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# Experiences of Stealthing and the Sociodemographic Profiles of Women Victims in Brazil: A National Study

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**Abstract:** Stealthing is the removal of a condom during sexual intercourse without the consent of one's partner. Despite considerable media attention devoted to the trend, limited empirical research has examined how women experienced stealthing. This study aimed to contribute toward generating empirical evidence to guide the discussion surrounding stealthing. It is the first empirical research at a national level in Brazil. An online survey was conducted among 2275 women over 18 who experienced stealthing. The study analyzes these women's sociodemographic profiles and how they experienced stealthing. Most were white, young, had a religion, were highly educated, and belonged to the Brazilian middle class. They usually experienced stealthing during their youth, and the perpetrator was a cisgender man. Most of them did not look for the morning-after pill and post-exposure prophylaxis after the occurrence and never told anyone about this experience. They stated that the perpetrator should be punished. Women reported contracting sexually transmitted infections, experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, or having an illegal abortion. In conclusion, the high incidence of stealthing in the country is notable, which should generate more discussions at academic and legal levels, creating specific laws on the subject so that victims could have more support.

**Keywords:** stealthing; sexual violence; sexual health; reproductive rights; consent

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## 1. Introduction

Stealthing refers to the act in which one of the partners, without the consent or knowledge of the other, removes the condom at the time of sexual intercourse, breaking the previously established agreement (Brodsky 2017). Both men and women who had experienced stealthing describe having sexual intercourse with partners with penises who, during sex, removed the condom without their knowledge (Ahmad et al. 2020).

Condom use is a preventive method against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and pregnancy (WHO 2022). The removal of the condom can result in the transmission of STIs/HIV or unplanned pregnancy, with significant personal and health implications (Bonar et al. 2021; Davis 2019).

Recently, stealthing has become commonly discussed in the media (Daroya 2022). The importance of sexual consent has gained widespread interest—often attributable to the #metoo movement—that has raised the importance of discussing consent and violence related to sexual health (Fairbaim 2020).

Even though we can acknowledge the recent media, legal attention, and empirical research about stealthing in some countries (Davis 2019), in the case of Brazil, there is limited empirical research information on the potential sequelae of this practice. To date, not only is there no state or federal law explicitly addressing stealthing, but there is also just one empirical research about stealthing (Costa et al. 2022) that aimed to understand the prevalence and its impact among students from a public university in São Paulo state.

This study addresses this gap through an investigation of nonconsensual condom removal in a sample of women who had experienced stealthing, demonstrating the incidence of the act in the country, the sociodemographic attributes of the victims, and their perspectives on the stealthing experience. We thus provide empirical evidence of young and adult women's knowledge and perception of stealthing and, in turn, produce a foundation for evidence-based policy implications and further research on the driving factors of this behavior.

## 2. Methods

An online survey was developed and applied to women from all regions of the country. Eligible women were older than 18 years, with Brazilian nationality, who could read and write in Portuguese, and were victims of stealthing. The survey was applied between February and August 2023 to collect sociodemographic data: gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, ethnic background, religion, and city/state of residence, and to learn more about the circumstances of the stealthing experience, such as their age when the episode happened, what kind of affective-sexual relationship they had with the perpetrator, what were the consequences in their lives, and with whom did they share the experience.

This study used an online link prepared through Google Forms. The participants were recruited online through ads on social media (Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp). Through emails, Brazilian public and private universities were asked to share the call for responses among their communities. Feminist institutions and health workers were asked to share the ads on social media. In addition, participants were asked to forward the survey to other women eligible for the study.

Online surveys are an important technique for collecting data across large countries, such as Brazil, a country with a territorial dimension of over 200 million people. This methodology aimed to reach the largest number of women to have the most faithful portrayal possible of the reality of stealthing in Brazil. The online survey emphasized the anonymity of answers in such a sensitive and unstudied topic. This technique has been successfully used in previous research on sensitive issues in Brazil and worldwide (Evans and Mathur 2005; Diniz et al. 2017). The Ethics Committee of the University of Porto approved this study. All respondents agreed via the informed consent form, which informed them of the objectives, possible risks, and the confidentiality of the data collected, and, in case of any doubts, they could contact the main investigator for eventual clarifications.

