

Forms of Online Violence Against Children

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Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can be seen as a form of technology-facilitated violence, where the behaviours, harms, and structural power dynamics of offline bullying are reproduced and often magnified through digital platforms (OECD, 2022)

- Cyberbullying takes place in different means of digital technology, such as social media, gaming environments, online forums, and messaging platforms

Identity-Based Cyberbullying

Identity-based cyberbullying is the use of digital platforms to harass or marginalize individuals based on their identity, such as race, gender, sexuality, nationalities, religion, or disability (Galan et al., 2021).

- Sometimes there are news reports, politicians, celebrities, and other influential figures who depict certain ethnic and diverse groups

Exclusion

Exclusion refers to intentionally leaving children out of online groups, conversations, games, or social activities in ways that can cause emotional harm and social isolation (Mulvey, 2016).

- It can lead to feelings of loneliness, emotional distress, and social isolation among children.

Online Child Sexual Exploitation

Online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) refers to the use of the internet or digital technologies by perpetrators to abuse, manipulate, or coerce children into sexual activity for financial gain, coercion, or gratification (Fry et al., 2025).

Online Grooming

Online grooming is when a predator builds a trusting, emotional connection with a child online to manipulate, exploit, or sexually abuse them (Ringenberg et al., 2022).

- Groomers often use fake profiles, shower victims with attention, or offer gifts. The ultimate goal is to isolate the victim and coerce them into sharing explicit images or meeting in person.

Sextortion

Child sextortion is a form of cyber blackmail where a predator manipulates or coerces a minor under 18 into sending sexually explicit images or videos, and then threatens to share that material with family, friends, or the public unless the child complies with specific demands (Ray et al., 2025).

Sexting

Child sexting refers to the creation, sending, or receiving of sexually explicit messages, photos, or videos involving young people (Webwise).

- Legally, underage sexting is treated with extreme seriousness and can carry severe legal consequences. Because minors are legally unable to consent to the creation or distribution of sexually explicit images of themselves, doing so often intersects with child protection.

Privacy Violations

A privacy violation refers to the unauthorized disclosure or exposure of sensitive information, such as a child's location, associations, or communications, which is linked to the child. This can occur through the publication of information or through a breach of security resulting in unauthorized access to private data (Steinberg, 2024).

Doxxing

Doxxing refers to the act of sharing a child's private or personal information online, such as their address, phone number, school, or photos, without their consent in order to threaten, shame, or harm them (Anderson & Wood, 2021).

