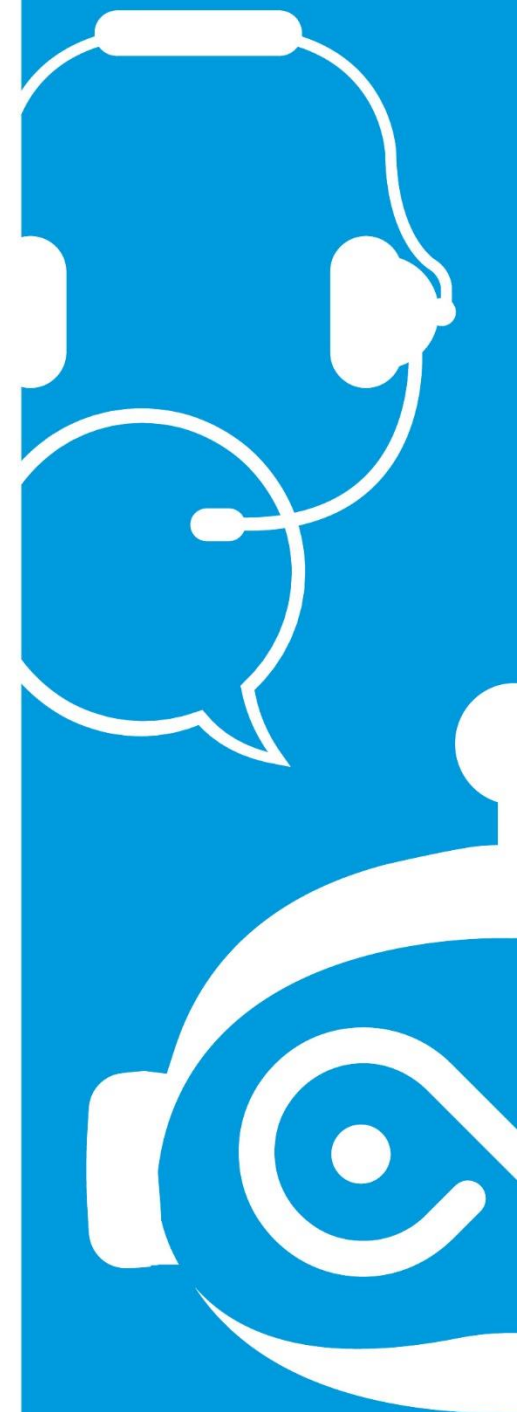




SEXUALLY EXPLICIT CONTENT: ONLYFANS

What is it?

OnlyFans is a **digital tool** in the form of a platform and app created in 2016. It is one of the most popular sites showing pornographic content created by the users themselves, wherein other users, as 'followers', subscribe to and pay for the sexually explicit material shared here through a monthly membership.



How can it impact the sexual and reproductive health of youth?

OnlyFans users, according to the platform's policy, must be at least 18 years old. However, research shows that adolescents access the site by using their parents' credit cards and family members' IDs or passports to log in and subscribe. This has resulted in minors (individuals under 18 years old) selling sexually explicit content for money.

