Çalışma 1'de, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilerek kadınların diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi paylaşımlarına maruz kalmaları, bu paylaşımlara verdikleri tepkiler, feminizmin rolü, Türkiye'de yabancı tacizine ilişkin algıları ve kendi yabancı tacizi deneyimleri nitel olarak incelenmiştir. Çalışma 2A'da Yabancı Tacizi Endeksi (Fairchild ve Rudman, 2008), Tecavüz Korkusu Ölçeği (Carretta ve Szymanski, 2020) ve Kendini Feminist Olarak Tanımlama Ölçeği (Szymanski, 2004) Türkçeye uyarlanmış ve Yabancı Tacizi Endeksi modifiye edilerek Twitter Aracılığıyla Dolaylı Olarak Yabancı Tacizine Maruz Kalma Ölçeği geliştirilmiştir. Çalışma 2B'de ise, kadınların Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalma sıklığının İTS düzeyiyle ilişkisi ve bu ilişkide tecavüz korkusu (güvenlik kaygısı, önlem alma ve erkek korkusu) ve duygusal tepkinin (empati ve sıkıntı) aracı, feminizmin (feminist kolektif hareketlere katılım, feminist kolektif hareketlere katılma niyeti ve feminist kimlik) düzenleyici rolü nicel olarak incelenmiştir. Ek olarak, feminizmin rolüne dair Çalışma 1'den elde edilen bulguların farklı yönlere işaret etmesi nedeniyle, feminizmin sonuç değişkeni olarak ele alındığı alternatif bir model de test edilmiştir.

1.1. İkincil Travmatik Stres ve Sosyal Medya Kaynaklı İkincil Travmatik Stres

Travmatik olaylar, ölüm tehdidi, ciddi düzeyde yaralanma veya cinsel şiddet gibi bireyin fiziksel ya da psikolojik bütünlüğünü tehdit eden yaşantılar olarak tanımlanabilir (Amerikan Psikiyatri Birliği, 2013; Figley, 1995). Travmatik olaylara doğrudan maruz kalmak başta TSSB olmak üzere çeşitli olumsuz ruh sağlığı sonuçlarıyla ilişkili bulunmuştur (Ayazi ve ark., 2014; Breslau ve ark., 1998; Kessler ve ark., 1995; Norris ve ark., 2002; Shalev ve ark., 2013; Tracy ve ark., 2014).

Figley (1986, 1995), bireylerin travmatik olayları yalnızca doğrudan deneyimleyerek değil, travmatize olmuş kişilerin deneyimlerine maruz kalarak dolaylı olarak da travma belirtileri geliştirebileceklerini ileri sürmüştür. İTS olarak adlandırılan bu durum, TSSB'ye benzer biçimde istemsiz yeniden yaşantılama, kaçınma, olumsuz duygu ve bilişler ve artan uyarılmışlık gibi belirtiler içermektedir. Önceki çalışmalar, travmatize olmuş bireylerin aile üyelerinin, yakınlarının ve onlarla çalışan profesyonellerin İTS geliştirebildiklerini göstermiştir (Bride ve Figley, 2009; Buchanan ve ark., 2006;

Figley, 1986; Figley ve McCubbin, 1983; Foreman ve ark., 2018; Gates ve Gillespie, 2008).

Daha sonraki çalışmalar, medya aracılığıyla travmatik olaylara maruz kalmanın da İTS geliştirme ile ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir (örn., Pfefferbaum ve ark., 1999; Jeronimus ve ark., 2019). Yakın zamanlı çalışmalar ise bu durumun sosyal medya için de geçerli olduğunu göstermiştir. Terör saldırıları, doğal afetler ve COVID-19 pandemisi gibi kitlesel travmatik olaylara sosyal medya aracılığıyla maruz kalmanın daha yüksek İTS düzeyleriyle ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur (Goodwin ve ark., 2013; Holman ve ark., 2014, 2020; Liu ve Liu, 2020; Zhao ve Zhou, 2020; Zhong ve ark., 2021). Türkiye'de yapılan araştırmalar da sosyal medyada geçirilen sürenin, olumsuz haberlerin takip edilmesinin ve olumsuz haber bağımlılığının (doomscrolling) daha yüksek sosyal medya kaynaklı İTS düzeyleriyle ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymuştur (Kırıkkanat ve Şimşek, 2026; Meral ve ark., 2025; Özdemir, 2023; Taşkın ve ark., 2024).

Bununla birlikte, bu çalışmalar büyük ölçüde deprem, terör saldırıları ve pandemi gibi kitlesel travmatik olaylara odaklanmıştır. Oysa sosyal medyada kullanıcılar yalnızca bu tür olaylara değil, başkalarının kişilerarası travma deneyimlerine de sıklıkla maruz kalmaktadır. Kadınların Twitter üzerinden paylaştıkları yabancı tacizi deneyimleri bunun en yaygın örneklerinden biridir (Bogen ve ark., 2021; Fileborn, 2017; Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019; Mendes ve ark., 2019). Dolayısıyla, Twitter üzerinden bu paylaşımlara maruz kalmak kadınların İTS geliştirmeleriyle ilişkili olabilir.

1.2. Cinsel Taciz, Yabancı Tacizi ve Twitter

Cinsel taciz, bireyin onurunu zedeleyen ve rahatsız edici, aşağılayıcı ya da saldırgan bir ortam yaratan istenmeyen sözlü, sözsüz veya fiziksel cinsel davranışlar olarak tanımlanabilir (Avrupa Cinsiyet Eşitliği Enstitüsü, 2024). Araştırmalar, cinsel tacizin kadınlarda depresyon, kaygı, psikolojik sıkıntı ve travma belirtileri gibi olumsuz psikolojik çıktılarla ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir (Ho ve ark., 2012; Houle ve ark., 2011; Östergren ve ark., 2022; Stockdale ve ark., 2009; Willness ve ark., 2007). Ancak, cinsel taciz araştırmaları büyük ölçüde iş yeri ve eğitim ortamlarında gerçekleşen taciz biçimlerine odaklanmış, kamusal alanlarda yabancı kişiler tarafından

gerçekleştirilen yabancı tacizi ise görece sınırlı incelenmiştir (Carretta ve Szymanski, 2020; Fairchild ve Rudman, 2008).

Yabancı tacizi, bireyin sokak, toplu taşıma, park, mağaza ve restoran gibi kamusal alanlarda tanımadığı bir kişi tarafından maruz bırakıldığı istenmeyen cinsel davranışlar olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Fileborn, 2013; Fileborn ve O'Neill, 2023). Islık çalma, dik dik bakma, cinsel içerikli yorumlarda bulunma, telefon numarası isteme, takip etme ve fiziksel temas gibi davranışları kapsayan yabancı tacizi, çoğu tanımda kadınların temel hedef, erkeklerin ise temel fail olduğu cinsiyet temelli bir şiddet biçimi olarak ele alınmaktadır. Araştırmacılar, günlük hayatta çoğunlukla zararsız iltifatlar olarak hafife alınsa da, yabancı tacizinin toplumsal güç ilişkilerinin yeniden üretildiği cinsiyet temelli bir şiddet biçimi olarak ele alınması gerektiğini belirtmektedir (Benard ve Schlaffer, 1984; Fileborn ve O'Neill, 2023; Kissling, 1991). Alan yazın incelendiğinde, yabancı tacizine maruz kalmanın kadınların kaygı, depresyon, travma belirtileri, korku, öfke ve psikolojik sıkıntının yanı sıra güvenlik algısının azalması ve kamusal alanlarda hareket özgürlüğünün kısıtlanmasıyla ilişkili olduğu görülmektedir (Carretta ve Szymanski, 2020; Davidson ve ark., 2016; DelGreco ve Christensen, 2020; Fairchild ve Rudman, 2008; MacMillan ve ark., 2000).

