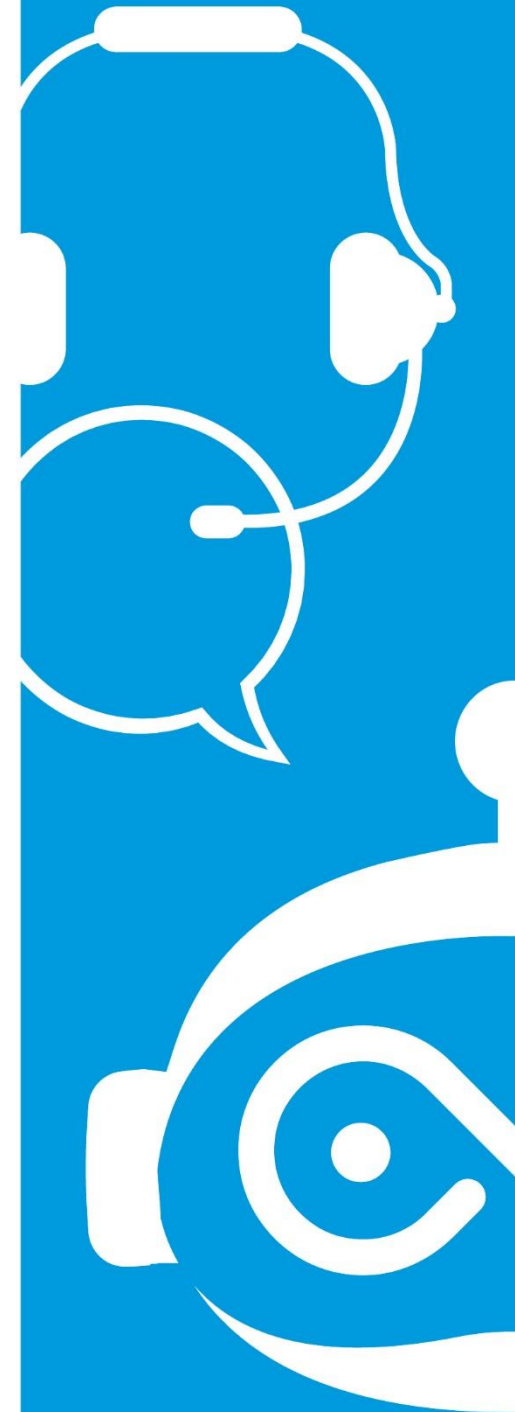




GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: INTIMATE IMAGE ABUSE

What is it?

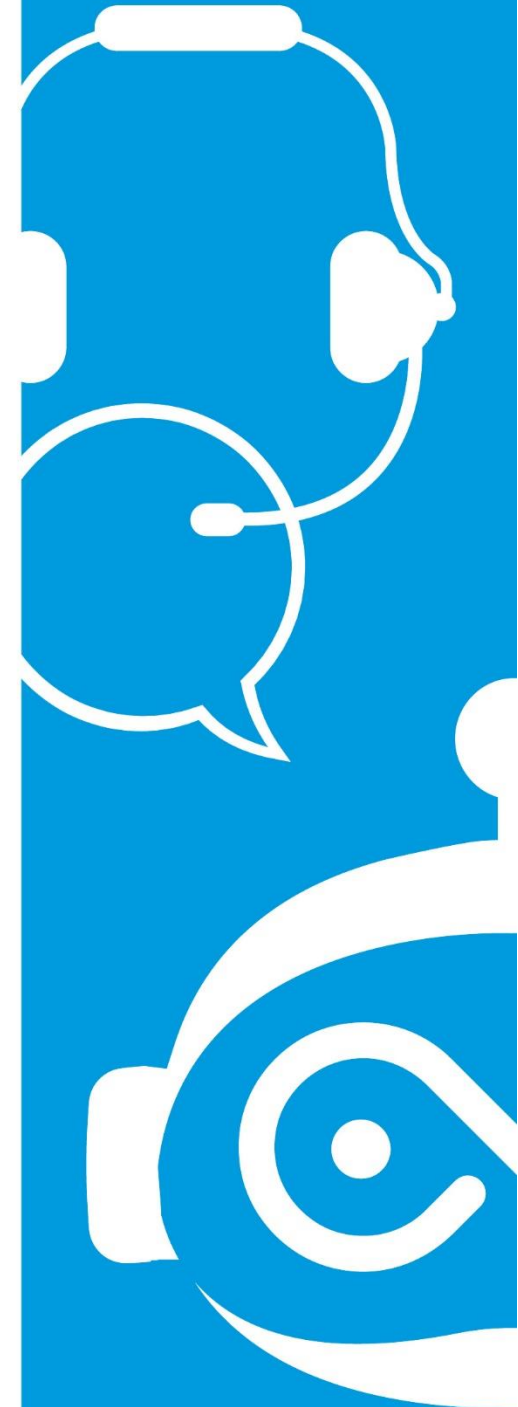
Intimate image abuse is a **digital phenomenon** most often expressed through the dissemination of intimate photographs on the Internet without the consent of the person featured in them. This is a form of gender-based violence, as statistically, it more often affects women. Sharing intimate photos on the internet without the consent of the person depicted constitutes a violation of personal rights (such as causing the victim to feel shame or fear) and/or qualifies as a criminal offense.



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

A very common reason for such an abuse of trust is the desire for revenge or retaliation, which may occur after a breakup between two people. Since victims usually prioritise putting an end to the public dissemination of their photos or recordings as quickly as possible, such cases are often resolved through a settlement, even at the cost of receiving less compensation. Victims fear lengthy legal processes and potential consequences, such as their family, friends or place of work finding out about the entire situation.

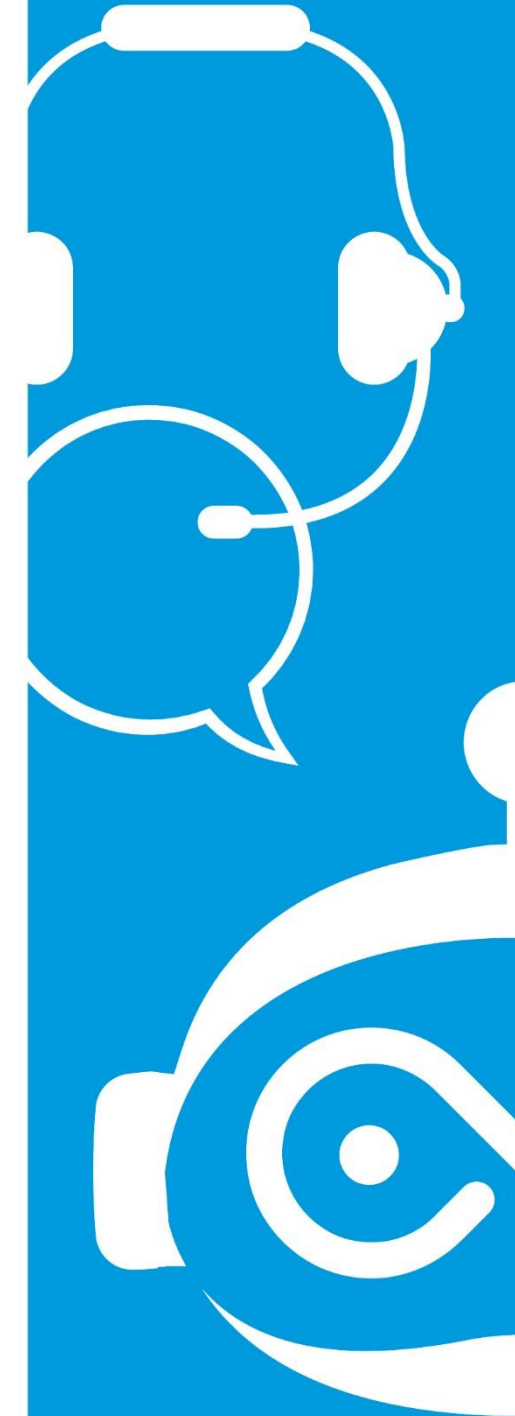
A serious offense is the dissemination of nude photos of a minor on the internet. This sometimes occurs after the prior coaxing of a minor to send such photos to the interested parties. This phenomenon is related to the concept of "sextortion" (involving the acquisition of sexually explicit material from the victim and then extorting money or additional photos under the threat of publishing or disseminating them).



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

The mentioned phenomenon can have a very detrimental impact on the SRH of young individuals. It often involves threats and blackmail, causing a young person to live under pressure and shame that their family or friends will discover the entire situation. As a result, intimacy, physicality, and sexuality start to be associated with something destructive that only brings trouble.