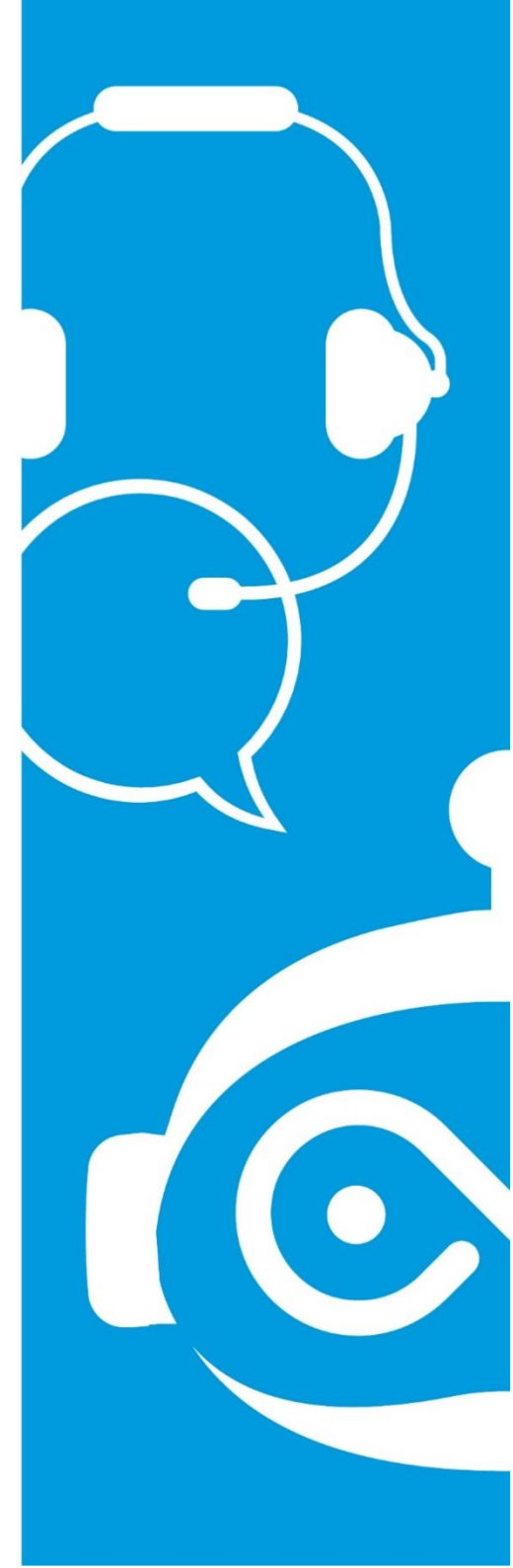
The number of users of the platform increased drastically during the global health pandemic of 2020, especially among sex workers who lost their jobs due to lockdowns and strip club closures. Watching sexually explicit content produced in such a way (for profit), can significantly distort a young person's perception of their own self-image and sexuality.

In addition to these problems, there is also the fact that, to sell photos, creators feel pressured that they always have to "show a little more". It means that often those who pay for the photos are not satisfied with what is shown to them, and they blackmail creators by requesting more explicit photos or videos.

According to an analysis conducted by a mental health specialist, the popularity of OnlyFans has carried with it certain impacts on the mental health of the young creators¹:

- A deliberate blurring of the line between reality and fiction is present on the platform, and the 'intimacy' curated there may then be misinterpreted as genuine by users. One such incident that

¹ Szczepańska, "Całkowicie nowy Czat Google może w końcu wystarczyć, abyś na dobre porzucił Slacka."



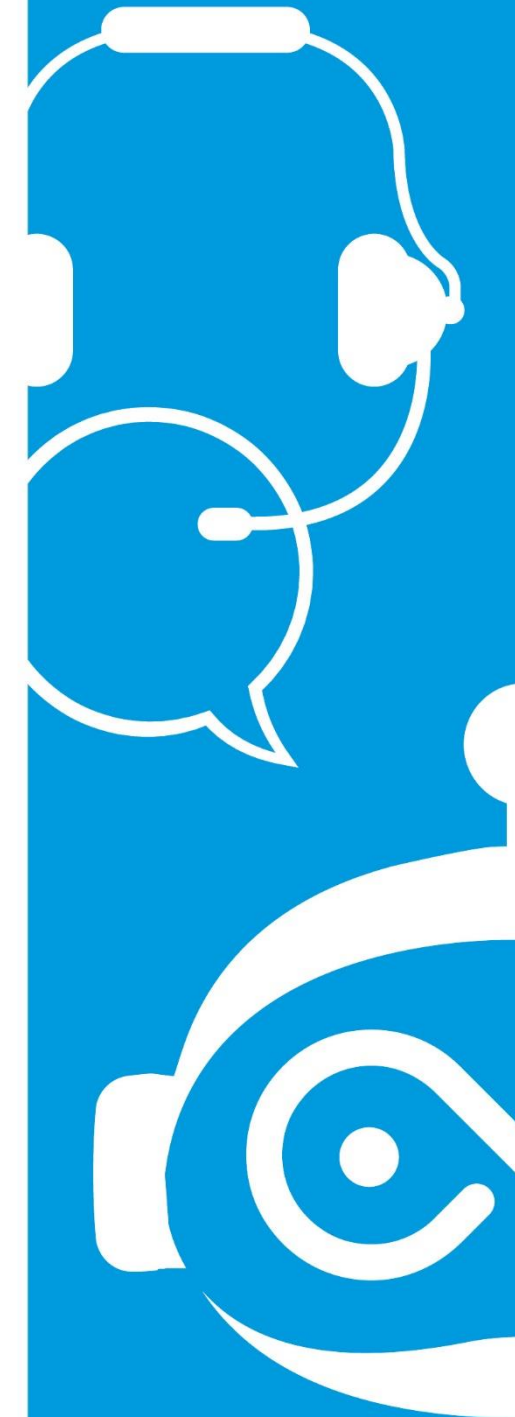
Supporting youth's sexual & reproductive health in the digital age: BEST PRACTICES

occurred involved a user breaking into the home of a woman presenting erotic content on the platform and claiming that the online creator wanted him to stalk her.