The sample consisted of women aged between 18 and 58 who were literate and living in Brazil in 2023. The minimum age of 18 ensured a legal majority for respondents, with no maximum age restriction. The data refers to stealthing in any period of the respondents' lives, not just those in the survey year. Literacy was an unavoidable requirement for this type of survey. This study included all Brazilian states, in particular, urban and metropolitan areas. Following recommendations for self-completed surveys on sexual health in populations that include people with low education (Diniz et al. 2017), the survey format was simple, without conceptually complex questions or requiring long answers.

## 3. Results

*Sociodemographic Data of Women Victims of Stealthing*

According to Table 1, the results show how stealthing is a common phenomenon in Brazil. In total, the online survey had 2275 respondents. Regarding sexual orientation, 65.1% (1482) considered themselves heterosexual, and 34.9% (793) were bisexual. All respondents (100%) identified themselves as cisgender.

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic characteristics.

| | | % | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sexual orientation | Heterosexual | 65.1 | 1482 |
| | Bisexual | 34.9 | 793 |
| City of residence | State capital | 94.8 | 2156 |
| | Metropolitan area | 5.2 | 119 |
| Region of Brazil | North | 8.2 | 186 |
| | Northeast | 23.3 | 530 |
| | Midwest | 16.8 | 384 |
| | Southeast | 37.2 | 846 |
| | South | 14.5 | 329 |
| Age | 18–24 | 20.4 | 463 |
| | 25–29 | 28.6 | 651 |
| | 30–39 | 44.8 | 1019 |
| | >40 | 6.2 | 142 |
| Religion | No religion | 44.3 | 1007 |
| | Catholic | 23.3 | 531 |
| | Evangelical | 16.1 | 367 |
| | Spiritualists | 11.7 | 265 |
| | Others | 4.6 | 105 |
| Ethnic Background | White | 60.4 | 1373 |
| | Brown | 23.8 | 542 |
| | Black | 15.8 | 360 |
| Education | Postgraduate | 52.3 | 1189 |
| | Graduate | 22.6 | 515 |
| | Undergraduate | 16.9 | 384 |
| | Completed high school | 8.2 | 187 |
| Personal income | Up to 2 | 20.4 | 463 |
| | 2–4 | 13.5 | 308 |
| | 4–10 | 42.1 | 958 |
| | 10–20 | 13.2 | 301 |
| | No income | 10.8 | 245 |

N = 2275 number of respondents.

Regarding the city of residence, 94.8% (2156) lived in the capitals of different states. The remaining 5.2% (119) lived in urban areas. Brazil has five geo-political regions: North, Midwest, Southeast, South, and Northeast. A total of 37.2% (846) lived in the southeastern region of Brazil, 23.3% (520) in the Northeast, 14.5% (329) in the South, 16.8% (384) in the Midwest, and 8.2% (186) in the North.

Regarding religion, 44.3% (1007) answered that they had no religion. Of those who professed, 23.3% (531) were Catholics, 16.1% were Evangelicals (367), and 11.7% were Spiritualists (265). Regarding ethnic background, 60.4% (1373) self-declared as "white", 23.8% (542) self-declared as "brown", and 15.8% (360) as "black". Regarding education, 52.3% (1189) had completed postgraduate studies, 22.6% (515) had completed graduation, 16.9% (384) were under graduation, and 8.2% (187) had completed high school.

At the time they responded to the survey, 20.4% (463) of women were between 18 and 24 years old, 28.6% (651) between 25 and 29 years old, 44.8% (1019) of women were between 30 and 39 years old, and 6.2% (142) over 40. Concerning personal income, 42.1% (958) had income between four and ten minimum wages, 20.4% (463) had an income of up to two minimum wages, 13.5% (308) had an income between two and four minimum wages, 13.2% (301) had an income between ten and twenty minimum wages, and almost 10.8% (245) had no income.

It is a diverse sample: the women were from different social classes, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and professions. However, a majority profile can be traced: most were heterosexual women, cisgender adults living in urban areas of the country, with a religion, white, with a high level of education, and belonging to the middle class.

According to Table 2, regarding the experience of stealthing, some data drew attention. Even though all participants answered that they had experienced stealthing, 51.5% (1171) indicated that they had never heard of the term "stealthing" before reading the survey for the first time, demonstrating the silence of this sexual violence. Furthermore, 77.4% (1763) realized at the exact moment of sexual intercourse that the partner's condom had been removed without their consent, while 22.6% (512) found out after intercourse. Also, 63.6% (1448) indicated that they did not know anyone else who was a victim of stealthing, with 36.4% (827) knowing someone who has been a stealthing victim.