Sosyal medyanın günlük yaşamın ayrılmaz bir parçası haline gelmesiyle birlikte, kadınların yabancı tacizine maruz kalmaları yalnızca kendi deneyimleriyle sınırlı kalmamakta, diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine ilişkin paylaşımlara da sıklıkla maruz kalmaktadırlar. Özellikle Twitter, kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerini paylaştıkları, benzer deneyimler yaşayan kadınlarla dayanışma kurdukları ve bu deneyimleri görünür kıldıkları başlıca sosyal medya platformu haline gelmiştir (Cobb ve Horeck, 2018; Gede ve ark., 2025; Mendes ve ark., 2019). Bu paylaşımlar kadınlara hem bireysel hem de grup temelinde önemli yararlar sağlasa da diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmanın olumsuz psikolojik sonuçları olabilir. Geçmiş çalışmalar, başka bir kadının yabancı tacizine uğradığını hayal etmenin dahi erkeklere yönelik korku ve öfkeyi artırabildiğini ve ayrıca yabancı tacizi paylaşımlarına maruz kalan kadınların duygusal olarak olumsuz yönde etkilenebileceğini göstermiştir (Chaudoir ve Quinn, 2010; Fileborn, 2017). Ancak Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmanın

kadınların İTS düzeyleriyle ilişkili olup olmadığı ve bu ilişkinin altında yatan psikolojik mekanizmalar bugüne kadar incelenmemiştir. Bu doğrultuda, mevcut doktora tezinde söz konusu ilişkinin yanı sıra bu ilişkiyi açıklayabilecek olası psikolojik mekanizmalar araştırılmıştır.

1.3. Tecavüz Korkusu

Alan yazında, kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimleri ile TSSB semptomları arasındaki ilişkiyi açıklayan temel değişkenlerden biri tecavüz korkusudur (Carretta ve Szymanski, 2020). Tecavüz korkusu, kadınların cinsel şiddete maruz kalabileceklerine ilişkin duydukları korkuyu ifade etmektedir. Ferraro'nun (1996) cinsel saldırının gölgesi hipotezine göre, kadınların cinsel saldırıya maruz kalma riskinin erkeklere kıyasla daha yüksek olması ve cinsel şiddetin toplumsal cinsiyet temelli bir olgu olması nedeniyle, kadınlar görece hafif görünen suçlarda dahi erkeklere kıyasla daha büyük korku yaşamakta ve olayın tecavüze dönüşmesi korkusu taşımaktadırlar. Bu nedenle yabancı tacizi, yalnızca tek başına bir mağduriyet deneyimi olmayıp kadınlara daha ağır cinsel şiddet biçimlerine maruz kalabileceklerini sürekli hatırlatan toplumsal güç hiyerarşisinin bir tezahürü olarak değerlendirilmelidir (Donnelly ve Calogero, 2018; Fileborn ve O'Neill, 2023; Kelly, 1987; Kissling ve Kramarae, 1991). Ayrıca yabancı tacizinin failinin mağdurun tanımadığı bir erkek olması, failin niyetinin ve davranışlarının öngörülememesi nedeniyle kadınların tehdit algısını daha da artırabilmektedir (Vera-Gray, 2016).

Carretta ve Szymanski'ye (2020) göre tecavüz korkusu güvenlik kaygısı, önlem alma davranışları ve erkek korkusu olmak üzere üç boyuttan oluşmaktadır. Güvenlik kaygısı, kadınların cinsel şiddet tehdidi nedeniyle kendilerini güvende hissetmemelerini; önlem alma davranışları, cinsel şiddetten korunmak amacıyla günlük yaşamlarında çeşitli güvenlik stratejileri geliştirmelerini; erkek korkusu ise erkeklere yönelik genellenmiş bir korkuyu ifade etmektedir. Geçmiş araştırmalar, yabancı tacizine maruz kalan kadınların kamusal alanları daha güvensiz algıladıklarını, geceleri yalnız yürümekten kaçındıklarını, güzergâhlarını değiştirdiklerini, sürekli çevrelerini kontrol ettiklerini ve yabancı erkeklere karşı daha fazla korku duyduklarını göstermektedir (Carretta ve Szymanski, 2020; Davidson ve ark., 2016; Fairchild ve Rudman, 2008; MacMillan ve ark., 2000). Türkiye'de yapılan

çalışmalar da kadınların özellikle gece saatlerinde sokakta, toplu taşımada ve yetersiz aydınlatılmış alanlarda kendilerini güvende hissetmediklerini ve günlük yaşamlarında çeşitli güvenlik önlemleri aldıklarını ortaya koymuştur (Antmen, 2025; Okan, 2023; Tandoğan ve İlhan, 2016).

Yabancı tacizi ile tecavüz korkusu arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyen çalışmalar, yabancı tacizine daha sık maruz kalan kadınların güvenlik kaygısı, önlem alma davranışları ve erkek korkusunun daha yüksek olduğunu göstermektedir (Carretta ve Szymanski, 2020; Fairchild ve Rudman, 2008). Carretta ve Szymanski (2020), tecavüz korkusunun üç boyutunun yabancı tacizi ile travma sonrası stres belirtileri arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık ettiğini göstermiştir. Ancak bu çalışmalar yalnızca kadınların kendi yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine odaklanmıştır. Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmanın kadınların tecavüz korkusuyla ilişkili olup olmadığı ise bugüne kadar incelenmemiştir. Bu nedenle mevcut tezde tecavüz korkusunun üç boyutu, dolaylı maruziyet ile İTS arasındaki ilişkide olası aracı mekanizmalar olarak ele alınmıştır.

1.4. Duygusal Tepki

Kadınların Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmaları ve İTS arasındaki olası ilişkiyi açıklayabilecek bir diğer mekanizma duygusal tepkilerdir. Gruplararası duygular kuramına göre (Mackie ve ark., 2000; Mackie ve Smith, 2018), bireyler aidiyet hissettikleri grubun diğer üyelerini etkileyen olaylara karşı duygusal tepkiler gösterebilirler. Kadınlar diğer kadınları kendi iç gruplarının üyeleri olarak algılayabilir ve Twitter'da diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine dair paylaşımlarına maruz kaldıklarında duygusal tepkiler geliştirebilirler. Bu tepkiler arasında İTS ile ilişkili olabilecek iki temel duygusal tepki bulunmaktadır: empati ve psikolojik sıkıntı.

Empati, bireyin diğerlerinin duygularını paylaşabilme ve onların yaşadıklarını kendi yaşantısı gibi hissedebilme eğilimi olarak tanımlanabilir (Mehrabian, 1988; Stotland, 1969). Figley (1986, 1998), empatiyi İTS gelişimindeki temel mekanizmalardan biri olarak tanımlamış ve travmatize olmuş bireylerle empatik bağ kurmanın kişileri dolaylı travmaya karşı daha savunmasız hâle getirdiğini ileri sürmüştür. Geçmiş çalışmalar da travmatize bireylerle çalışan meslek gruplarının ve sosyal medya

aracılığıyla travmatik olaylara maruz kalan bireylerin daha yüksek empati düzeylerinin yüksek İTS ile ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir (Çakıroğlu, 2026; Figley, 1998; Schleicher, 2026; Woodward ve ark., 2005). Benzer şekilde, kadınların diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimleriyle empati kurmaları da İTS geliştirmeleriyle ilişkili olabilir. Nitekim nitel çalışmalar, kadınların sosyal medyada paylaşılan toplumsal cinsiyet temelli şiddet içerikleriyle kendilerini özdeşleştirdiklerini ve bu içeriklere korku, kaygı, sıkıntı ve aşırı tetikte olma gibi güçlü duygusal tepkiler verdiklerini göstermektedir (Fileborn, 2017; Soysal, 2025).

