|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FOR QUT RESEARCH PROJECT**  **– Interview –** |
| **Safe to ‘Make the First Move’? Exploring Experiences of Intrusion and Safety Work for Indian Women on Bumble**  **QUT Ethics Approval Number 6909** | |

**Research team**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Principal Researcher: | Benson Rajan PhD Candidate |
| Associate Researcher(s): | Dr. Laura Vitis, Senior Lecturer Principal Supervisor  Prof. Michael Flood, Professor Associate Supervisor  Prof. Melissa Bull, Professor Associate Supervisor |
|  | **School of Justice/ Faculty of Creative Industries, Education and**  **Social Justice** |
|  | **Queensland University of Technology (QUT)** |

**Why is the study being conducted?**

This research project is being undertaken as part of a PhD study for Benson Rajan.

The purpose of this project is to explore Indian women’s uncomfortable, uneasy, or unsafe experiences on Bumble. The study will also explore women’s experience of Bumble’s safety features. Dating apps such as Bumble have framed their app and its design features as ‘feminist‘ and ‘safe’ in the Indian digital dating space. By exploring women’s experiences of negotiating safety and uncomfortable encounters on Bumble, this project aims to examine how Indian women negotiate contemporary online dating platforms.

You are invited to participate in this research project if:

* You have felt uncomfortable, unsafe or uneasy while interacting with men on Bumble.
* You are an Indian women aged 18 to 35.
* You have used Bumble for at least for the past 6 months.
* You can communicate in English. The Chief Investigator is well-versed in Hindi, Urdu, English and Malayalam. However, the interview will be conducted predominantly in English.

**What does participation involve?**

I am interested in talking to you about your experience of using Bumble. Your participation will involve an audio recorded interview either at a location (Civil Society / Non-government organization’s office space) or when in-person interview is not possible, a remote interview using Zoom. For Zoom calls you will need a safe space from where you can comfortably speak about your experience without any fear of being overheard. The interview will last approximately 90 minutes and will be conducted by Benson Rajan, who is a male PhD student at QUT School of Justice. You have the option to have the principal investigator Dr. Laura Vitis, present during the interviews if you would like to have a female researcher present to discuss the study. The participant can also choose to have a support person present during the interview if they wish to.

In the interview, you will be asked questions like:

1. Have you had any experiences on Bumble that made you feel uneasy, uncomfortable, or unsafe?
2. Whether/ how you responded after your experience.
3. Did the incident have any impact on other areas of your life?

Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw from the research project without comment or penalty. You will have the option to review your interview transcript after the interview. The option to withdraw from the study should be communicated during the first four weeks after receiving your transcript. It’s important to remember that If you choose to withdraw from the study after your interview, the data will be retained in accordance with QUT policy and public records legislation in its raw (unedited) form for a period of five years, but that data would not be used (analysed or reported) in the study. However, this option is only available during the first four weeks after receiving your transcript. So, if you have any concerns, it's best to review your transcript as soon as possible to make an informed decision. Your decision to participate or not participate will not impact your current or future relationship with QUT or any other organisation you have accessed in relation to your participation in this project.

**What are the possible benefits for me if I take part?**

It is expected that this research project will not benefit you directly. However, the outcome of this research will be contributing to the scholarship of violence against women in the Global South. The findings of the project will lead to a PhD document to be submitted by 3rd May, 2025. A link to the publications will be made available on the project web page.

To recognise your contribution should you choose to participate, the research team is offering Amazon pay e-gift cards worth ₹1000 INR (approximately $20 AUD). This will be shared with you via the same platform that was used for project correspondence.

**What are the possible risks for me if I take part?**

There are some risks associated with your participation in this research project. These include feeling upset, there is a potential for emotional or psychological distress arising from answering the questions, as they are about your uncomfortable or unsafe experiences with Bumble. Therefore, if you feel distressed during the interview you can skip questions, take breaks, reschedule, withdraw, or end the interview at any time. I will discuss with you about how you would like to handle that situation before starting the interview and I will follow your advice. This project is not intended to expose any crime, and the research team is under no obligation to report any crime. However, should you wish for legal advice, contact details of legal service providers are available here:

1. Centre for Cyber Victim Counselling
   1. Consultation via phone, email, video conference, or in-person
   2. Contact: ccvcindia@gmail.com/ [ccvcindia@cybervictims.org](mailto:ccvcindia@cybervictims.org)
2. Cyber Peace Foundation
   1. Consultation via phone, email, video conference, or in-person
   2. Contact: 91-8235058865; secretariat@cyberpeace.net

In case you feel the need to speak to someone, you can also find a women friendly mental health support from:

1. Sangath (not-for-profit organisation):
   1. Free telephone counselling helpline number: 011-41198666 (toll-free within India) and is functional between 10am – 6pm on Monday-Sunday
   2. They also provide access to ‘Listening circles’ and ‘Self-care resource centre’: email- [counselling@sangath.in](mailto:counselling@sangath.in)
2. National Commission for Women (Government Body)
   1. Digital Complaint Registration System – Helpline Number: 112
   2. Psychological Support – Helpline Number: 7827-170-170
   3. Counselling Services on Women in Distress- Helpline Number: (011) 3317004

Your identity will be confidential and protected throughout the process. After the interview has been transcribed, the transcript will be de-identified and coded. Any personal information you share will be kept confidential, and all identifying details will be removed from the transcripts. Any quotes or information provided will only be used in a relevant and appropriate context and will not be traceable back to you in any reports or publications. Any data collected will be stored securely in accordance with QUT's Management of research data policy. The data will be kept for a minimum of 5 years and accessible to the research team alone.

**What about privacy and confidentiality?**

Your privacy and confidentiality is a priority for this project. Therefore, pseudonyms will be established before initiating the interview and before initiating verbal consent. The interview will be audio recorded thus:

* Any identifying information will be removed from the interview transcripts.
* After the interview you will be provided with the option to review the transcript.
* You will have four weeks to review your transcript.
* If you do not wish to see your transcripts, your contact details and communications will be destroyed.
* If you wish to see your transcripts, your contact details and communications will be destroyed four weeks after the transcript has been shared with you.
* Transcriptions and audio recordings are stored securely as per QUT’s Management of research data policy. <https://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/D/D_02_08.jsp#D_02_08.06.mdoc>
* All identifying information will be destroyed following verification and deidentification of transcription.
* I will share the document with you using email.
* Your de-identified data will be used for research publication and updates about the publications resulting from the data will be shared on the project web page.
* It is not possible to participate in the research project without being audio recorded.

The de-identified transcriptions and audio recordings will be stored for a minimum period of five years and can be disclosed if specifically required by law, or if a regulatory or monitoring body such as the ethics committee requests it. Transcripts of interviews will only be used for the current projects by the research team. These transcripts may be used for publication of journal articles, books, or conference presentations.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the data you provide cannot be traced back to you in reports, publications, and other forms of presentation. For example, we will only include the relevant part of a quote, names will be changed, and pseudonyms will be established prior to taking a recorded verbal consent, and details such as dates and specific identifiable circumstances will be excluded from the reports, publications, and other forms of presentation.

**How do I give my consent to participate?**

Due to the nature of the research project a verbal consent mechanism will be used. This is to ensure that the research team do not have written records of any participants.

At the beginning of the interviews, I will talk you through this information sheet, share the verbal consent sheet, and highlight the risks involved. At the completion of this, you may ask any further questions. In case you have queries about the research and your participation before the interview, please feel free to email me. Once you are satisfied with this and wish to participate in the interview, I will ask the following questions (also shared on the verbal consent sheet provided to you):

*Having read and understood all of the risks associated with this interview, do you consent to participate in the interview process?*

You will respond with a YES or NO. This section will be audio-recorded and will form part of the overall transcription.

**What if I have questions about the research project?**

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact the principal researcher and

his principal supervisor:

Benson Rajan bensonthyparmbil.rajan@hdr.qut.edu.au

Dr Laura Vitis laura.vitis@qut.edu.au

**What if I have a concern or complaint regarding the conduct of the research project?**

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. If you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, particularly in relation to matters concerning policies, information or complaints about the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Advisory Team on +61 7 3138 5123 or email [humanethics@qut.edu.au](mailto:humanethics@qut.edu.au).

**Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.**