In common, all participants (100%) responded that the perpetrator of stealthing was a cisgender man. Regarding the status of the partner, 48.9% (1113) answered that at the time of stealthing, the sexual relationship was "episodic sexual intercourse". Another 41.5% (944) indicated the partner's status was "casual date". Still, 9.6% (218) marked that the partner was a "boyfriend-husband".

Regarding the age at which the act happened, 4.3% (100) were between 15 and 17 years old, 37.9% (860) were between 18 and 24, and 33.9% (772) were between 25 and 29 years old. Another 22.1% (502) were between 30 and 39 years old, and 1.8% (41) were over 40. Regarding the partner's age, the respondents were asked if the partner was "young" or "adult". "Young people" refers to the age group between 15 and 32 years old (United Nations Human Settlements Programme 2012; UNDP 2022). A total of 60.4% (1374) answered that the perpetrator partner was young (between 18 and 32 years), and 33.9% (772) answered that the partner was an adult (between 33 and 40). Another 5.7% (129) indicated that the partners were over 40.

Regarding how the partners met, 38.8% (882) met their partners through an app (Tinder and Instagram were the most cited), 29.6% (673) met their partners through mutual friends, 22.9% (521) met their partner at a party/club, and 8.7% (199) met them at work or places they usually frequent, such as the neighborhood, courses, or family meetings.

Women were asked about how they felt after they discovered that they were victims of stealthing. In this question, 74.3% (1691) indicated that they realized at the exact moment that they were victims of sexual violence, while 25.7% (584) said the act could happen to anyone. Regarding how the partner who performed stealthing reacted, 81.6% (1855) answered that he did not care. Furthermore, 16.2% (369) said that their partner pressured them to get a morning-after pill the next day, and 2.2% (51) said that they never discussed the matter with their partner. When asked about intervening action following stealthing, 67.7% (1529) did not seek any prophylaxis, 30.4% (691) took the morning-after pill, and 2.4% (55) took the morning-after pill and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).

Nine women became pregnant after stealthing. Of these nine, five performed an illegal abortion, and all of them used Misoprostol. The other four women carried the pregnancy to term. About sexually transmitted infections (STIs), 7.3% (166) reported which STIs they had: HPV, syphilis, gonorrhea, candidiasis, and discharge. Some had reported dual infections of infections such as HPV and gonorrhea or syphilis and gonorrhea.

**Table 2.** Experiences of stealthing.

| | | % | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Knowledge about the term | Never heard | 51.5 | 1171 |
| | Have heard | 48.5 | 1104 |
| Realized stealthing | During sexual intercourse | 77.4 | 1763 |
| | After sexual intercourse | 22.6 | 512 |
| Knowing a victim of stealthing | Do not know | 63.6 | 1448 |
| | Know | 36.4 | 827 |
| Status of the partner | Episodic sexual intercourse | 48.9 | 1113 |
| | Casual date | 41.5 | 944 |
| | Boyfriend/husband | 9.6 | 218 |
| Age at the moment of stealthing | 15–17 | 4.3 | 100 |
| | 18–24 | 37.9 | 860 |
| | 25–29 | 33.9 | 772 |
| | 30–39 | 22.1 | 502 |
| | >40 | 1.8 | 41 |
| Partner's age | 18–32 | 60.4 | 1374 |
| | 33–40 | 33.9 | 772 |
| | >40 | 5.7 | 129 |
| How partners met | App | 38.8 | 882 |
| | Mutual friends | 29.6 | 673 |
| | Bar/club | 22.9 | 521 |
| | Others (work, school/college, gym) | 8.7 | 199 |
| Feelings after stealthing | Victims of sexual violence | 74.3 | 1691 |
| | This could happen to anyone | 25.7 | 584 |
| Partner reaction | Did not care | 81.6 | 1855 |
| | Pressure to get the morning-after pill | 16.2 | 369 |
| | Never discussed | 2.2 | 51 |
| Prophylaxis after stealthing | Did not seek prophylaxis | 67.2 | 1529 |
| | Took the morning-after pill | 30.4 | 691 |
| | Morning-after pill and PEP | 2.4 | 55 |
| Reproductive outcomes | Pregnancy | 0.39 | 9 |
| | Illegal abortion | 0.21 | 5 |
| | Pregnancy to term | 0.17 | 4 |
| STI | Reported STI | 7.3 | 166 |
| | Did not report STI | 92.7 | 2109 |
| Consequences after stealthing | Afraid of STI or pregnancy | 83.6 | 1902 |
| | Lost confidence in future partners | 77.6 | 1766 |
| | Lost interest and pleasure in sex | 77.3 | 1758 |
| | Lost interest in hook-up | 7.5 | 172 |
| Social support | Internet | 38.6 | 879 |
| | Professional help | 18.9 | 431 |
| | Police station | 1.5 | 34 |
| | Never told anyone | 41 | 931 |
| The partner should be punished | Yes | 91.4 | 2080 |
| | No | 8.6 | 195 |
| Stealthing should be a crime | Yes | 85.9 | 1955 |
| | No | 14.1 | 320 |