Psikolojik sıkıntı ise kaygı, üzüntü, endişe ve psikolojik rahatsızlık gibi olumsuz duygusal durumları ifade etmektedir (Ridner, 2004). Alan yazında psikolojik sıkıntının İTS belirtilerinden kavramsal olarak farklı olduğu ancak bu belirtilerle yakından ilişkili olduğu belirtilmektedir (Bride ve ark., 2004; Figley, 1995). Geçmiş çalışmalar, travmatize olmuş bireylerin yakınlarında ve ruh sağlığı çalışanlarında daha yüksek psikolojik sıkıntının daha yüksek İTS düzeyleriyle ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir (Bride, 2007; Figley, 1998; Hensel, 2015). Benzer şekilde, medya ve sosyal medya aracılığıyla travmatik olaylara maruz kalmanın da bireylerin yüksek psikolojik sıkıntı ve stres belirtileriyle ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur (Comstock ve Platania, 2017; Holman ve ark., 2014; Liu ve Liu, 2020; Soysal, 2025; Taşkın ve ark., 2024). Bu doğrultuda, mevcut tezde kadınların Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmalarının empati ve psikolojik sıkıntıyı artırabileceği, bu duygusal tepkilerin de İTS ile maruz kalma arasında aracı rol oynayabileceği öne sürülmüştür.

1.5. Feminist Kimlik ve Feminist Kolektif Hareket

Kadınların Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmaları tüm kadınları aynı şekilde etkilemeyebilir. Bu farklılığı açıklayabilecek koruyucu faktörlerden biri feminizm olabilir. Feminizm, kadınların yabancı tacizini bireysel ve rastlantısal olaylar yerine toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizlikleri ve ataerkil sistem bağlamında değerlendirmelerine yardımcı olabilir, kadınlar arasında dayanışma, aidiyet, sosyal destek ve güçlenme duygularını arttırabilir ve (Brown, 2004; Gefter ve ark., 2013; Leavy ve Adams, 1986) böylece dolaylı maruziyetin olumsuz psikolojik etkilerinin ortaya çıkmasını engelleyebilir. Bu doğrultuda mevcut tezde, feminizmin

iki farklı göstergesi olan feminist kimlik ile feminist kolektif eylem düzenleyici değişkenler olarak incelenmiştir.

Feminist kimlik, kadınların toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerini ve bunların temelindeki ataerkil sistemi fark etmesi, feminist değer ve amaçları benimsemesi ve feminist kimliğini benlik algısının bir parçası hâline getirmesi olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Brown, 1994). Feminist kimlik, yalnızca feminist inanışlara sahip olmaktan farklı olup, feminizmi bireyin kimliğinin önemli bir bileşeni olarak benimsemesini ifade etmektedir (Weis ve ark., 2018). Sosyal Kimlik Kuramı'na göre bireyler, ait oldukları sosyal gruplardan edindikleri psikolojik kaynaklar sayesinde stresli yaşam olaylarıyla daha etkili biçimde başa çıkabilmektedir (Haslam ve ark., 2018; Jetten ve ark., 2012; Tajfel ve Turner, 1979). Bu doğrultuda yapılan çalışmalar, feminist kimliğin daha olumlu beden algısı, daha düşük beden utancı ve psikolojik sıkıntı ile ilişkili olduğunu; kadınların cinsiyetçiliği daha kolay fark etmelerini, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerine karşı çıkmalarını ve cinsel taciz ile cinsiyetçiliğin olumsuz etkileriyle daha etkili biçimde başa çıkmalarını desteklediğini göstermektedir (Ayres ve ark., 2009; Gefter ve ark., 2013; Hurt ve ark., 2007; Leaper ve Arias, 2011; Moradi ve Subich, 2002). Yabancı tacizi bağlamında ise Carretta ve Szymanski (2020), feminist kimliğin yabancı tacizi ile travma sonrası stres belirtileri arasındaki doğrudan ilişkiyi düzenlemediğini, ancak kendini suçlama aracılığıyla oluşan dolaylı etkiyi zayıflattığını göstermiştir. Bu bulgulardan hareketle, mevcut tezde feminist kimliğin kadınların Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmaları ile ikincil travmatik stres arasındaki ilişkiyi düzenleyebileceği öne sürülmüştür.

Mevcut tezde ele alınan ikinci düzenleyici değişken ise feminist kolektif eylemlere katılımdır. Feminist kolektif eylem, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerini azaltmayı ve kadın haklarını iyileştirmeyi amaçlayan davranışları ifade etmektedir (Radke ve ark., 2018). Sosyal kimlik temelli kolektif eylem modeline (van Zomeren ve ark., 2008) göre kolektif eylemlere katılım, grup temelli haksızlıklar karşısında bireylere aidiyet, kolektif yeterlik, güçlenme ve sosyal destek sağlayabilir ve psikolojik iyilik hâllerini arttırabilir. Nitekim geçmiş çalışmalar feminist kolektif eyleme katılımın kadınların psikolojik iyi oluş, yaşam doyumu, sosyal destek ve kendini kabul ile pozitif ilişkili olduğunu ve ayrıca cinsiyetçiliğin psikolojik sıkıntı üzerindeki olumsuz etkilerini

azaltabildiğini göstermiştir (Conlin ve ark., 2020; Foster, 2000; Leavy ve Adams, 1986; Szymanski ve Owens, 2009; Watson ve ark., 2018). Ayrıca kadınların yabancı tacizine karşı bireysel çözümler yerine kolektif mücadeleyi daha etkili gördükleri belirtilmektedir (Fileborn ve Vera-Gray, 2017). Buradan hareketle, mevcut tezde feminist kolektif eylemin kadınların Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmaları ile İTS arasındaki ilişkiyi düzenleyebileceği öne sürülmüştür. Bu amaçla, feminist kolektif eylemin farklı boyutlarını yansıtmak üzere geçmiş feminist kolektif eylem katılımı ve feminist kolektif eyleme katılma niyeti, feminist kimlikle birlikte olası düzenleyici değişkenler olarak incelenmiştir.

1.6. Tezin Amacı

Yukarıda özetlendiği gibi alan yazında önemli araştırma boşlukları olduğu görülmektedir. İlk olarak, sosyal medya kaynaklı İTS araştırmaları büyük ölçüde savaş, doğal afet ve pandemi gibi kitlesel travmatik olaylara odaklanmış, kişilerarası travmalara sosyal medya aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak maruz kalmanın İTS ile ilişkisi incelenmemiştir. İkincisi, geçmiş çalışmalar çoğunlukla sosyal medyayı tek bir bütün olarak ele almış, farklı platformların kendine özgü özelliklerini dikkate almamıştır. Üçüncüsü, sosyal medya kullanımının İTS ile ilişkisini açıklayabilecek mekanizmalar kısıtlı sayıda çalışmada ele alınmıştır. Dördüncüsü, yabancı tacizinin kadınların ruh sağlığı üzerindeki olumsuz etkilerine rağmen özellikle sosyal psikoloji çalışmalarında görece ihmal edilmiştir ve bu konuyu ele alan daha fazla çalışmaya ihtiyaç bulunmaktadır. Son olarak hem sosyal medya kaynaklı İTS hem de yabancı tacizi Türkiye bağlamında oldukça sınırlı düzeyde araştırılmıştır. Özellikle Türkiye'de yabancı tacizini doğrudan inceleyen ampirik çalışmaların çok kısıtlı olması, bu konudaki bilgi birikimini önemli ölçüde sınırlandırmaktadır.

Buradan hareketle, mevcut doktora tezinde kadınların Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalma sıklığının İTS ile ilişkisi araştırılmıştır. Bu ilişkide tecavüz korkusunun boyutlarının (güvenlik kaygısı, önlem alma davranışları ve erkek korkusu) ve duygusal tepkilerin (empati ve psikolojik sıkıntı) aracı, feminist kimlik ve feminist kolektif eylemin (geçmiş katılım ve kolektif eyleme katılma niyeti) ise düzenleyici rolleri incelenmiştir.

