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HANDBOOK ON PREVENTING DIGITAL GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



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A short message from the author

The digital world is no longer merely an “extension” of young people’s reality—it is an integral part of their everyday lives, a space for growth, connection, and creation. But that same space can also become a place of fear, shame, and silence, especially for girls.

As the author of this handbook, I have written it with a deep awareness of the gravity of the issue and with the sincere hope that it will serve as a tool that truly makes a difference. I created this handbook with one clear and deeply personal goal: to help teachers and school professional support staff recognize when a child is suffering, to see the child behind the silence, and to respond with sensitivity, knowledge, and courage.

I believe and know that digital gender-based violence is not merely a technical or “online” issue. It is a deeply human issue that affects young people’s self-confidence, dignity, and sense of safety. That is why I feel a personal responsibility to contribute to the creation of a school environment in which young people know they are not alone—that there are adults who see them, listen to them, and are present and ready to support them.

This handbook is my call to action—to everyone who works with young people. A call not to ignore the pain that unfolds behind the screen. A call to respond in a timely manner, to ask the right question, to offer support, and to be the turning point.

I know that every teacher, every pedagogue, and every psychologist has the power to change someone’s experience, to prevent escalation and re-victimization, and to restore a sense of safety.

I believe that schools can be places where children feel protected, heard, and valued. And I believe that all of us can help build such an environment.

This handbook is my contribution to that shared mission.

Why this handbook matters?

Digital gender-based violence is becoming one of the most widespread and difficult to recognize forms of violence among young people. It happens quietly, behind screens, in private messages, and in group chats, but its consequences are profoundly offline. They affect students' self-confidence, mental health, school performance, and sense of safety.

Findings from the latest OSCE study (2025) show that the problem is both serious and growing. **10% of young women and girls reported having personally experienced digital gender-based violence**, while **an additional 15% have witnessed such incidents**. This means that **one in four young women is directly affected** by digital violence — a figure that points to a systemic risk rather than isolated incidents.

Despite its prevalence, **only around 5% of victims report their experiences**. This exceptionally low reporting rate indicates that young girls often feel isolated, ashamed, or insufficiently confident that institutions will understand and protect them. In addition, a significant proportion of young women report feeling unsafe in digital spaces, pointing to a lasting erosion of their sense of security.

The problem is not limited to individual experiences. According to data from a 2024 analysis by the UNDP, **more than 60% of women in North Macedonia have experienced at least one form of online violence**. This confirms the broader picture: digital violence is part of the everyday reality of many girls and women, and schools must not remain on the margins of this issue.

That is why schools have a crucial role to play. They are the places where young people spend most of their day, where the first signs of changes in behavior can be noticed, and where support can be provided in a timely manner. However, for teachers and school professional support staff to respond effectively, they need clear guidance, a structured approach, and an understanding of the specific dynamics of digital gender-based violence.

This handbook is important because:

- **it explains the forms of digital gender-based violence** in a clear and practical way
- **it helps in recognizing early warning signs** among male and female students
- **it provides psychological and pedagogical guidance** for a sensitive approach
- **it connects the topic to the national legal framework**
- **it offers concrete school-based response protocols**
- **it includes practical modules, exercises and scenarios** for teacher training

With a tool like this, schools can create an environment in which digital safety is part of everyday care rather than a response only after an incident occurs.

This handbook provides teachers and school professional support staff with the knowledge, confidence, and clear steps they need—essential prerequisites for delivering timely, sensitive, and effective support to young people facing any form of digital gender-based violence.

How to use this handbook

This handbook has been developed as a practical tool for teachers, school professional support staff, and all professionals who work with young people. Its purpose is to provide clear guidance, recommendations, and examples that can be applied in everyday school practice. To ensure that the handbook is truly useful, it is important to use it in a way that supports both understanding and practical application.

For training purposes - the handbook can serve as a foundation for organizing in-house training sessions, pedagogical council meetings, team meetings, or workshops. The modules, scenarios, and examples make it easy to facilitate group discussions and to develop a shared approach within the school.

For individual preparation - teachers and school professional support staff can also use the handbook for independent professional learning and to deepen their understanding of the topic. Each section is structured so that it can be read on its own—for better recognition of digital gender-based violence, preparation for conversations with a child, or planning preventive activities.

For intervention (when there is a suspicion or a confirmed case) - the step-by-step guidance is designed to help teachers and school professional support staff respond when there is a suspicion or confirmed case of digital gender-based violence. It provides clear instructions on what actions to take, whom to inform, and how to speak with the child who has experienced violence.