N = 2275 number of respondents.

Regarding this question: "What consequences would you say you had after you experienced stealthing?" 83.6% (1902) answered that they were afraid of having had an STI or becoming pregnant; 77.6% (1766) responded that they lost confidence in their

future sexual partners; 77.3% (1758) answered that they lost interest and lost pleasure in subsequent sexual relations. A total of 7.5% (172) said they began to have sexual relations only with acquaintances and never again with strangers. The respondents could mark multiple alternatives in this question.

Regarding respondents' social support after the stealthing, 59% (1344) said they talked to someone (friends, family, professional help). Further, 41% (931) said they never told anyone. Of the 1344 who spoke to someone, 38.6% (879) mentioned that they sought help only through the internet (blogs, testimonials, and videos on YouTube, mainly about other victims), 18.9% (431) said they sought professional help, such as talking to a doctor, nurse, or psychologist, and 1.5% of the sample (34) went to the police station to report the episode and seek help from the Brazilian justice system. In this question, they also could mark more than one alternative.

Finally, 91.4% (2080) considered that the partner who perpetrated stealthing should be punished by justice for such an act, and 85.9% (1955) believed that stealthing should be considered a crime.

## 4. Discussion

This study indicates that stealthing is a common phenomenon in Brazil. In a stratified sample of 2275 women, the sociodemographic features show that the victims of stealthing are "regular" women: they are young, work and study, follow a religion, and live in urban areas.

Almost 90% of the victims were at a young age when the episode happened. Furthermore, 3.9% (89) were between 16 and 17 years old, and 41.5% (943) were between 18 and 25 years old. According to the literature, younger women are more likely to be victims of sexual violence. Still, women aged between 18 and 24 who are college students are three times more likely than women in general to experience sexual violence (WHO 2022; Morgan and Thompson 2022).

The affective-sexual trajectory of young women is marked by gender–social norms that often place them in situations of vulnerability to violence (Heise et al. 2019). It does not mean that only physical violence is present in heterosexual relationships. Still, there is a type of symbolic violence that includes sexual harassment and sexual coercion; for example, revealing the inequality of power present in sexual relationships that often prevents them from negotiating the use of the condom or saying no to the sexual intercourse itself. In matters of sexuality, this power relation is usually subtle in how consent can be defined (Armstrong et al. 2018).

It also highlighted that stealthing happened mostly in non-stable relationships, mainly on casual dates and episodic sexual intercourse. Authors mention that episodic sexual intercourse may pose a risk for sexual victimization due to a lack of norms guiding the sexual activity, the likelihood of misperception of the other´s sexual interest, and difficulties in sexual communication between unacquainted partners, especially in the decision-making process of using a condom, expressing the power of men to make decisions alone with no negotiation (Ford 2017). In addition, casual dates and episodic sexual intercourse typically occur in private settings, which makes it difficult for bystanders to notice or intervene (Sheffield et al. 2023).

Furthermore, the high number of women who met their sexual partners on geolocation applications is also relevant. The literature shows how the internet influences the sexuality of young people and how the use of dating 'apps' to facilitate real-world social encounters between strangers is culturally mainstream (Rousseau et al. 2017). The authors mention that the use of dating apps poses risks associated with privacy, security, intimacy, sexual assaults, sexual abuse, and risky sexual behaviors. Apps can be addressed as technology-facilitated sexual violence perpetration (Ford 2017; Sheffield et al. 2023).