Bu amaç doğrultusunda karma yöntem araştırma deseni kullanılarak iki çalışma gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma 1'de kadınların sosyal medya aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmalarına ilişkin algıları ile bu paylaşımlara verdikleri bilişsel, duygusal, fizyolojik ve davranışsal tepkiler nitel yöntemlerle incelenmiştir. Ayrıca Türkiye bağlamında yabancı tacizine ilişkin alan yazına katkı sağlamak amacıyla kadınların yabancı tacizine ilişkin genel algıları ve kişisel deneyimleri de araştırılmıştır. Çalışma 1 bulguları ve alan yazından hareketle geliştirilen araştırma modeli, Çalışma 2'de nicel yöntemlerle test edilmiştir. Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalma sıklığının yüksek güvenlik kaygısı, erkek korkusu, önlem alma davranışları, empati ve psikolojik sıkıntı ile ilişkili olacağı; güvenlik kaygısı, erkek korkusu, empati ve psikolojik sıkıntının daha yüksek İTS ile, önlem alma davranışlarının ise daha düşük İTS ile ilişkili olacağı öngörülmüştür. Ayrıca feminist kimlik, geçmiş feminist kolektif eylem katılımı ve feminist kolektif eyleme katılma niyetinin, Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalma ve İTS arasındaki ilişkiyi zayıflatacağı varsayılmıştır.

2. ÇALIŞMA 1: KADINLARIN SOSYAL MEDYA ÜZERİNDEN DİĞER KADINLARIN YABANCI TACİZİ DENEYİMLERİNE DOLAYLI OLARAK MARUZ KALMALARININ NİTEL İNCELENMESİ

Nitel çalışmanın amacı kadınların sosyal medya aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmaları ve bu deneyimlere verdikleri tepkilerin incelenmesidir. Ek olarak, Türkiye bağlamında yabancı tacizine ilişkin araştırmaların sınırlı olması göz önünde bulundurularak, kadınların yabancı tacizine ilişkin genel algıları ve kendi deneyimleri de incelenmiştir.

2.1. Yöntem

2.1.1. Katılımcılar, İşlem, Ölçüm Araçları ve Analiz Yöntemi

Çalışmaya, 18-28 yaş aralığında ($Ort_{yaş}$= 21.00, $SS_{yaş}$ = 1.91) 30 sosyal medya kullanıcısı kadın katılmıştır. Katılımcılara ODTÜ-SONA sistemi ve sosyal medya duyuruları aracılığıyla ulaşılmıştır ve katılım gönüllülük esasına dayanmıştır.

Katılımcıların ekonomik statü ortalaması (1 = düşük ve 6 = yüksek) 3.90 (*SS* = .66), siyasi görüş ortalaması (1 = aşırı sol ve 6 = aşırı sağ) ise 2.70'tir (SS = .79).

Etik izin ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulundan alınmıştır. Görüşmeler araştırmacı tarafından yürütülmüş ve öncesinde katılımcılardan hem araştırmaya katılım hem de ses kaydı alınması için yazılı ve sözlü onam alınmıştır. Her bir görüşme yaklaşık 15–25 dakika sürmüştür. Görüşmelerin sonunda katılımcılar Demografik Bilgi Formunu doldurmuş ve kendilerine farklı şiddet türlerine yönelik destek hizmetlerinin iletişim bilgileri sağlanmıştır.

Görüşme soruları, alan yazın temel alınarak araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen 15 açık uçlu sorudan oluşmuştur. Sorular katılımcıların Türkiye'de yabancı tacizine ilişkin genel algılarını, kendi yabancı tacizi deneyimlerini, sosyal medya aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine dolaylı olarak maruz kalmalarını, bu içeriklere verdikleri tepkileri ve feminist kimlik ile feminist kolektif eylemin bu tepkilerdeki rolünü incelemeye amaçlamıştır. Katılımcıların yabancı tacizini nasıl kavramsallaştırdıkları sorulduktan sonra, kalan soruları tüm katılımcıların ortak bir tanım üzerinden yanıtlamaları amacıyla yabancı tacizi tanımı katılımcılara sunulmuştur. Demografik Bilgi Formunda ise cinsiyet, yaş, eğitim düzeyi, ekonomik statü, siyasi görüş, sosyal medya kullanımı ve Twitter hesabına sahip olma durumu sorulmuştur.

Veriler Braun ve Clarke'ın (2021) yansıtıcı (reflective) tematik analiz yaklaşımı kullanılarak araştırmacı tarafından analiz edilmiştir. Veri toplama süreci, araştırmacının veri setinin araştırma sorularını yanıtlamak için yeterli zenginlik ve karmaşıklığa ulaştığına karar vermesiyle sonlandırılmıştır. Görüşmeler araştırmacı tarafından yazıya aktarılmış, tekrarlı şekilde okunarak veri setine aşinalık sağlanmış, ardından veriler kodlanmış ve temalar MAXQDA 24 programı kullanılarak oluşturulmuştur. Analiz ağırlıklı olarak tümdengelimsel, semantik ve gerçekçi bir yaklaşımla yürütülmüş, bununla birlikte araştırmacının anlam üretimindeki etkin rolü ve ilgili kuramsal alan yazından yararlanılması da analiz sürecinin bir parçasına dahil edilmiştir.

2.2. Bulgular

Dört ana tema belirlenmiştir: (1) yabancı tacizine ilişkin genel algılar, (2) diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi paylaşımlarına maruz kalma, (3) bu paylaşımlara verilen tepkiler ve (4) feminizmin bu tepkilerdeki rolü.

İlk tema kapsamında katılımcılar yabancı tacizini, kamusal alanlarda tanımadıkları kişiler tarafından gerçekleştirilen ve kadınları rahatsız etmeyi, korkutmayı ve kontrol altına almayı amaçlayan bir cinsel şiddet biçimi olarak tanımlamışlardır. Yabancı tacizinin sadece açıkça gerçekleştirilen cinsel davranışları değil, ısrarlı bakışlar, sözlü tacizler, takip edilme, istenmeyen fiziksel temas, teşhircilik ve benzeri davranışları da kapsadığını ifade etmişlerdir. Buna göre, katılımcılar yabancı tacizini tekil olaylar olarak değil, kadınların günlük yaşamlarının sıradan görülen ancak önemli ve etkili bir parçası olarak algılamaktadırlar. Yabancı tacizinin Türkiye'de oldukça yaygın olduğunu, faillerin çoğunlukla orta yaşlı erkeklerden oluştuğunu, özellikle toplu taşıma ve sokakta gerçekleştiğini ve çoğu zaman yeterince ciddiye alınmadığını belirtmişlerdir. Birçok katılımcı, yabancı tacizinin kanıtlanmasının güç olması ve kısa sürede gerçekleşmesi nedeniyle faillerin çoğunlukla herhangi bir yaptırımla karşılaşmadığını düşünmektedir. Ayrıca katılımcıların tamamına yakını yaşamlarının bir döneminde en az bir kez yabancı tacizine maruz kaldıklarını belirtmiştir.

İkinci temadan elde edilen bulgular, katılımcıların diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine dair paylaşımlarıyla en çok Twitter üzerinden karşılaştıklarını göstermiştir. Katılımcılar, bu paylaşımların temel amacının yaşanan olayı görünür kılmak, diğer kadınları uyarmak, destek görmek, farkındalık oluşturmak, failleri ifşa etmek ve benzer deneyimler yaşayan kadınlarla dayanışma kurmak olduğunu düşünmektedir. Paylaşımlarda en çok sözlü taciz, takip edilme, istenmeyen fiziksel temas, teşhircilik davranışlarının yer aldığını, olayların çoğunlukla kamusal alanlarda ve erkek failler tarafından gerçekleştirildiğini gözlemlediklerini belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca paylaşımların altındaki yorumların ve diğer kullanıcıların tepkilerinin de yaşanan olaya dair algılarını ve tepkilerini etkilediğini, kadınların mağduru destekleyen, erkeklerin ise mağdur suçlayıcı yorumlar yaptıklarını belirtmişlerdir.