Additional guidance for using the handbook:

- **Read the handbook in sections, according to your specific needs.** The handbook is structured so that each section can be used independently. Teachers may choose to focus on the sections related to identifying signs of digital gender-based violence and communicating with students, while school professional support staff may rely on the protocols and procedures for responding to cases. There is no need to read the handbook from beginning to end for it to be practical and applicable.
- **Use the examples and scenarios as learning tools.** The handbook includes realistic scenarios, practice-based examples, and suggested approaches for conversations with male and female students. These materials are designed to help develop sensitivity, improve the ability to recognize subtle warning signs, and build trust with young people.
- **Follow the response protocols step by step.** The protocols are designed to provide a clear, structured, and safe approach when there is a suspicion or confirmed case of digital gender-based violence. They are intended to be practical and accessible so that any member of the school staff can follow them, regardless of their level of experience.
- **Use the handbook as a foundation for teamwork.** Digital gender-based violence is not an issue that can be addressed by one person alone. The handbook encourages coordination among teachers, pedagogues, psychologists, school professional support staff, and school leadership. The best outcomes are achieved when the school responds as a team.
- **Apply the material preventively, not only when a case arises.** The handbook includes materials that can also be used in regular classes, workshops, class meetings, or thematic days. Prevention is key — the more male and female students know, the better protected they are.

- **Return to the handbook whenever a new situation arises.** Digital forms of violence evolve rapidly. This handbook is designed to be a living document—one you can revisit repeatedly, use as a reference, and adapt to the specific needs of your school.

1. Understanding digital gender-based violence

1.1. What is a digital GBV?

Digital gender-based violence (GBV) is a form of gender-based violence carried out through digital technologies — including mobile phones, social media platforms, messaging applications, online platforms, and other digital tools — and directed at a person because of their sex, gender, gender identity, or perceived gender.

According to UNICEF (2023), digital GBV is “a form of gender-based violence that occurs through digital technologies and can cause psychological, emotional, physical or economic harm.” UNFPA (2021) further emphasizes that this form of violence “disproportionately affects women and girls and reproduces the same gender inequalities that exist offline.”

In the context of secondary education, this means that students, especially female students, are exposed to pressures, threats, manipulation, or humiliation that take place behind screens, but have very real consequences for their well-being, learning, and sense of safety.

The digital space as part of young people’s everyday lives

For young people, the digital space is not “virtual” or “separate” from real life. It is a space where identities are shaped, relationships are formed, personal moments are shared, and support is sought. Therefore, when violence occurs online, it is not experienced as something less serious. On the contrary, for a female student, a humiliating post, a threatening message, or a shared photo can be just as traumatic as face-to-face violence.

OHCHR (2026) notes that technology “intensifies psychological and emotional harm, limiting the participation of women and girls in public and digital life.”

Definitions from different professional perspectives

Educational perspective

From an educational perspective, digital GBV disrupts:

- the student's sense of safety
- his/her ability to learn and concentrate
- his/her motivation to participate in the class
- his/her relationships with peers and teachers

Teachers often do not see the violence itself, but they can observe its consequences, such as: social withdrawal, a decline in school performance, avoidance of certain students, anxiety or changes in behavior.

Psychological perspective

From a psychological perspective, digital gender-based violence is a form of emotional and psychological abuse that can have profound and long-lasting effects on young people’s mental health. UNICEF (2023) highlights that such experiences can cause “psychological, emotional and social harm,” with particularly significant effects on adolescent girls, whose identities and self-confidence are still in the process of developing.

Consequences may include:

- fear, anxiety, and panic reactions, especially when the violence is repetitive or unpredictable
- feelings of guilt or shame, even though the student is not responsible for the abusive behavior
- a decline in self-confidence and self-esteem, which may affect school performance and social functioning
- a diminished sense of self-worth, often accompanied by negative thoughts about oneself
- withdrawal from activities, peers, and school responsibilities, as an attempt to avoid further exposure or judgment

These reactions are not "excessive" or "typical teenage changes," but a natural response to situations in which a young person feels attacked, exposed, or powerless.

It is important to understand that for young people, the digital space is intimate and deeply personal. It is an extension of their social lives, their relationships, and their self-perception. Therefore, when violence occurs online, it is not experienced as something "virtual" or "less serious". On the contrary — violence in the digital space is often experienced as an attack on their identity, privacy, and sense of safety.

Additionally, OHCHR (2026) notes that technology can "intensify psychological and emotional harm," because digital violence is:

- constantly present (the student cannot "escape" it when leaving school)
- widely visible (potentially accessible to a large audience)
- difficult to control (content can be shared, saved and reproduced without the student's consent)

These factors create a sense of ongoing exposure and vulnerability, which can intensify psychological distress and prolong the recovery process.

Most often, these consequences, at least in the initial stages, are invisible to the environment. A child may continue attending school, laughing with peers, or appearing to be "fine," while internally coping with intense stress, shame, or fear. This is why it is crucial for teachers to understand that digital GBV doesn't always leave visible signs, but it always leaves psychological ones.

Legal perspective

In North Macedonia, digital GBV may include acts such as: harassment, threats, blackmail, unauthorized sharing of photos or videos, stalking, misuse of personal data.

A UNDP analysis published in 2024 notes that digital violence can cause "psychological, social, political, or economic harm" and that states have an obligation to establish mechanisms for protection.

These acts are regulated under various laws, and schools have a duty to respond when they receive information about such behavior. Teachers do not need to be legal experts, it is sufficient for them to know that there is an obligation to report such cases, and that the school professional support staff and relevant institutions will take over the subsequent procedures.

The difference between digital violence and other forms of online risks

There are many types of online risks, including: scams, dangerous challenges, general cyberbullying, excessive internet use. However, digital gender-based violence differs in one key component: its gender-based motivation.

It is a form of violence that most often targets girls and young women, with the aim of controlling, shaming, or punishing their sexuality, autonomy, or digital freedom. This gendered nature makes digital GBV particularly harmful, as it affects not only a young person's safety, but also their identity, dignity, and sense of self-worth.

OHCHR (2026) emphasizes that technologically-facilitated gender-based violence is driven by “the same structural factors that fuel offline violence: gender inequality, discrimination and harmful social norms”.

This means that digital GBV is not simply an “ordinary online dispute” or a conflict between students. It is a form of violence that targets a girl because of her gender and aims to limit, control, or humiliate her.

Why is it important for teachers to understand this?

Because teachers are often the first adults to notice that something is wrong. And because female students are often more likely to confide in their teacher or school psychologist than in their parents or another institution.

When teachers understand what digital GBV is:

- they are better able to recognize subtle warning signs
- they know how to initiate a conversation without causing the student to feel ashamed;
- they know what to do and what not to do
- they can prevent escalation
- they could become a turning point

This handbook was created precisely for that purpose - to provide teachers and school professional support staff with a clear, professional, and practical framework for understanding the issue.

1.2. Forms of digital gender-based violence

Digital gender-based violence can take many different forms, which are often interconnected and mutually reinforcing. According to UN Women (2023), UNFPA (2021) and a UNDP analysis (2024), the most common forms of technology-facilitated GBV include online harassment, stalking, the abuse of intimate content, manipulation, blackmail, sexual harassment, and the creation or dissemination of false information.

In the secondary school context, these forms of violence most commonly occur through social networks, private messages, group chats, photo-sharing applications, and online games.

Online harassment

Online harassment refers to repeated, unwanted, and humiliating behavior directed at a girl, most commonly through comments, messages, or group communications. It may take the form of mockery, insults, aggressive reactions, or threats, and is often intended to shame, silence, or isolate her. Although it occurs in the digital space, its impact on self-esteem and a sense of safety is very real.

Examples:

- A girl posts a photo, and insulting comments about her appearance begin to appear beneath it.
- In a group chat, several students mock her because of her clothing, body, or opinions.
- Someone sends her humiliating messages every time she posts something online.

Gender-based and sexist hate speech

This form of violence occurs when a girl is targeted with insults, degrading remarks, or humiliating comments because of her gender. Sexualized insults, comments about appearance, degrading labels, or public ridicule are common in online spaces. This type of speech is not merely “bad humor”—it reproduces the same discrimination and gender stereotypes that also fuel offline forms of violence.

Examples:

- A girl receives comments saying that she “was asking for it” because she posted a photo.
- A group of students call her degrading names in a public chat.
- Sexualized jokes targeting her appear under one of her posts.

Non-consensual sharing of intimate content

This is one of the most harmful forms of digital GBV. It occurs when intimate photos, videos, or private messages are shared without the girl's consent. It often begins with trust in a romantic relationship and ends in betrayal, shame, and fear of public exposure. The consequences can be profound and long-lasting, as digital content can be shared, stored, and reproduced without control.

Examples:

- An intimate photo that a girl shared privately with her partner appears in a group chat.
- A former partner threatens to publish private messages if she does not respond to him.
- Someone shares her photo without her knowledge, accompanied by a degrading comment.

Online sexual harassment

Sexual harassment in digital spaces includes unwanted sexual messages, requests for intimate photos, sexually suggestive comments, or the sending of explicit content. This behavior may come from peers, but also from adults. For girls, such messages often create feelings of fear, confusion, and guilt, especially when accompanied by pressure, manipulation, or threats.

Examples:

- A girl receives messages asking her to send “a photo just for him.”
- Someone sends her an explicit photo without her consent.
- A peer constantly writes sexualized comments on her posts.

Digital stalking

Digital stalking involves the constant monitoring of a girl's online activities monitoring her posts, locations, friendships, or sending a large number of messages demanding explanations about where she is and whom she is with. This behavior creates feelings of restriction, fear,

and loss of privacy. It often occurs in peer or romantic relationships in which controlling behavior is disguised as “care” or “jealousy out of love.”

Examples:

- Her partner sends her dozens of messages a day demanding that she explain where she is.
- A girl notices that someone constantly monitors and comments on her every online activity.
- Her partner demands that she sends photos to “prove” where she is.

Manipulation, blackmail, grooming

This form of violence develops gradually. The perpetrator builds trust, offers attention or support, and creates the feeling of a “special relationship,” only to later use that trust to request intimate content, impose conditions, or control the girl. Grooming behavior can be subtle and difficult to recognize, especially when the girl believes the communication is sincere or romantic.

Examples:

- An older teenager writes to her every day, praises her, and encourages her, and then asks for intimate photos.
- Someone convinces her that “she can only trust him,” and then blackmails her using private messages.
- A girl receives messages from an unknown adult pretending to be a peer.

Blackmail such as “If you don’t send it to me, I’ll tell everyone”, is a common continuation of this dynamic.

Deepfake abuse

With the advancement of technology, new forms of digital GBV are also emerging. Deepfake abuse involves the creation of fabricated photos or videos that make it appear as though a girl has done something she never actually did. Such content may be used to humiliate, intimidate, or blackmail her. Although these materials are technically “fake,” their impact on psychological well-being is very real.

Examples:

- An edited video featuring her face is shared among students.
- A fake photo is used to mock or humiliate her.
- A girl receives a message containing deepfake content along with a threat that it will be published.

Publishing or spreading false information

This form of violence involves spreading false claims, fabricated messages, edited screenshots, or rumors with the intention of damaging a girl’s reputation. In the secondary school context, where social status and peer relationships are especially important, such content can lead to serious social isolation and a decline in self-esteem.

Examples:

- Someone publishes a fabricated story about a girl in order to humiliate her.
- A doctored screenshot is circulated as “evidence” of something she never did.
- A group of students spread a rumor that the girl “sent something,” even though it is not true.

Controlling digital devices

Control over digital devices is a form of technological control that often occurs in peer or romantic relationships. It may include demanding passwords, checking messages, restricting communication, or monitoring online activities. Although it is sometimes presented as “trust” or “closeness,” this behavior limits a girl’s autonomy and creates a dynamic of power and control.

Examples:

- Her partner asks for her password “so there are no secrets between them.”
- A girl has to send him screenshots of her conversations to “prove” that she is not talking to anyone else.
- Someone takes her phone and checks her messages without permission.

1.3. What does it look like in the context of secondary education?

Digital gender-based violence among female secondary school students does not occur in isolation, but is deeply rooted in the dynamics of adolescence, peer relationships, online culture, and the school environment as a social space. Although the violence takes place in digital spaces, its consequences most often become visible within the school context. This section is intended to help teachers recognize early warning signs, typical dynamics, and school-based manifestations of digital GBV, without requiring prior training or specialized knowledge.

Recognizing early signs

Early signs of digital GBV are often subtle and can easily be attributed as “typical teenage behavior.” However, when they appear suddenly, intensely, or in combination, they may indicate that a female student is experiencing something that goes beyond ordinary adolescent dynamics. Emotional reactions such as sudden irritability, withdrawal, or visible distress after using a phone are often among the first warning signs. A girl may become unusually sensitive to comments from peers or respond with silence and withdrawal whenever social media is mentioned.

Behavioral changes are also significant. A female student who was previously active may suddenly stop participating in class, begin avoiding certain students or groups, or frequently ask to leave the classroom “just for a moment.” Sometimes girls delete or deactivate their social media profiles as an attempt to distance themselves from the source of stress. Social changes, such as isolating from previously close friendships or avoiding group activities, are another important warning sign. Academically, teachers may notice difficulties with concentration, a sudden decline in school performance, or more frequent lateness and absences from class. These indicators are not proof of violence, but they are important “red flags” that require careful, non-intrusive observation and support.

Category	Early warning signs among female students exposed to digital GBV
Emotional signs	Sudden irritability or withdrawal; visible distress after using the phone; increased sensitivity to comments from peers.

Category	Early warning signs among female students exposed to digital GBV
Behavioral signs	Avoidance of certain students or groups; sudden decline in classroom participation; frequent requests to leave the classroom “for a moment”; deleting or deactivating social media profiles.
Social signs	Distancing themselves from previously close friends; changing seats or peer groups; avoiding group activities or collaborative projects.
Academic signs	Difficulty concentrating; sudden decline in school performance; more frequent lateness or absences from class.

Typical dynamics among young people (especially girls)

Secondary school age is a period of intensive identity formation, heightened sensitivity to peer pressure, and a strong need for acceptance. In this context, digital GBV often develops through dynamics that may appear “normal” in teenage relationships but actually carry significant risks.

One of the most common dynamics is pressure for intimacy. Girls are confronted with requests for photos, “proofs of trust,” or manipulative messages that equate intimacy with loyalty. This pressure often occurs in romantic relationships, but also within peer groups where intimacy is used as a form of social currency for acceptance.

Control within peer and romantic relationships is another common dynamic. It is often disguised as “love” or “care,” but may include demanding passwords, checking messages, or monitoring online activities. Girls may accept this as a sign of closeness without recognizing that it actually represents a restriction of their autonomy.

Peer groups, meanwhile, can become powerful amplifiers of digital gender-based violence. Group chats and social media platforms often become spaces for mockery, spreading rumors, or sharing content without consent. In such situations, the silence of bystanders often normalizes the violence, while active participation intensifies it.

Fear of social consequences is another dynamic that prevents young people (especially girls) from seeking help. They remain silent out of fear of judgment, fear that the situation will worsen, or distrust that adults will understand them. This silence makes teacher intervention particularly important.

Role of peer groups and online culture

Peers play a major role in how digital GBV develops and is sustained. In many cases, peer groups become amplifiers of the violence—sharing, commenting on, or mocking content, thereby increasing both its reach and intensity. Other students remain passive observers, which indirectly normalizes the behavior and leaves the victim without support. There are also positive examples in which peers become protectors by reporting incidents, intervening, or supporting the female student, although such cases are less common.

Online culture among young people further complicates this landscape. Humiliating humor is often perceived as “normal,” while screenshots become tools for control, mockery, or blackmail. The pressure to remain constantly available creates a sense that girls must respond immediately, stay continuously active online, and adapt to peer expectations. The idea that “if it is online, it is not serious” reduces the perceived harm and makes it more difficult to recognize the violence.

How digital GBV manifests in school behavior

Although the violence occurs online, the school is often the place where its consequences become most visible. In terms of behavior, a girl may begin avoiding certain spaces or groups, become involved in frequent conflicts, or show a sudden change in her style of dress—as an attempt to become “invisible” and reduce attention directed toward her. In communication, she may avoid talking to teachers, become quiet or nervous when phones, social media platforms, or certain names are mentioned.

In learning, digital GBV may manifest as a decline in motivation, reduced concentration, or more frequent absences from class. In social relationships, the girl may isolate herself, change her circle of friends, or become involved in conflicts during group projects. These manifestations should not be viewed as “problematic behavior,” but rather as signs of vulnerability that require a careful and supportive approach.

Area	How digital GBV manifests in the school context
Behavior	A girl may avoid certain spaces or groups, become involved in frequent conflicts or tensions with peers, or suddenly change her style of dress in an attempt to become “invisible” and reduce attention directed toward her.
Communication	She may avoid talking to teachers, become quiet or nervous when phones, social media platforms, or certain names are mentioned, or react with withdrawal after receiving a message.
Learning	A decline in motivation, reduced concentration, absences from class, or frequent lateness, all of which may affect overall school performance.
Social relationships	Social isolation, changes in friendship circles, or tensions during group projects may emerge, indicating disrupted peer relationships and a sense of insecurity.