Another related consequence which can bring about dangerous outcomes is real-world sexual exploitation. Victims are sometimes coerced into such encounters through threats of further dissemination of photos or videos on the internet. The mentioned situation undoubtedly leaves lasting scars on the SRH of young people.



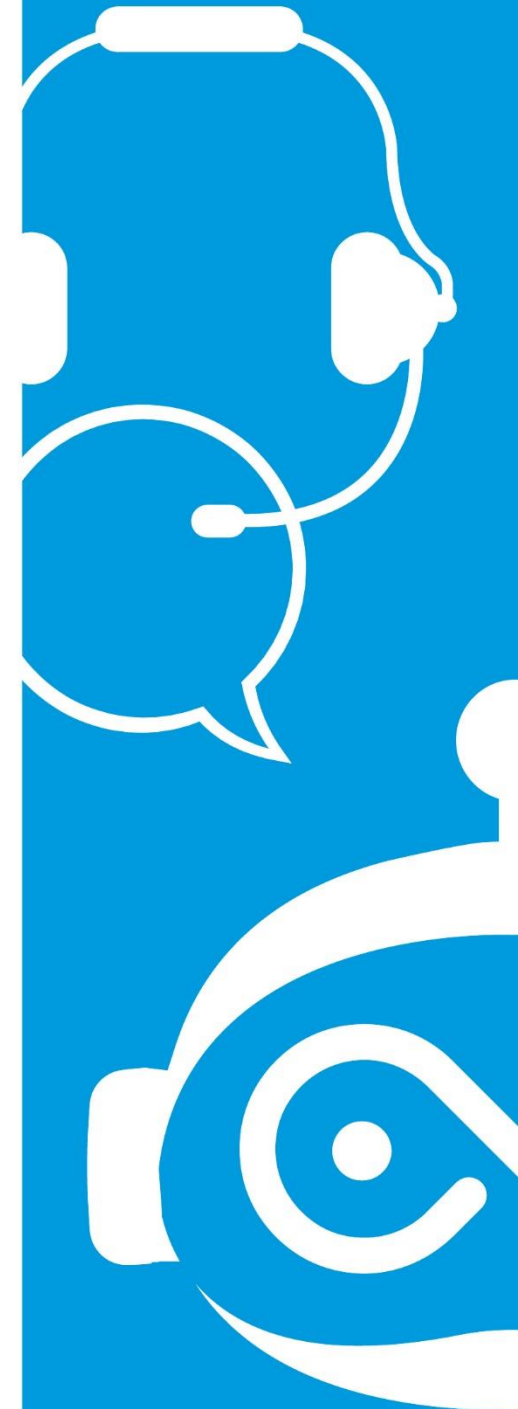
What are some ways in which youth can be supported?

- Explain to a young person that they should carefully consider and verify who they send their intimate photos or videos to.
- Emphasise that they should not engage in sexual discussions with strangers they meet online.
- Demonstrate that relationships and friendships formed in the real world are better and safer than those in the virtual world.
- Teach the importance of striking a balance between being open and not being overly trusting.
- Assist young people in identifying the mechanisms used in manipulation.
- Highlight that if a young person is coerced into sending more intimate photos (if such a situation has already occurred), they don't have to give in to blackmail and can seek help from a trusted adult (such as parents, teachers, or any other person they trust and feel safe with).

Related digital phenomena/tools:

See sheets:

- Gender-based violence: Coercive control of technology
- Know your rights: The right to be forgotten
- Online abuse: Grooming of youngsters



Further reading:

- Litkowiec, Marta. "Konsekwencje Karne Utrwalania i Rozpowszechniania Wizerunku Nagiej Osoby Lub Osoby w Trakcie Czynności Seksualnej." INFOR, 2014. <https://www.infor.pl/prawo/kodeks-karny/odpowiedzialnosc-karna/703359,Konsekwencje-karne-utrwalania-i-rozpowszechniania-wizerunku-nagiej-osoby-lub-osoby-w-trakcie-czynnosci-seksualnej.html>.
- Sewastianowicz, Monika. "Nagim Zdjęciem w Byłego Partnera - Słodka Zemsta Może Słono Kosztować." Prawo.pl, January 20, 2021. <https://www.prawo.pl/prawo/co-grozi-za-rozpowszechnienie-nagich-zdjec-bylego-partnera,459255.html>.
- Sreenivas, Shishira. "What Is Sextortion?" WebMD, 2022. <https://www.webmd.com/sex-relationships/what-is-sex-tortion>.