Üçüncü temanın bulguları, diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmanın katılımcılarda yoğun korku, kaygı, öfke, üzüntü, çaresizlik ve psikolojik

sıkıntı yarattığını göstermiştir. Birçok katılımcı, mağdurlarla güçlü bir empati kurduklarını ifade etmiştir. Ayrıca bu paylaşımların güvenlik kaygılarını artırdığı, erkeklere yönelik genellenmiş korkularını güçlendirdiği ve günlük yaşamlarında daha fazla önlem alma davranışı göstermelerine neden olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Bunun yanında bazı katılımcılar, paylaşımları gördükten sonra uzun süre olayları düşünmeye devam ettiklerini, benzer durumlarla karşılaşmaktan kaçındıklarını, sürekli tetikte hissettiklerini ve çarpıntı, mide rahatsızlığı gibi fizyolojik tepkiler yaşadıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Bu bulgular, kadınların dolaylı maruziyet sonrasında İTS geliştiriyor olabileceklerine işaret etmiştir.

Dördüncü temanın bulguları, feminist kimliğin kadınların yaşadıkları ve maruz kaldıkları yabancı tacizi deneyimlerini bireysel olaylar yerine toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin bir sonucu olarak değerlendirmelerini sağladığını belirtmiştir. Öte yandan pek çok katılımcı, bu paylaşımlara maruz kalmanın feminist kimliklerini güçlendirdiğini ve feminist kolektif eylemlere katılma motivasyonlarını artırdığını ifade etmiştir.

2.3. Tartışma

Çalışma 1'den elde edilen bulgular, yabancı tacizinin kadınlar tarafından Türkiye'de önemli bir sorun olarak algıladığını ve günlük hayatlarını önemli şekilde etkilediğini belirtmektedir. Katılımcılar yabancı tacizini yalnızca istenmeyen cinsel davranışlar olarak değil, kadınları korkutmayı, rahatsız etmeyi ve kamusal alandaki hareket özgürlüklerini sınırlandırmayı amaçlayan bir güç ve kontrol mekanizması olarak tanımlamışlardır. Bu bulgu, yabancı tacizinin toplumsal cinsiyet temelli bir şiddet biçimi olduğunu ve kadınlar üzerindeki erkek egemenliğini yeniden üreten bir araç olarak işlev gördüğünü ileri süren alan yazınla tutarlıdır (Benard ve Schlaffer, 1984; Kissling ve Kramarae, 1991; Tuerkheimer, 1997; Vera-Gray ve Kelly, 2020). Bunun yanında katılımcıların neredeyse tamamının en azından yaşamlarının bir döneminde yabancı tacizine maruz kaldığını ifade etmeleri, yabancı tacizinin Türkiye bağlamında da oldukça yaygın bir sorun olduğunu göstermektedir.

Katılımcılar failleri çoğunlukla erkekler olarak tanımlamış olmakla birlikte, özellikle orta yaş ve üzerindeki erkekler daha sık fail olarak tanımlanmıştır. Bu durum, yabancı tacizde yalnızca cinsiyetin değil, yaşın da algılanan güç dengesini etkileyebileceğini

düşündürmektedir. Ayrıca bazı katılımcılar, yaşlı kadınların da yabancı tacizinde bulunabildiğini ifade etmiştir. Ancak erkeklerden farklı olarak bu davranışlar cinsel içerikli değil, daha çok kadınların giyimlerini, davranışlarını veya yaşam tarzlarını eleştirmeye yönelik ahlaki yargılar şeklinde tanımlanmıştır. Bu konunun gelecekte ayrıntılı biçimde araştırılması yerinde olacaktır.

Çalışmanın bir diğer önemli bulgusu, kadınların diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine en sık Twitter aracılığıyla maruz kaldıklarını belirtmeleridir. Katılımcılar, Twitter üzerinden diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kaldıkça güvenlik kaygılarının artırdığını, erkeklere yönelik genellenmiş bir korku hissettiklerini ve daha fazla önlem alma davranışında aldıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bu önlemler arasında güzergâh değiştirme, gece yalnız yürümekten kaçınma, canlı konum paylaşma, kulaklık kullanmama, çevreyi sürekli kontrol etme ve kendilerini koruyabilecek araçlar taşıma gibi davranışlar bulunmaktadır. Bu bulgular, yabancı tacizinin sadece doğrudan maruz kalan kadını değil, Twitter üzerinden dolaylı olarak maruz kalan kadınları da olumsuz yönde etkiliyor olabileceğini göstermektedir.

Bunun yanında katılımcılar, mağdurlarla güçlü bir empati kurduklarını ve çoğu zaman olayları kendileri yaşamış gibi hissettiklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Bu paylaşımların korku, kaygı, öfke, üzüntü ve çaresizlik gibi yoğun duygusal tepkilere yol açtığı belirtmiştir. Ayrıca birçok katılımcı olayları uzun süre zihninden çıkaramadığını, benzer durumlarla karşılaşmaktan kaçındığını, sürekli tetikte hissettiğini ve çarpıntı, mide rahatsızlığı gibi fizyolojik belirtiler yaşadığını belirtmiştir. Bu bulgular, katılımcıların deneyimlerinin tanımladığı İTS belirtileriyle (Figley, 1986, 1995) uyuşmaktadır. Dolayısıyla bulgular, kadınların Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmalarının İTS ile ilişkili olabileceğine dair nitel kanıt sunmaktadır.

Katılımcıların bir kısmı, feminist bir kimliğe sahip olmanın ve feminist kolektif hareketlere katılmanın yabancı tacizini bireysel bir sorun olarak değil, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin bir sonucu olarak değerlendirmelerine yardımcı olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Bu bulgu, feminizmin kadınları dolaylı olarak yabancı tacizine maruz kalmanın olumsuz etkilerinden koruyor olabileceğine işaret etmektedir. Öte yandan kalan katılımcılar ise, diğer kadınların deneyimlerine maruz kalmanın feminist

kimliklerini güçlendirdiğini ve feminist kolektif eylemlere katılma motivasyonlarını artırdığını belirtmişlerdir. Dolayısıyla feminizm koruyucu bir faktör olmak yerine dolaylı maruziyetin bir sonucu da olabilir. Ek olarak, katılımcılar resmî kurumların kadınları yabancı tacize karşı yeterince korumadığına inandıklarını ve mevcut koşullarda feminizmi çoğu zaman etkili olduğu için değil, başka bir seçenek göremedikleri için benimsediklerini de dile getirmişlerdir. Bu bulgular, feminizmin yalnızca koruyucu bir faktör olmayabileceğini, aynı zamanda kadınların maruz kaldıkları yapısal eşitsizliklere verdikleri bir tepki olarak da değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir.

Genel olarak Çalışma 1, kadınların Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmalarının güvenlik kaygısı, erkek korkusu, önlem alma davranışları, empati, psikolojik sıkıntı ve İTS ile ilişkili olabileceğine işaret ederek Çalışma 2 için oluşturulan teorik yapıyı desteklemiştir. Elde edilen bulgular, hem Türkiye bağlamında yabancı tacizine ilişkin alan yazına katkı sağlamakta hem de Çalışma 2'de nicel olarak test edilen ilişkilerin geliştirilmesine temel oluşturmaktadır.

3. ÇALIŞMA 2A: YABANCI TACİZİ ENDEKSİ, TWITTER ARACILIĞIYLA DOLAYLI OLARAK YABANCI TACİZİNE MARUZ KALMA ÖLÇEĞİ, TECAVÜZ KORKUSU ÖLÇEĞİ VE KENDİNİ FEMİNİST OLARAK TANIMLAMA ÖLÇEĞİNİN TÜRKÇEYE UYARLANMASI

Bu çalışmanın amacı Çalışma 2B'de kullanılacak ölçeklerin Türkçeye uyarlanmasıdır.

3.1. Yöntem

3.1.1. Katılımcılar, İşlem ve Veri Toplama Araçları

Çalışma örneklemi 157 kadın katılımcıdan oluşmaktadır ($Ort_{yaş}$= 22.69, $SS_{yaş}$ = 3.26). Katılımcılara ODTÜ-SONA sistemi ve sosyal medya duyuruları aracılığıyla ulaşılmıştır ve katılım gönüllülük esasına dayanmıştır.

0 (*hiç maruz kalmadım*) ile 5 (*her gün maruz kalıyorum*) arasında değerlendirilen 9 maddelik Yabancı Tacizi Endeksi (örn. "*Tanımadığınız birinin size laf atmasına, ıslık çalmasına ya da dik bir şekilde bakması*"; Carretta ve Szymanski, 2020; Fairchild ve Rudman, 2008); ilk 13 maddenin 0 (*asla*) ve 4 (*her zaman*) ve kalan 3 maddenin 0 (*hiç*

güvende hissetmiyorum) ve 4 (*çok güvende hissediyorum*) arasında değerlendirilen 3 faktörlü (güvenlik kaygısı, önlem alma, erkek korkusu) Tecavüz Korkusu Ölçeği (örn. "*Gece tek başıma dışarı çıkmaktan kaçınırım*"; Carretta ve Szymanski, 2020); 1 (*kesinlikle katılmıyorum*) ve 5 (*kesinlikle katılıyorum*) arasında değerlendirilen 4 maddelik Kendini Feminist Olarak Tanımlama Ölçeği (örn. "*Kendimi diğer insanlara feminist olarak tanımlıyorum*"; Szymanski, 2004) Türkçeye adapte edilmiştir. Ayrıca Yabancı Tacizi Endeksi dolaylı maruziyeti ölçecek şekilde modifiye edilerek Twitter Aracılığıyla Dolaylı Olarak Yabancı Tacizine Maruz Kalma Ölçeği geliştirilmiştir.

Ölçekler ilk olarak araştırmacı tarafından Türkçeye çevrilmiş, ardından alana hâkim bir araştırmacı tarafından tekrar İngilizceye çevrilmiştir. Araştırmacı ölçeklerin Türkçe ve İngilizce versiyonlarını birbirleriyle karşılaştırarak son şekillerini vermiştir. Daha sonra ölçekler, yedi uzmanın görüşüne sunularak kapsam, dil ve kültürel uygunluk açısından değerlendirilmiş ve içerik geçerliliği (content validity) sağlanmıştır. Uzman önerileri doğrultusunda son düzenlemeler yapıldıktan sonra ölçek adaptasyonu tamamlanmıştır.

Çalışma çevrimiçi ortamda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcılar yukarıda belirtilen ölçeklerin yanında 1 (*hiçbir zaman*) ve 5 (*çok sık*) arasında değerlendirilen 17 maddelik Sosyal Medya Kullanıcıları İçin İkincil Travmatik Stres Ölçeği (örn. "*Duygusal olarak hissizleştim*"; Balcı-Çelik ve Altınışık, 2021), 1 (*Hiç*) ve 7 (*Aşırı*) aralığında değerlendirilen 14 maddelik Duygusal Tepki Ölçeği (örn. "*Tetikte*" ; Hajraj, 2019), 1 (*kesinlikle katılmıyorum*) ve 5 (*kesinlikle katılıyorum*) arasında değerlendirilen 4 maddelik Feminist Kolektif Harekete Katılma Niyeti Ölçeği (örn. "*Kadın haklarını savunan bir organizasyonun toplantı, forum ya da tartışma gruplarına katılmaya istekliyim*"; Uysal ve ark., 2021), niyet ölçeğinin geçmişi sorularak modifiye edilmesiyle oluşturulan 4 maddelik Feminist Kolektif Harekete Geçmiş Katılım Ölçeği ve Demografik Bilgi Formu da katılımcılara sunulmuştur.

3.2. Bulgular

Türkçeye uyarlanan ölçeklerin faktör yapıları açıklayıcı faktör analizleri (AFA) ile incelenmiştir.

Yabancı Tacizi Ölçeği orijinal ölçeğe paralel olarak sözel taciz ve cinsel baskı olarak iki faktörlü bir yapı göstermiştir. Faktör yükleri .55 ile .89 arasında değişmiş ve iki faktör toplam varyansın %60.09'unu açıklamıştır. Ancak iki faktör arasındaki yüksek korelasyon (r = .70), ölçeğin orijinal çalışmasında olduğu gibi faktörlerin önemli ölçüde örtüştüğünü göstermiştir.

Twitter Aracılığıyla Diğer Kadınların Yabancı Tacizi Deneyimlerine Maruz Kalma Ölçeği tek faktörlü bir yapı göstermiştir. Faktör yükleri .74 ile .89 arasında değişmiş ve tek faktör toplam varyansın %67.75'ini açıklamıştır.

Tecavüz Korkusu Ölçeği orijinal ölçekteki gibi güvenlik kaygısı, önlem alma ve erkek korkusu şeklinde üç faktörlü yapı sergilemiştir. Faktör yükleri .37 ile .90 arasında değişmiş ve üç faktör toplam varyansın %49.76'sını açıklamıştır.

Kendini Feminist Olarak Tanımlama Ölçeği orijinal çalışmadaki gibi tek faktörlü yapı göstermiştir. Faktör yükleri .86 ile .93 arasında değişmiş ve tek faktör toplam varyansın %80.07'sini açıklamıştır.

Yapı geçerliğine ilişkin ek kanıt elde etmek amacıyla, ilişkili olması beklenen değişkenler Pearson korelasyon analizi ile incelenmiştir. Ölçekler beklenen yönde anlamlı ilişkiler göstermiştir. Buna göre feminist kimlik, feminist kolektif harekete katılma niyeti (r = .63, p < .001) ve geçmiş feminist kolektif harekete katılımı (r = .43, p < .001) ile; Twitter aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak yabancı tacizine maruz kalma sıklığı; günlük Twitter kullanım süresi (r = .16, p = .046), tecavüz korkusunun boyutları (r = .23–.39, p'ler ≤ .004), psikolojik sıkıntı (r = .46, p < .001), empati (r = .30, p < .001) ve İTS (r = .44, p < .001) ile; kendi yabancı tacizi deneyimi tecavüz korkusunun tüm boyutlarıyla (r = .28–.37, p'ler < .001) pozitif yönde ilişkili bulunmuştur.

3.3. Tartışma

Bulgular, uyarlanan ölçeklerin kapsam geçerliği, yapı geçerliği ve güvenirliğini desteklemiş ve Çalışma 2B'de kullanılmak üzere yeterli psikometrik özelliklere sahip olduğunu göstermiştir.

4. ÇALIŞMA 2B: KADINLARIN TWITTER ARACILIĞIYLA DİĞER KADINLARIN YABANCI TACİZİ DENEYİMLERİNE MARUZ KALMALARININ İKİNCİL TRAVMATİK STRES İLE İLİŞKİSİNİN İNCELENMESİ

Çalışma 1'den elde edilen nitel bulguları ve mevcut alan yazın doğrultusunda, kadınların Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalma sıklıklarının İTS düzeylerini yordayacağı öngörülmüştür. Ayrıca bu ilişkide tecavüz korkusunun boyutlarının (güvenlik kaygısı, erkek korkusu ve önlem alma) ve duygusal tepkilerin (empati ve psikolojik sıkıntı) aracı rol oynayacağı; feminist kimlik, feminist kolektif harekete geçmiş katılım ve feminist kolektif harekete katılma niyetinin ise bu ilişkiyi düzenleyeceği varsayılmıştır. Bunun yanı sıra, Çalışma 1'de feminizmin rolüne ilişkin elde edilen karma bulgular doğrultusunda, Twitter aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak yabancı tacizine maruz kalmanın feminizmin değişkenlerini yordadığı alternatif bir model de test edilmiştir.

4.1. Yöntem

4.1.1. Katılımcılar, İşlem ve Veri Toplama Araçları

Örneklem Twitter kullanıcısı 503 kadından oluşmaktadır ($Ort_{yaş}$= 21.81, $SS_{yaş}$ = 2.12). Katılımcılara ODTÜ-SONA sistemi ve sosyal medya duyuruları aracılığıyla ulaşılmıştır ve katılım gönüllülük esasına dayanmıştır. Çalışma çevrim içi veri gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcılar Çalışma 2B ile aynı ölçekleri yanıtlamışlardır.

4.2. Bulgular

Çalışma 2A'da Türkçeye uyarlanan ölçeklerin faktör yapıları doğrulayıcı faktör analizleri (DFA) ile yeniden incelenmiştir. Yabancı Tacizi Endeksi için ilk model kabul edilebilir uyum göstermemiştir (χ^2 (26) = 282, p <.001, CFI = .89, TLI = .85, RMSEA = .14, SRMR = .06). Ancak altıncı ve dokuzuncu maddelerin hata terimleri arasında kovaryans eklenmesinin ardından model uyumu artmıştır (χ^2 (25) = 156, p <.001, CFI = .94, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .10, SRMR = .05). Çalışma 2A'da (r = .70, p <.001) ve Çalışma 2B'de (r = .78, p <.001) iki faktör arasındaki yüksek korelasyon göz önünde bulundurularak ilerleyen analizlerde ölçek toplam puanı kullanılmıştır.

Twitter Aracılığıyla Diğer Kadınların Yabancı Tacizi Deneyimlerine Maruz Kalma Ölçeği tek faktörlü modelin uyumunun zayıf olduğu (χ^2 (27) = 584, p <.001, CFI = .86, TLI = .82, RMSEA = .20, SRMR = .06), iki faktörlü modelin daha iyi uyum gösterdiği (χ^2 (26) = 280, p <.001, CFI = .94, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .14, SRMR = .04) bulunmuştur. İki faktör arasındaki yüksek korelasyon (r = .84, p <.001) ve Çalışma 2A'da bulunan tek faktörlü yapı göz önünde bulundurularak ilerleyen analizlerde ölçek toplam puanı kullanılmıştır.

Tecavüz Korkusu Ölçeği için ilk modeli kabul edilebilir düzeyde uyum göstermiştir (χ^2 (101) = 551, p <.001, CFI = .87, TLI = .84, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .07). Birinci ve üçüncü maddelerin hata terimleri arasında kovaryans tanımlanmasının ardından model uyumu artmış (χ^2 (100) = 371, p <.001, CFI = .92, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .07) ve ölçeğin orijinal üç faktörlü yapısıyla kullanılmasına karar verilmiştir.

Kendini Feminist Olarak Tanımlama Ölçeği için tek faktörlü model iyi uyum göstermiştir (χ^2 (2) = 121, p <.001, CFI = .93, TLI = .79, RMSEA = .35, SRMR = .03). Dolayısıyla ilerleyen analizlerde ölçeğin tek faktörlü yapısı korunmuştur.

Hipotezler SPSS'te PROCESS Model 5 kullanılarak üç ayrı modelde test edilmiştir. Twitter aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak yabancı tacizine maruz kalma sıklığı güvenlik kaygısını (b = .10, p = .021), erkek korkusunu (b = .17, p <.001), önlem almayı (b = .18, p <.001), empatiyi (b = .17, p = .018) ve psikolojik sıkıntıyı (b = .24, p <.001) anlamlı ve pozitif yönde yordamıştır. Ayrıca güvenlik kaygısı (b = .10, p = .001), erkek korkusu (b = .09, p <.05) ve psikolojik sıkıntı (b = .32, p <.001) İTS'yi anlamlı ve pozitif yönde yordarken, önlem alma ve empati anlamlı yordayıcılar olarak bulunmamıştır.

Doğrudan etki incelendiğinde, Twitter aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak yabancı tacizine maruz kalma sıklığının, kendi yabancı tacizi deneyimleri kontrol edildikten sonra da İTS'yi anlamlı ve pozitif yönde yordadığı görülmüştür (b = .11-.12, p'ler <.001). Toplam dolaylı etki anlamlıdır (b = .11, %95 GA [.07, .15/-.16]). Dolaylı etkiler incelendiğinde, güvenlik kaygısı (b = .01, %95 GA [.00/.01, .02]), erkek korkusu (b = .01-.02, %95 GA [.00, .03]) ve psikolojik sıkıntının (b = .08, %95 GA [.04, .11/-.12]) anlamlı aracı değişkenler olduğu bulunmuştur.

Düzenleyicilik analizleri, feminist kolektif harekete geçmiş katılımın (ΔR^2 = .0003, p = .60), feminist kolektif harekete katılma niyetinin (ΔR^2 = .0010, p = .34) ve feminist kimliğin (ΔR^2 = .0001, p = .75), Twitter aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak yabancı tacizine maruz kalma sıklığı ve İTS arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamlı olarak düzenlemediğini göstermiştir. Buna karşın,

Twitter aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak yabancı tacizine maruz kalma sıklığının feminist kolektif harekete geçmiş katılımı (toplam etki: b = .17, p <.001; doğrudan etki: b = .19, p <.001), feminist kolektif harekete katılma niyetini (toplam etki: b = .22, p <.001; doğrudan etki: b = .18, p <.001) ve feminist kimliği (toplam etki: b = .18, p <.001; doğrudan etki: b = .12, p = .03) anlamlı ve pozitif yönde yordadığı bulunmuştur. Modeller sırasıyla varyansın %22'sini (R^2 = .22), %17'sini (R^2 = .17) ve %14'ünü (R^2 = .14) açıklamıştır. Ayrıca önlem almanın, maruz kalma ve feminist kolektif harekete geçmiş katılım (b = −.05, %95 GA [-.08, -.02]) ve feminist kolektif harekete katılma niyeti (b = -.03, %95 GA [-.07, -.01]) arasındaki ilişkiye negatif yönde aracılık ettiği; erkek korkusunun ise maruz kalma ve feminist kolektif harekete katılma niyeti (b = .02, %95 GA [.00, .05]) ve feminist kimlik (b = .04, %95 GA [.01, .07]) arasındaki ilişkiye pozitif yönde aracılık ettiği belirlenmiştir.

4.3. Tartışma

Twitter aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak yabancı tacizine maruz kalma sıklığının kadınların İTS düzeylerini pozitif yönde yordadığı bulunmuştur. Bu bulgu, sosyal medya aracılığıyla travmatik olaylara dolaylı olarak maruz kalmanın İTS ile ilişkili olduğunu gösteren geçmiş araştırmalarla (Goodwin ve ark., 2013; Holman ve ark., 2020; Liu & Liu, 2020; Zhao & Zhou, 2020) tutarlıdır. Ayrıca, dolaylı maruziyet ve İTS arasındaki ilişkinin kişilerarası travmalar için de geçerli olabileceğini göstermektedir. Kadınların kendi yabancı tacizi deneyimleri kontrol edildikten sonra da bu ilişkinin devam etmesi, yabancı tacizinin etkilerinin yalnızca mağdurlarla sınırlı kalmadığını, diğer kadınların deneyimlerine sosyal medya aracılığıyla maruz kalan kadınlara da yayılabildiğini göstermektedir.

Twitter aracılığıyla dolaylı olarak yabancı tacizine maruz kalma sıklığı ve İTS arasındaki ilişkiye güvenlik kaygısı, erkek korkusu ve psikolojik sıkıntının aracılık ettiği bulunmuştur. Bu bulgu geçmiş çalışmalarla (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020) ve

yetiştirme kuramı (Gerbner ve ark., 1977), riskin sosyal güçlendirilmesi çerçevesi (Kasperson ve ark., 1988) ve sosyal bilişsel kuram (Bandura, 2001) ile uyumludur. Buna göre sosyal medya aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmak, kadınların yabancı tacizini daha yaygın ve tehdit edici olarak algılamalarına yol açabilir. Bunun sonucunda kendilerini gelecekteki olası mağdurlar olarak değerlendirebilmekte ve güvenlik kaygıları, erkek korkuları ve psikolojik sıkıntıları artmakta, bu da daha yüksek İTS belirtileriyle ilişkili olabilir.