In this context, the use of dating applications should be seen as an emerging public health issue. The public health field should consider the use of online dating apps with an increase in sexual victimization risks. Our data demonstrate that stealthing should be

noted as sexual violence that could be facilitated through these apps, which should not be normalized or minimized. Understanding the negotiation of condom use and experiences of violence mediated by applications can be a significant research path for discussing the dialogue of digital sociality and its implications for the health field (Deslandes et al. 2020). Such discussions can provide support actions in the health field, allowing a critical reflection on how digital sociabilities have created new forms of socialization, codes, and vulnerabilities among their users. Provoking a debate about sexuality in times of the internet and social media platforms becomes essential for understanding the subjectivities, vulnerabilities, and acts of violence that might be present in those relationships.

Also, we must highlight the link between stealthing and reproductive rights in the Brazilian context. In Brazil, abortion is illegal except in cases of rape, or when the woman's life is in danger, and more recently, because of anencephaly—when the fetus has an undeveloped brain (BRASIL 1984; BRASIL 2012). This study points out the link between stealthing concerning heterosexual relationships and the possibility of an unplanned pregnancy as a consequence, as was the case of nine women. Stealthing, still, is not typified in the Brazilian criminal code. In Switzerland, there was a trial for a victim of stealthing, which constitutes rape (ABC 2017). We affirm the urgent need for more legal discussion to understand whether the practice would qualify as a crime of sexual violation through fraud for victims of stealthing and who become pregnant to have access to legal abortion if so they desire.

We mentioned that only 55 (2.4%) women sought post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). This prevention technology consists of the use of antiretroviral medication for 28 days, which must also be started within 72 h of possible sexual exposure to HIV (WHO 2014). Limited information is known about the cisgender women who seek and initiate PEP for HIV prevention worldwide (United Nations Development Programme 2022).

The use of PEP has been shown to reduce new infections in cisgender women and other priority populations with adequate adherence (DeHaan et al. 2022). However, the rates of PEP uptake are meager among cisgender women, reported between 5 and 15% of all PEP prescriptions (Irvine et al. 2015). Women who experience sexual violence should use PEP in a discreet manner, which offers them autonomy over their sexual health (Inciarte et al. 2020). Learning about their opinions and knowledge about PEP, their HIV risk factors, and why they should take it may help inform future PEP implementation efforts among cisgender women. The results suggest that innovative approaches may be needed to reach women and their acknowledgment of PEP. It is crucial to empower cisgender women with PEP knowledge and sexual risk awareness to engage women in PEP, especially after an episode of violence, such as in cases of stealthing.

Only 34 women (1.5%) sought a women's police station. Data from the World Health Organization indicate that around 35% of women in the world have experienced some type of physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Violence against women represents a public health issue and a violation of human rights (WHO 2021). In the Brazilian case, the literature indicates that women seek out a women's police station only after being victims of cases of physical violence (Maffei et al. 2020). Considering the limited knowledge of stealthing, there may be a dissociation between the woman perceiving herself as a victim of violence and having the right to seek help and rights at a women's police station to report her sexual partner.

The promulgation of Law 11.340/2006, known as the Maria da Penha Law, played an essential role in the visibility of violence against women, as the topic became of public interest, and protection became the responsibility of the State (Romagnoli 2015). However, it must be considered that women in situations of violence often have a derogatory representation of themselves, which, in most cases, is the result of a poor understanding of the process that they have suffered and of historically constructed male power (Fonseca et al. 2012). Women commonly feel guilty, ashamed, and fragile when faced with episodes of violence. It is emphasized that the search for a police station by women victims of violence is one of the main gateways to access public policies to combat violence (Camp 2022). Stealthing is sexual violence against women and should be treated as such. Reporting

stealthing is fundamental to ensuring rights and protection. The data suggests that women are unaware of these public protection institutions and often do not believe they can achieve any results. After all, women and victims of stealthing need to know that they can count on professional institutions to be prepared to provide support.

Stealthing also reinforces the need to educate men and women about consent and gender relations to prevent gender-based violence. Therefore, to prevent stealthing episodes, it should contribute to conveying messages in favor of gender equality, promoting non-stereotyped gender roles, and teaching about consent to sexual relations and respect for each other's integrity (UNESCO et al. 2018; McQuigg 2018) from the early stages of education.