- Real-life sex workers often experience feelings of loneliness and report low levels of psychological well-being, even as creators of pornographic content online².
- A 2021 report published by the Avery Centre found that 30% of creators surveyed had received emails from OnlyFans informing them that their accounts would be deleted if they did not publish new content; 34% of creators said they experienced negative physical and mental health consequences (shame, anxiety, low self-esteem)³.

² Travers, "3 Mental Health Consequences of OnlyFans Stardom."

³ Henderson, "ONLYFANS: A Case Study of Exploitation in the Digital Age."



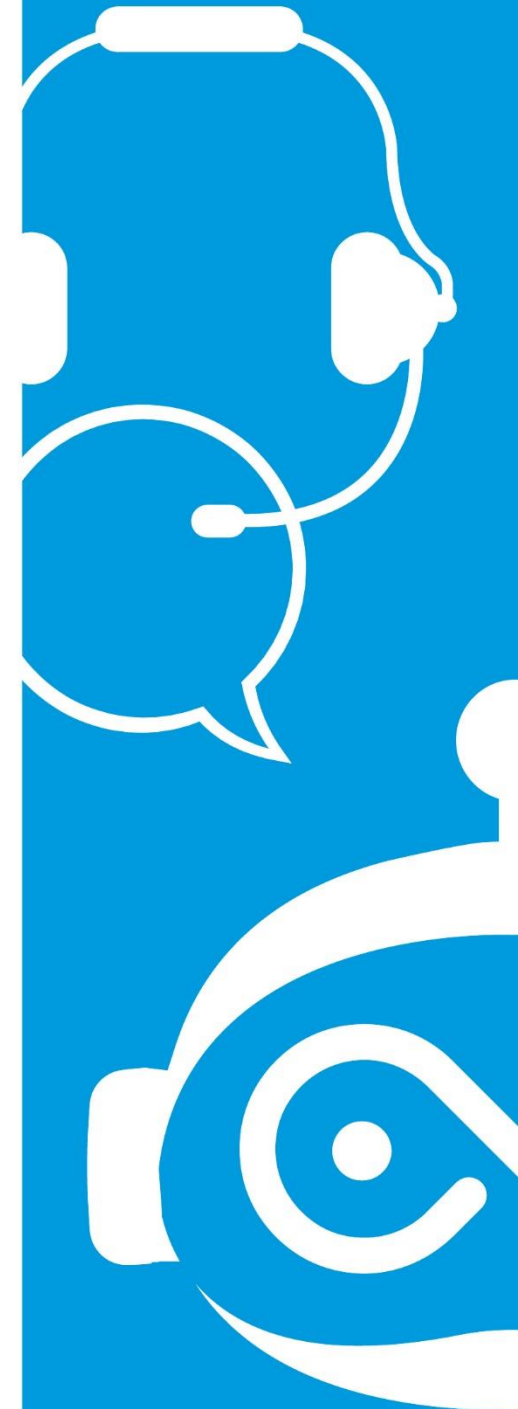
What are some ways in which youth can be supported?

- Emphasise that creating and selling pornographic content can lead to blackmail and harassment for further engagement in such activities.
- Teach young people how to assertively decline selling sexual content they create.
- Demonstrate and share that there are better and safer ways of earning income.
- Show that one can use their time more wisely and efficiently than watching pornographic content, such as pursuing hobbies/higher education, creating meaningful relationships, and others.

Related digital phenomena/tools:

See sheets:

- Misconceptions & misinformation: Emotional effects of sex
- Sexually explicit content: Pornographic websites
- Sexually explicit content: Sexting



Further reading:

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- Internet Matters. "What Is OnlyFans? What Parents Need to Know," December 7, 2022. <https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/news-blogs/what-is-onlyfans-what-parents-need-to-know/>.
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- Travers, Mark. "3 Mental Health Consequences of OnlyFans Stardom." *Psychology Today*, 2023. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/social-instincts/202304/3-mental-health-consequences-of-onlyfans-stardom>.