Önlem alma ve empatiye hipotezler ise kısmen desteklenmiştir. Daha sık dolaylı maruziyet yaşayan kadınlar daha fazla önlem alma davranışı sergilemiş ve daha yüksek empati bildirmiş olsalar da bu değişkenler İTS ile dolaylı maruziyet arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık etmemiştir. Bu bulgu, önlem almanın kadınları İTS geliştirmekten korumaktan ziyade, artan tehdit ve kırılganlık algılarının bir yansıması olabileceğini gösteriyor olabilir. Her ne kadar empati alan yazında İTS gelişiminde önemli bir mekanizma olarak ele alınmış olsa da (Figley, 1986, 1998), mevcut bulgular dolaylı yoldan yabancı tacizine maruz kalmada empatinin tek başına İTS gelişimini açıklamak için yeterli olmadığını göstermektedir.

Feminist kimlik, feminist kolektif harekete geçmiş katılım ve katılma niyeti, dolaylı maruziyet ile İTS arasındaki ilişkiyi düzenlememiştir. Bu bulgu, kadınların feminist kimlikleri veya feminist kolektif eyleme katılım düzeylerinden bağımsız olarak, diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kaldıklarında benzer düzeyde İTS belirtileri geliştirebildiklerini göstermektedir. Çalışma 1'in bulguları ile birlikte değerlendirildiğinde, bunun olası nedenlerinden biri kadınların mevcut toplumsal ve siyasal koşullarda feminizmi yabancı tacizine karşı yeterince koruyucu algılamamaları olabilir.

Öte yandan Twitter aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine daha sık maruz kalmanın daha güçlü feminist kimlik, daha yüksek feminist kolektif harekete katılım ve katılma niyetiyle ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Ayrıca önlem almanın, maruz kalma ve feminist kolektif harekete geçmiş katılım ve katılma niyeti arasındaki ilişkiye negatif; erkek korkusunun ise maruz kalma ve feminist kolektif harekete katılma niyeti ve feminist kimlik arasındaki ilişkiye pozitif yönde aracılık ettiği bulunmuştur. Bu bulgular, dolaylı maruziyetin feminist kimlik gelişimi modeli (Downing & Roush,

1985) ile uyumlu olarak, dolaylı maruziyetin kadınlarda cinsiyete dayalı tehdit algısını ve erkek korkusunu artırarak feminist kimliği ve kolektif eyleme yönelimi güçlendiriyor olabileceğini işaret etmektedir.

5. GENEL TARTIŞMA

Bu tez çalışması, İTS, yabancı tacizi ve sosyal medya alan yazınlarına çeşitli şekillerde önemli katkılar sunmaktadır. Sosyal medya kaynaklı İTS üzerine yapılan geçmiş çalışmalar büyük ölçüde kitlesel travmalara odaklanırken, bu tez çalışması sosyal medya aracılığıyla yabancı tacizi gibi kişilerarası travmalara dolaylı maruz kalmanın da İTS ile ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir. Geçmiş kavramsallaştırmaların aksine Figley, 1995) İTS gelişiminde empati değil, güvenlik kaygısı, erkek korkusu ve psikolojik sıkıntıları temal mekanizmalar olarak tespit edilmiştir ve bu durum sosyal medya kaynaklı İTS'nin yakın ilişkiler veya travmatize bireylerle profesyonel çalışma sonucunda gelişen İTS'den farklı psikolojik süreçler içeriyor olabileceğini göstermektedir.

Aynı zamanda mevcut tezin bulguları hem Türkiye'de hem de uluslararası alan yazında görece sınırlı biçimde incelenen yabancı tacizinin Türkiye örneklemi için de oldukça yaygın olduğunu ve etkilerinin yalnızca mağdurlarla sınırlı kalmadığını göstermektedir. Bulgular, sosyal medya aracılığıyla diğer kadınların yabancı tacizi deneyimlerine maruz kalmanın yüksek güvenlik kaygısı erkek korkusu ve psikolojik sıkıntı ile ve bunların da yüksek İTS ile ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Dolayısıyla, yabancı tacizinin yalnızca bireysel değil, çevrim içi ortamlarda dolaylı maruziyet yoluyla daha geniş kitleleri etkileyebilen bir halk ruh sağlığı sorunu olarak ele alınması gerektiğini işaret etmektedir.

Bulgular, kadınların sosyal medyadaki yaşadıkları cinsel şiddet olaylarına dair paylaşımları önemli yararlar sağlasa da bu paylaşımlara sıklıkla maruz kalan kadınlar için beklenmedik olumsuz etkiler yaratabileceğini göstermektedir. Dolayısıyla, sosyal medya platformlarının sağladığı faydalar korunurken dolaylı travma maruziyetinin olumsuz etkilerini azaltacak stratejilerin geliştirilmesi önem taşımaktadır. Yabancı tacizi paylaşımlarının daha etkili denetlendiği ve belgelendiği yönelik özel platformların geliştirilmesi, sosyal medya okuryazarlığının artırılması ve feminist

örgütlerin doğrulanmış içerikleri öne çıkararak yanlış bilgi ve manipülatif paylaşımları azaltmaya yönelik çalışmalar yürütmesi bu doğrultuda yararlı olabilir.

Ayrıca, kadınların feminizmi yabancı tacize karşı önemli bir mücadele aracı olarak görmelerine rağmen, feminist kimlik veya feminist kolektif eylemin İTS gelişimine karşı koruyucu olmadığı görülmüştür. Bu nedenle feminist örgütlerin kadınlara yalnızca dayanışma ortamı sunmaları değil, aynı zamanda feminist mücadelenin somut kazanımlarını ve başarılarını daha görünür kılarak kolektif eylemin etkili olduğuna ilişkin inancı güçlendirmeleri önem taşımaktadır. Bunun yanında, yasa yapıcıların ve devlet yöneticilerinin yabancı tacizine yönelik hukuki düzenlemeleri güçlendirmesi, yaptırım mekanizmalarını etkin biçimde uygulaması ve kadınların kurumlara duyduğu güveni artırması da hem yabancı tacizin azaltılmasına hem de dolaylı maruziyetin olumsuz etkilerinin hafifletilmesine katkı sağlayabilir.

Öte yandan, her çalışmada olduğu gibi mevcut çalışmanın da bazı sınırlılıkları bulunmaktadır. Nitel ve kesitsel desenler kullanılmıştır ve bu nedenle elde edilen bulgulara dair nedensel çıkarım yapılamamaktadır. Ayrıca tüm değişkenler öz-bildirim yöntemleriyle ölçülmüş, örneklem büyük ölçüde üniversite öğrencilerinden ve sol görüşe yakın katılımcılardan oluşmuş ve dolaylı maruziyet yalnızca Twitter bağlamında incelenmiştir. Gelecek çalışmaların deneysel, boylamsal veya günlük yöntemleri kullanılması; farklı yaş, eğitim ve politik görüşlerden örneklemlerle çalışması; TikTok gibi daha görsel sosyal medya platformlarının da incelenmesi; maruz kalınan içeriklerin ve yorumların özelliklerini, algoritmaların etkisini ve çevrim içi ile çevrim dışı feminist kolektif eylem arasındaki farklılıkları incelemesi yerinde olacaktır. Ayrıca empati yerine mağdurla özdeşim, kadın kimliğiyle özdeşleşme, devlete güven ve kolektif eylemin etkililiğine inanç gibi değişkenlerin de incelenmesi önemli olabilir.

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