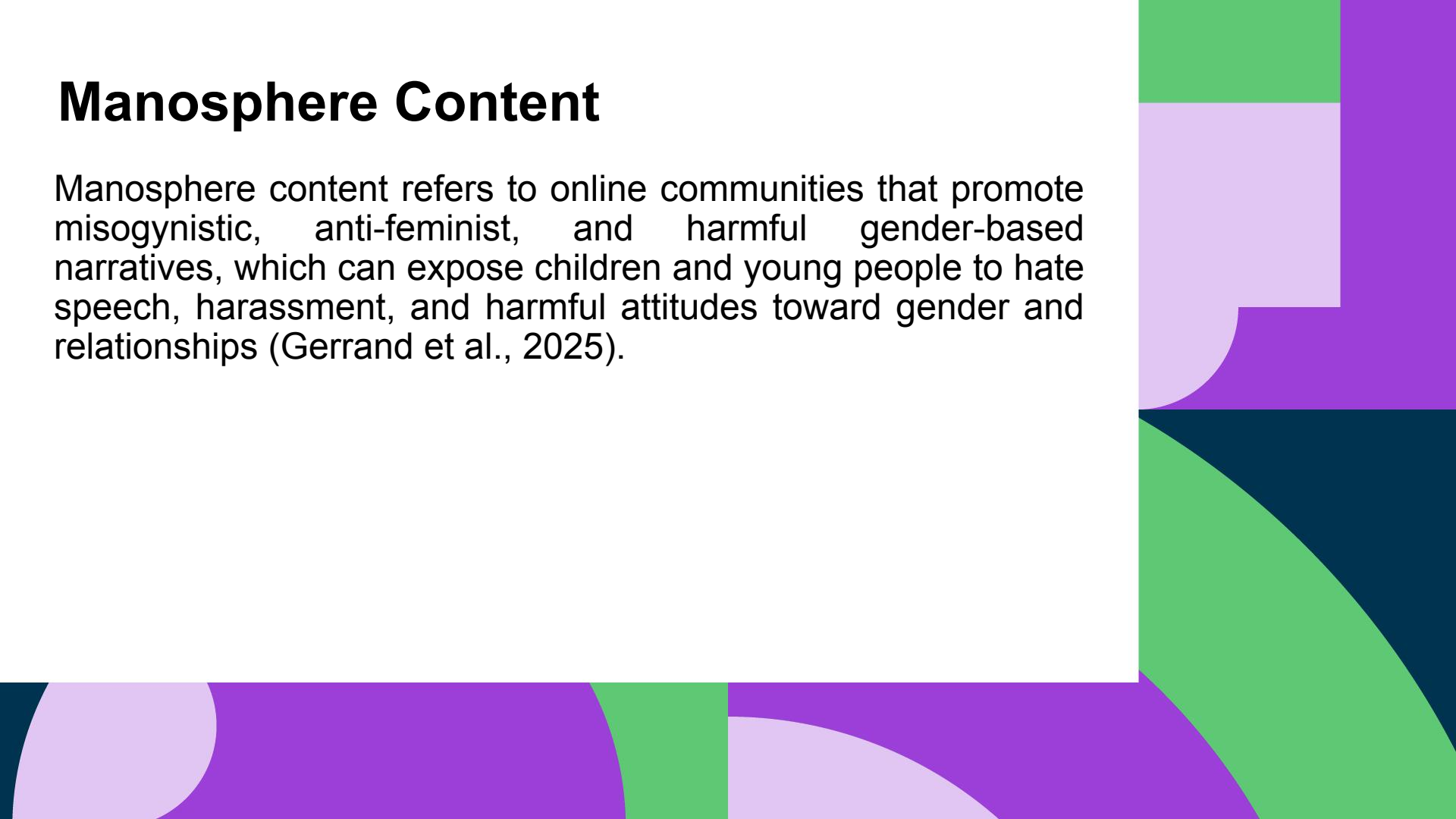
Exposure to Harmful Content

Exposure to harmful content refers to children encountering inappropriate, disturbing, or dangerous material online through social media, websites, gaming platforms, or messaging apps (Izrael et al., 2025).

- Examples of harmful content include violent or graphic videos, sexual or explicit material, hate speech, self-harm related content, and misleading online challenges or misinformation.

Manosphere Content

Manosphere content refers to online communities that promote misogynistic, anti-feminist, and harmful gender-based narratives, which can expose children and young people to hate speech, harassment, and harmful attitudes toward gender and relationships (Gerrand et al., 2025).



Deep Fakes and AI Generated Abuse

Deepfakes and AI-generated content refer to digitally manipulated or artificially created images, videos, or audio that can falsely portray children, spread misinformation, or be used for harassment, bullying, or exploitation (Laczi & Poser, 2021).

