Project deSHAME: Young People’s Experiences of Online Sexual Harassment

Aims

This report presents the results of quantitative and qualitative research conducted as part of Project deSHAME with 3,257 young people aged 13-17 years in Denmark, Hungary and the UK. It provides a unique insight into their experiences of peer-related online sexual harassment.

Key Findings

In this report, online sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual conduct on any digital platform and it is recognised as a form of sexual violence. It can make a person feel threatened, exploited, coerced, humiliated, upset, sexualised or discriminated against. This report specifically focuses on peer-to-peer online sexual harassment taking place between young people. In this report online sexual harassment has been categorised in four main types. These different behaviours are often experienced simultaneously and can overlap with offline experiences of sexual harassment.

Non-consensual sharing of intimate images
- 6% of respondents aged 13-17 years across Denmark, Hungary and the UK have had their nude or nearly nude image shared with other people without their permission in the last year (6% in the UK), while 41% have witnessed this happening (51% in the UK).
- The majority of respondents (68%) agree that people will think badly about a girl if her nude image is posted online, whereas a smaller proportion would think the same if it were a boy (40%).
- A quarter of respondents (25%) have witnessed young people secretly taking sexual images of someone and sharing them online (23% in the UK), while 10% admitted they had done this in the last year (8% in the UK).

Exploitation, coercion and threats
- 9% of respondents aged 13-17 years across Denmark, Hungary and the UK have received sexual threats online from people their age in the last year (10% in the UK), while 29% have witnessed this happening (31%) in the UK.
- 6% of respondents said that someone used sexual images of them to threaten or blackmail them in the last year (7% in the UK).
- 1 in 10 respondents said their boyfriend or girlfriend had pressured them to share nude images in the last year (12% in the UK), with girls being more likely to report this.

Sexualised bullying
- 25% of respondents aged 13-17 years across Denmark, Hungary and the UK have had rumours about their sexual behaviour shared online in the last year (26% in the UK), with over two-thirds of respondents (68%) saying that girls are judged more harshly for this than boys.
- Almost a third of respondents (31%) had seen people their age creating fake profiles of someone to share sexual images, comments or messages in the last year (31% in the UK), while almost half (48%) witnessed other young people sharing personal details of someone who is seen as ‘easy’ (47% in the UK).
- 4 in 5 respondents (80%) had witnessed people their age using terms like ‘sket’ or ‘slut’ to describe girls in a mean way online in the last year (80% in the UK), while over two-thirds (68%) had witnessed people using homophobic or transphobic language online (72% in the UK).
Unwanted sexualisation

- 24% of respondents aged 13-17 years across Denmark, Hungary and the UK have received unwanted sexual messages and images in the last year (23% in the UK), with girls being significantly more likely to experience this (30%) compared to boys (13%).
- Almost a quarter of respondents (24%) reported that they have received sexual comments on a photo they posted of themselves in the last year (26% in the UK), with girls being significantly more likely to experience this (26%) compared to boys (18%).
- 45% of respondents said that they have witnessed people their age editing photos of someone to make them sexual, for example putting their face on a pornographic image or placing sexual emojis over them (47% in the UK).

Responding to incidents of online sexual harassment

Young people across Denmark, Hungary and the UK said that if they experienced online sexual harassment they would be most likely to block the people involved (82%), speak to friends (67%), tell the people involved to stop (65%) or speak to parents/carers (48%). Fewer young people said they would be likely to report to a social network (39%), report to police (27%), speak to a helpline (15%) or speak to a teacher (14%). In comparison to the European average, UK teens were less likely to speak to a parent (39%) or report to the police (18%). Young people reported a range of barriers to seeking help, including being too embarrassed (52%) or being worried about what would happen next (42%).

Methodology

3,257 young people aged 13-17 years old in the UK (n=1,559), Denmark (n=915) and Hungary (n=783) completed the online questionnaire. 107 young people aged 13-17 years also took part in focus groups in the UK (n=39), Denmark (n=29) and Hungary (n=39).

Background

This research was conducted as part of Project deSHAME, a collaboration between Childnet (UK), Kek Vonal (Hungary), Save the Children (Denmark) and UCLan (UK), co-financed by the European Union. It aims to increase reporting of online sexual harassment among minors and improve multi-sector cooperation in preventing and responding to this behaviour.

Source  www.deshame.eu

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https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis