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SEXED: Investigating online SEXual harassment and Exploitation in relation to the UN sustainable Development goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) relate specifically to the reduction in violence against, and exploitation of, children and teenagers. Dangers in digital and online environments fall within this remit. This project is particularly concerned with the prevalence and impact of online sexual harassment and exploitation of teenagers. While previous research in the area of cyberbullying (or online harassment) has highlighted important issues for prevention (e.g., the need for friendships and strong social networks), there is little evidence available on the specific risk factors of online sexual harassment or exploitation. Such negative experiences are far reaching. Some examples include unwillingly receiving images of a sexual nature or having personal images shared online without one's consent. Research is also limited on the role of gender in these experiences and on the effects they can have on a victim's mental health. For this reason, the current project aims to conduct a large-scale cross-sectional study of the prevalence of online sexual harassment and exploitation in teenagers in Sweden and Ireland, with particular attention to gender and psychological outcomes. This data is being collected with the help of a Swedish NGO called Friends. Findings will be used to inform policy solutions and recommendations with support from the United Nations specialized agency for information and communications technologies (ITU). The current work plan and research objectives fall under the umbrella of the Sustainable Development Goals outlined in the United Nations Agenda 2030. Academics and NGOs working with victims of sexual harassment and exploitation will benefit significantly from the results and recommendations of this project.

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