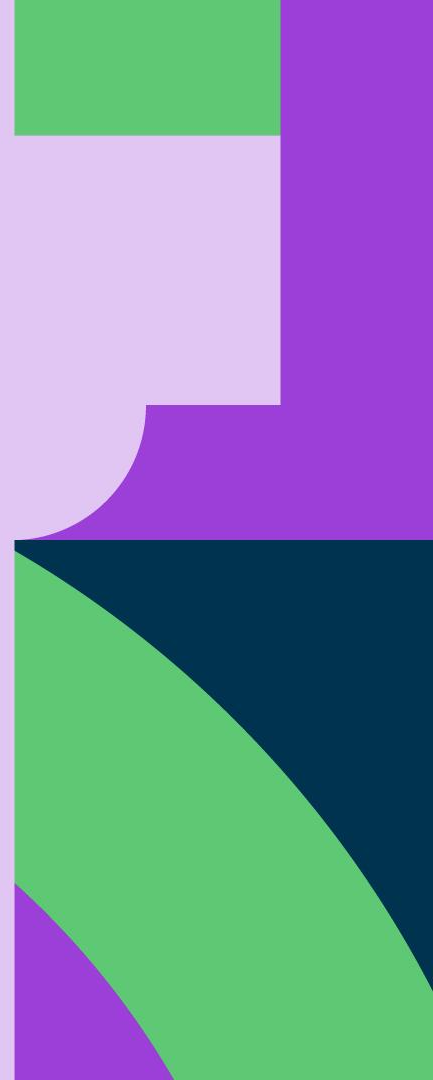
Prevalence of Online Violence against Children

WHO, 2022

- International studies found that 11.5% of survey participants had experienced unwanted online child sexual solicitation.
- In 2021, electronic service providers identified 29 million child sexual exploitation images online.
- A European survey found that 11% of children aged 9 to 16, including 17% of 16 to 17-year-olds, had experienced misuse of their personal information online.

UNESCO, 2021

- 1 in 2 children aged 11-18 surveyed in 11 European countries, 6 in 10 children aged 13-17 in the USA and 1 in 3 primary and secondary school students surveyed in South Africa reported they experienced cyberbullying.
- 44% of the children surveyed in 11 European countries who had been cyberbullied before lockdown said it happened even more during lockdowns in 2020.
- According to a survey conducted in 13 states in the USA, 61% of children said they were cyberbullied because of their appearance.



NCRB, 2023

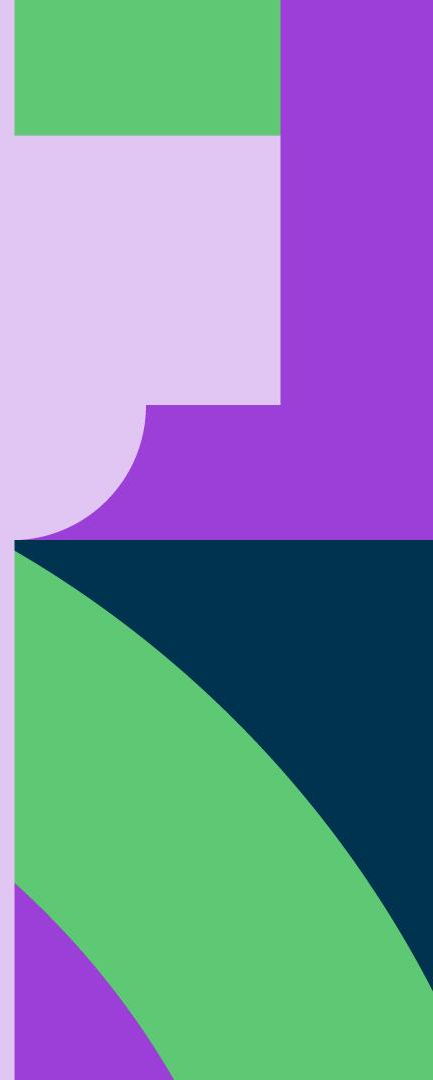
- 1,77,335 cases of crimes against children in 2023, up 9.2 per cent from the previous year
- Offences under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act followed closely with 38.2 per cent
- Nearly 237 cybercrime cases and 486 crimes against children

Vijayarani et al., 2024

- India has one of the highest incidences of internet harassment, with over 33% of children reporting having been the victim of it

Ranjith et al., 2023

- 228 teenagers between the ages of 11 and 15, cyberbullying was prevalent (7.5% of cases), while victims of cyberbullying were found to account for 17.2% of cases
- Prevalence rate of cyberbullying among school-going adolescents was 28.3%



Ranjith et al., 2023

- Nearly 13.8% of adolescents were both victims and cyber-offenders at some time.
- Prevalence rate is 14.5% for only the victims of cyberbullying and 5.8% for the offenders of cyberbullying
- The most frequently reported cyber-victimization was “someone threatened to hurt me through a cell phone text message” (10%), and cyber-offending was “I posted mean or hurtful comments about someone online” (7%)

Ranjith et al., 2023

- Among the majority, 13.2% of victims have been cyberbullied on the multiplayer online game platform.
- When it comes to the platform or pattern of offenders, 9.5% of them cyberbullied others on Instagram.

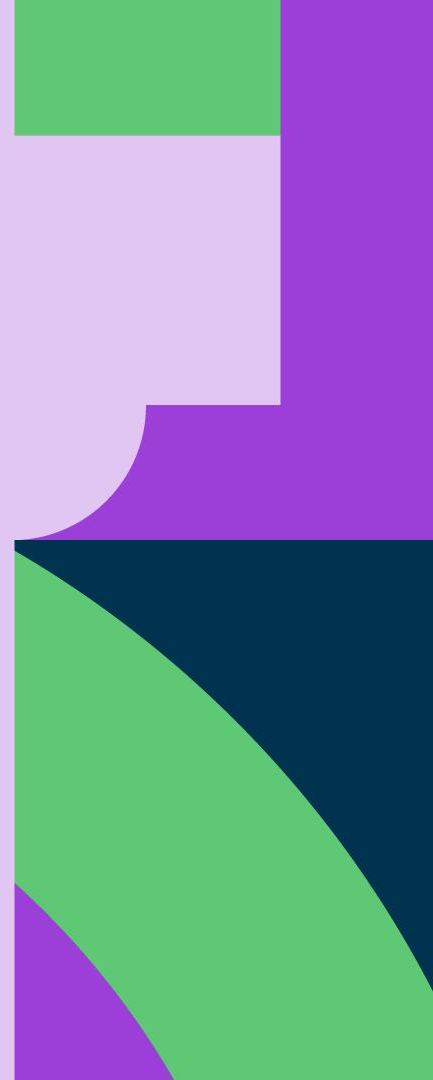
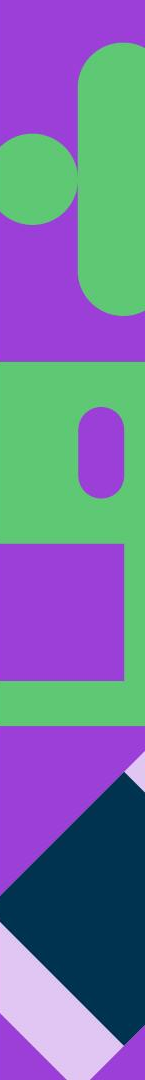


Table 1. Comparison of cybercrimes against children reported before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic ([National Crime Records Bureau, 2022](#)).

S. No	Cybercrimes against children reported	Before the COVID-19 pandemic			During and after the COVID-19 pandemic		
		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1.	Cyber pornography/hosting or publishing obscene sexual materials depicting children (Sec. 67B of IT Act r/w other Indian Penal Code/Special and Local Laws)	7	44	102	738	969	1171
2.	Cyber stalking (Sec. 354D IPC)	7	40	45	140	123	158
3.	Other cybercrimes against children	70	141	153	220	252	416

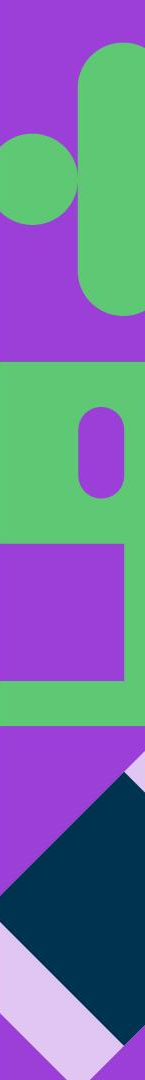
Activity

<https://youtu.be/xhaJNDCGJp4>



Questions (Take 2 minutes and answer):

- Has this situation happened in your class or with someone you might know?
- If this child were in your classroom, how would you respond as a teacher?



Signs of Online Violence Against Children

- Sudden changes in behaviour, mood, or personality
- Becoming withdrawn, anxious, or unusually aggressive
- Being secretive about online activities or devices
- Avoiding school, friends, or social interactions
- Signs of emotional distress after using devices
- Receiving unexplained messages, gifts, or requests online
- Changes in sleep, eating, or online habits
- Fear of checking phones or social media accounts
- Loss of confidence or low self-esteem

If a Child Reveals Online Violence (UNCRC)

Protection Rights

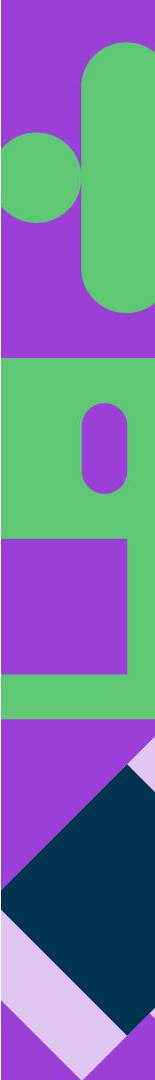
- Ensure the child's safety and take all disclosures seriously.
- Protect the child from further harm, abuse, or exploitation online.

Participation Rights

- Listen carefully to the child and respect their voice and experiences.
- Involve the child in decisions about the support and actions taken.

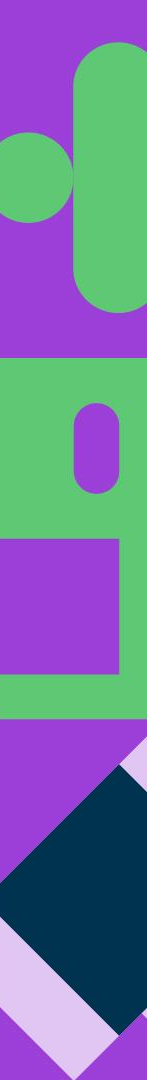
Provision Rights

- Provide emotional support, guidance, and access to appropriate services.
- Ensure children have access to safe digital environments and safeguarding support.



A Child with Harmful Online Behaviour

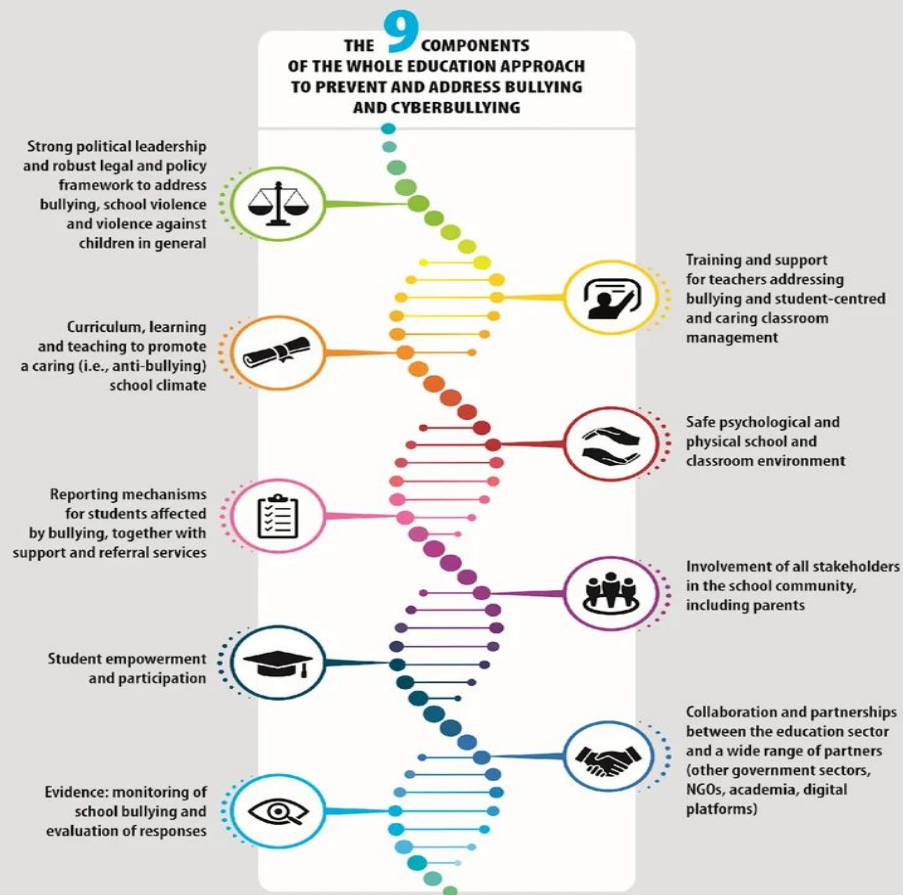
- Discuss about other's online privacy and respecting online rights
- Stay calm and avoid shaming the child publicly
- Talk privately to understand the reason behind the behaviour
- Explain the impact of online actions on others
- Encourage empathy, respect, and responsible digital behaviour