It is important to emphasize that the consequences of stealthing are not only limited to victims becoming infected with sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies (Gazendam et al. 2020). They reported experiencing expressive emotional stress after stealthing. There are emotional effects that also contribute to compromising the sexual and reproductive health of women. We note that stealthing is viewed negatively and raises questions about trust, personal health, and consent. These results show that stealthing must become an imperative component of public health efforts to ensure appropriate sexual health literacy.

We emphasize that the sexual intercourse in question was consensual between the partners. However, there is a breach of contract, in which the male partner removes the condom without the woman's consent. Consent in sexual relations must be seen as essential for a healthy sexual relationship despite the visible hierarchies that some encounters can lead to (Morgan and Thompson 2022). Lack of consent becomes a model of regulation and a criterion in defining the act of stealthing as sexual violence. Consent is a fundamental component to guarantee healthy, satisfactory, and violence-free sexual relationships (Pérez 2017). In cases of stealthing, a consensual sexual relationship becomes nonconsensual, and therefore, sexual violence must be considered.

Finally, we also point to a certain invisibility of the term, as almost 52% had never heard of it at the time of the research, and almost 64% did not know any other victims of stealthing in their social circle. The term needs greater dissemination in academic, legal, and social circles to bring about greater visibility and awareness about the phenomenon, its severity, and the need to be incorporated into public policies, further demonstrating the difficulty in disseminating the term in non-English speaking countries.

The results also demonstrate that women in Brazil perceive the act of stealthing as violence—and how the State should be required to provide health education programs to address stealthing prevention behaviors. Showing how victims could face this type of violence is an urgent issue so that social mechanisms can evolve to the point of allowing women and men to have sex relations safely from a gender equality perspective (Ahmad et al. 2020; United Nations 2020).

## 5. Conclusions

This study has limitations. Despite the high number of respondents, the data are not a national representative sample. Also, our data were limited due to most respondents identifying as white, highly educated, and cisgender. Our analysis of the racialized dynamics of stealthing demonstrates the need for further research on this issue, considering more black and brown women, low education status, and transgender women. Only urban and literate women responded. They also needed to be over 18. This means that other social marks should be considered to obtain a more accurate number of victims in the country, considering the experiences of women with lesser literacy abilities and girls below the age of 18, for example. The number of occurrences of stealthing is undoubtedly higher than the number of women in this research who have experienced stealthing. The total number of victims of stealthing in the country will be more significant than indicated in this study if rural areas and the less literate population are also accounted for, as well as the country's minors, and the fact that a person can experience stealthing more than once throughout life.

Although increasingly discussed in international media, more scientific research on stealthing must be done. To our knowledge, this is the first study investigation about

stealthing in Brazil, including the sociodemographic features of the victims, the context in which it occurred, the impact on those who experienced it, and how they perceived the event.

We note that stealthing, despite the term not being well known among the Brazilian population, our results do demonstrate that women in this study perceive the act of stealthing as a sexual violation. This notion has been brought up in the field of law. It thus provides public health a foundation for initiating health education programs to address stealthing prevention behaviors and further research. Educational violence prevention is also crucial. Specifically, formalized social media qualitative analyses would be beneficial to highlight emergent themes related to how stealthing is discussed and research into the driving factors behind such behavior, which may shed further light on the means of preventive measures. Given the substantial media coverage on stealthing and the importance of ensuring that victims receive appropriate evidence-based information, public health efforts are needed to incorporate stealthing as a part of sexual health education.

Stealthing demands more empirical investigations, as well as further conceptual and theoretical attention, especially in the gender and sexual violence field (Ebrahim 2019), showing how sexual interactions can involve fraud and violate autonomy (Vidler 2017). It is not only a criminal issue per se but also a public health issue and needs further judicial engagement in Brazil and worldwide. Specifically, qualitative research could be significant in highlighting emergent analyses on how stealthing could be discussed more, and researchers among people who perpetuate stealthing could highlight preventive measures. Such a widespread phenomenon with health outcomes needs public health efforts for more visibility and discussions on the national public health agenda and sex education.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** This study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of the University of Porto, protocol code "Reference 2023/04-05". Date of approval: 05/03/2023.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy and ethical restrictions.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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