Conclusion

Digital gender-based violence among female secondary school students is a complex phenomenon that occurs at the intersection of online spaces and school life. Teachers don't have to be experts to recognize it, it's enough that they pay attention to changes in behavior, create a safe and supportive environment, and understand that every warning sign matters.

2. Psychological and pedagogical aspects

2.1. Psychological impact on young people

Digital gender-based violence has profound psychological consequences for young people, especially for girls of secondary school age. This period is particularly sensitive because of identity formation, the need for acceptance, and the strong influence of peer relationships. When violence occurs online, its impact is often more intense because the digital space is constant, public, and much more difficult to control.

Emotional reactions

Emotional reactions are often the fastest and most visible response to digital GBV. Girls frequently experience sudden anxiety, fear, or shame, especially when the violence is connected to their appearance, sexuality, or private content. These reactions may appear

immediately after receiving a message or comment, but they may also develop gradually as a result of continuous exposure to harmful content.

Many girls feel confused and uncertain about whether to respond, whom to turn to, or whether their reaction might make the situation worse. Feelings of guilt are also common, even though the responsibility never lies with them. This internal struggle may lead to withdrawal, irritability, or emotional instability. Some young people also develop chronic tension: a constant expectation that "something bad" will happen, that a new post will appear, or that peers will react negatively. This constant sense of threat disrupts emotional balance and reduces a young person's ability to cope with everyday challenges.

Consequences for self-esteem, learning, relationships

Self-esteem and self-perception

Digital GBV directly affects girls' self-esteem. When their appearance, bodies, or privacy become subjects of mockery or control, they may begin to see themselves through the eyes of the perpetrators. This can lead to feelings of worthlessness, shame, or doubt about their own worth. During a period in life when identity is still fragile and developing, such messages can have an especially powerful impact and may lead to withdrawal or avoidance of social exposure.

Learning and academic functioning

The psychological burden of digital GBV often affects school performance. Girls may experience difficulties concentrating, forget assignments, or feel overwhelmed even by ordinary school responsibilities. Fear of peers or fear of renewed exposure may lead to avoiding classes, arriving late, or experiencing reduced motivation. Even when they are physically present, their mental energy is directed toward coping with stress rather than learning. This is not a "lack of motivation", but a natural consequence of psychological overload.

Relationships with peers and adults

Digital GBV disrupts girls' ability to build and maintain healthy relationships. They may become distrustful, isolate themselves, or avoid communication with peers. In some cases, they also withdraw from adults (teachers, parents, or school professional support staff) out of fear of not being understood or of being blamed. Others become attached to a small group of friends or to a single person in search of a sense of safety, which can create dependent relationships or additional risks.

Serious mental health consequences

When digital violence continues over a longer period of time or when a female student is left alone with her experience, the consequences can become significantly more severe. What begins as fear, shame, or confusion may develop into serious psychological conditions. The adolescent brain is particularly sensitive to stress and social pain, which is why timely recognition and the provision of support are crucial in preventing long-term consequences.

Chronic anxiety and a constant sense of danger

When a girl is exposed to continuous humiliation, threats, or stalking, her nervous system remains in a state of "constant alert." She may develop chronic anxiety, become afraid to use her phone, avoid social situations, or experience sleep difficulties. This constant sense of danger is emotionally exhausting and increases vulnerability to additional stressors.

Depressive symptoms and feelings of worthlessness

Prolonged exposure to humiliation, mockery, or the spread of false information can lead to profound changes in self-perception. A girl may begin to believe that the negative messages about her are true, which lowers self-esteem and increases the likelihood of depressive symptoms. These symptoms may manifest as a loss of interest in activities, withdrawal, sadness, fatigue, or a feeling that “nothing makes sense anymore.”

Social isolation and disrupted relationships

When digital violence spreads within a peer group, a girl may feel completely isolated. She may begin avoiding school, withdraw from friendships, or feel as though there is no one she can trust. This isolation further intensifies feelings of sadness, fear, and helplessness.

Body image difficulties and self-harming behaviors

When the violence is connected to appearance, the body, or sexuality, girls may develop a distorted body image. They may feel ashamed of their body, try to “hide” it, or develop unhealthy habits related to diet or appearance. In some cases, prolonged stress and feelings of helplessness may lead to self-harming behaviors as an attempt to cope with emotional pain.

Risk of post-traumatic reactions

When digital GBV is intense, humiliating, or associated with threats, a girl may develop reactions similar to those experienced after trauma. These may include flashbacks, avoidance of places or situations that remind her of the experience, strong physical stress reactions, or feelings of being “detached” from herself and her surroundings. These reactions are not signs of weakness, but natural responses to prolonged psychological distress.

These outcomes are not inevitable. On the contrary, attentive listening, timely response, and support from teachers and school professional support staff can interrupt the cycle of harm. When a girl feels that someone is watching her, listening to her, and trusting her, the risk of serious consequences is significantly reduced. The role of the school is not only to respond, but also to create an environment in which no child is left alone with their pain.

This section is designed to help teachers understand *why timely intervention is both urgent and essential*.

2.2. A child-centered approach

A child-centered approach means that the teacher places the child at the center of the process: their feelings, their safety, and their control over the conversation. This approach implies being non-intrusive, respecting boundaries, and avoiding questions or comments that may sound judgmental. The child should feel that their experience matters, that they are being heard, and that they are not to blame for what has happened to them.

A gender-responsive approach further recognizes that girls and adolescent girls are often targeted because of their gender, appearance, or sexuality, and that they carry burdens of expectations and pressures that are not distributed equally among all children. Teachers should be aware of these dynamics and avoid messages that could reinforce feelings of guilt or shame.

Basic principles of a child-centered approach

A child-centered approach is based on the idea that the child is an active participant in the process, rather than a passive recipient of support. It combines a victim-centered approach with an understanding of the specific needs of adolescents: their sensitivity, desire for autonomy, and need for respect and security. This approach helps teachers create an

environment in which the child can speak without fear, feel heard, and participate in decisions that affect them.

- **The best interest of the child**

Every step taken by the teacher should protect the child's physical and psychological well-being, sense of safety, and long-term well-being. This means proceeding carefully, avoiding intrusive behavior, and preventing situations that could expose the child to additional stress or shame.

- **Victim-centered approach**

This approach is guided by four basic principles: **safety, confidentiality, non-discrimination and respect**. The teacher treats the child with dignity, does not blame them, does not question them, and does not put them in a position to defend themselves. Instead, the teacher gives the child space to speak in their own time and in their own words.

- **Active participation of the child**

Adolescents need to be involved in decisions that affect them. The teacher should give the child the opportunity to choose when they want to speak, how much they wish to share and which other adult they want to be involved. This empowers the child and helps restore a sense of control, which is often disrupted by the violence.

- **"Do no harm"**

The teacher must avoid actions that could cause additional pain or exposure. This means not insisting on details, not sharing information with other students or teachers, and not taking steps without the child's knowledge and consent (except in situations where the child's safety is at risk).

- **Developmentally appropriate communication**

Adolescents respond best to clear, warm, and direct language. Teachers should use words the child can understand, avoid technical terminology, and ask questions that do not sound like an interrogation. The tone should be calm, supportive, and non-intrusive.

- **Recognizing gender dynamics**

Children, especially girls and adolescents, are often targeted because of their appearance, sexuality, or gender stereotypes. Teachers should be aware of these dynamics and avoid messages that could reinforce feelings of guilt or shame ("Why did you send it to him?" or "You should have been more careful"). A gender-responsive approach protects the child from additional stigma.

- **Support that goes beyond the crisis**

Children aren't just looking for a "solution" — they're looking for understanding, stability, and long-term support. Teachers can help by connecting the child with school professional support staff, encouraging them to participate in activities that strengthen their confidence and resilience, and remaining available as a safe and trusted adult.

How to create a safe and supportive environment

For a child to open up and talk about something that is distressing them, they must first feel that the space is safe. Safety is not only physical—it is also emotional, relational, and communicative. Teachers can create such an environment through a calm tone of voice, privacy, and clearly communicating that the conversation will be treated confidentially.

It is important that teachers do not rush, pressure, or insist that the child share details immediately. Sometimes, it is enough simply to let the child know that there is an adult who is

ready to listen whenever they feel prepared to talk. Many children, especially adolescents, fear that their words will be misunderstood, shared with others, or lead to additional problems. Therefore, teachers should make it clear that the goal is support, not punishment or control.

A safe environment is also built through clear messages that the child has a right to privacy, that their feelings are valid, and that they will not be judged for what they are experiencing. This creates a foundation for trust, and trust is a prerequisite for any further conversation.