UNESCO Whole Education Approach to Cyberbullying

Elements operating at different and sometimes simultaneous levels need to be considered if a school is to truly develop a whole-education approach to reducing bullying and cyberbullying.

The following nine core components have been identified to form part of a whole-education approach that can help to effectively reduce bullying and cyberbullying (see infographic).



Key Challenges

- Rapidly changing digital technologies and platforms
- Lack of child-centred policies and inclusion of children's voices in decision-making
- Underreporting of online abuse and exploitation
- Treating children as a homogeneous group
- Algorithmic risks
- Digital literacy is essential for supporting children's protection, participation, and safe access to digital spaces (School Curriculum)

Conclusion

- Children's online safety must be approached through a children's rights framework.
- Digital spaces has opportunities such as children's learning, creativity, communication, and inclusion.
- Online safety policies should recognise children's diverse experiences and identities.
- Platforms need greater accountability for creating safer digital environments.
- Collaboration among families, schools, governments, and digital platforms is necessary to support children online.



Helpline portals and their description

Portal	Description
<i>National women helpline number 118 and e-mail</i>	The national women helpline number is 181. Moreover, a dedicated e-mail address Complaint-mwcd@gov.in has been created for women and children to file complaints related to abusive behavior, harassment, and hateful content on social media ^a
<i>Childline 1098</i>	CHILDLINE INDIA FOUNDATION (CIF) ^b is the nodal agency of the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, which has generated <i>childline 1098</i> services that provide free 24/7 assistance to emergency needs regarding issues dealing with child rights and child protection all over the country. The alternative e-mail for complaints is dial1098@childlineindia.org.in
<i>National Commission for Women Helpline: 7827170170</i>	Under National Commission for Women Act, 1990 National Commission for Women was set up to review women's Constitutional and Legal safeguards and recommend remedial legislative measures, and a helpline was launched to provide Digital Complaint Registration System for women. ^c It also facilitates redressal of any kind of grievances and advises the Government on all policy matters affecting women
<i>MahilaBol helpline^d number: 01244007444</i>	In December 2017, MahilaBol started in India in partnership with the Government of India and the United Nations to end the menace of sexual harassment of women in the workplace

Activity

A 15-year-old student spends a lot of time using social media and online gaming platforms. Recently, classmates noticed that the student has become anxious and upset after checking their phone. It is later discovered that an unknown person online has been sending threatening messages and asking for personal photos. The student is scared to tell their parents because they fear losing access to the internet and their phone.

- What warning signs can you identify in this situation?
- What forms of online violence or harm are present?
- Why might the child feel afraid to report the issue?

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