How to start a conversation with a child

Starting a conversation is a sensitive moment that requires warmth, sensitivity, and genuine care. It's best to begin the conversation by noticing a change, rather than assuming the cause. Instead of direct questions such as, "Is someone doing something to you online?", it is often far more effective to say something like:

"I've noticed that you seem worried over the past few days. I want you to know that I'm here if you would like to talk."

This type of message gives the child space to decide how much they want to share. Teachers should listen actively, without interrupting, without asking questions that sound like an interrogation, and without offering quick solutions. Sometimes, a child simply wants to be heard and to feel that someone understands them. It is important for teachers to avoid phrases that may sound judgmental or dismissive, such as: "It's probably not that serious," "Why did you send it to him?", or "You should have been more careful." Such messages reinforce shame and reduce the likelihood that the child will confide in someone again.

Instead, supportive messages like **"I understand that this is difficult for you," "You're not alone in this", "It's good that you told me"**, help create a sense of safety and trust, and reassure the child that there is an adult who is on their side.

3. Step by step guide for schools

The school as a system: A framework for child protection

Although North Macedonia does not yet have a specific nationally adopted protocol that comprehensively regulates responses to digital gender-based violence, schools have a clear legal obligation to protect every child exposed to violence, risk, or psychological harm. Existing protocols for child protection, peer violence, and sexual violence provide a foundational framework within which schools are required to respond, even when the violence occurs in digital spaces.

This means that schools must not remain passive. On the contrary, every school has a responsibility to establish internal procedures, ensure coordination between teachers and school professional support staff, and create an environment in which the child can feel safe and supported. In practice, this implies clear steps for recognition, response, documentation and referral, as well as providing continuous care for the child's well-being.

This handbook offers a practical response model that schools can apply within the framework of their legal obligations. It does not replace the existing system, but rather complements it with clear guidelines, sensitive approaches, and concrete steps that help teachers respond calmly, professionally, and in the best interest of the child.

3.1. The first conversation with the child

When a teacher notices a change in a child's behavior or receives a report of digital gender-based violence, the most important thing is to respond calmly and carefully. The child must

feel that the adult speaking with them is stable, available, and prepared to listen without judgment. The way a teacher responds in the first moments can either strengthen or undermine trust, which is why the approach must be careful and focused on the child's needs.

The first step is for the teacher to establish contact with the child in a non-intrusive manner. This can be done by simply noticing a change, without making assumptions about the cause. The child should feel that they have a choice regarding when and how much they wish to share. Teachers should not ask direct or pressuring questions, nor request details that could expose the child to additional distress.

Non-Intrusive questions for opening a conversation

Example question	Purpose
"How are you feeling today?"	Opens space for conversation without pressure.
"I've noticed that you seem worried over the past few days. Would you like to tell me a little more about it?"	Shows care without making assumptions.
"It seems like something has been weighing on you. Would you like to talk about it?"	Encourages the child to open up.
"Is there anything that has been causing you stress or making you uncomfortable?"	Normalizes feelings of difficulty or distress.

The next step is ensuring privacy and a sense of safety. The conversation should take place in a calm and private space, away from peers and other adults. The child must know that the conversation will remain confidential within the limits of professional responsibilities, and that the teacher will not share anything that is not necessary for the child's protection. This creates a foundation for trust, and trust is a prerequisite for any further conversation.

When the child begins to share, the teacher should listen actively, without interrupting and without offering quick solutions. At this stage, the most important thing is not to obtain all the information, but for the child to feel that they are not alone and that their feelings are valid. Teachers should not make promises they cannot keep, such as assuring the child that no one else will be informed. Instead, they should calmly explain that their role is to help and that there are trained professionals within the school who can provide additional support.

Supportive comments that build trust

Supportive comment	Effect on the child
"Thank you for telling me. I know it's not easy."	Validates the child's effort and courage.
"I'm here for you."	Strengthens the child's sense of safety.
"I understand that this may be very difficult for you."	Demonstrates empathy.
"You are not alone in this. We will find a way to help you."	Reduces feelings of isolation.
"Your feelings matter."	Confirms the emotional experience.

Supportive comment	Effect on the child
"Share only as much as you feel comfortable sharing."	Reduces pressure.

When the teacher assesses that there is a risk or a need for further intervention, they should inform the school's professional support staff: the pedagogue, psychologist or social worker. This should be done calmly and transparently, so that the child understands that involving school professional support staff is not a punishment, but a way to ensure greater care and protection.

Comments that set boundaries in a calm and professional manner

Comment	Why it is important
"I will be careful with what you share with me. I will only share it with people you give me permission to share."	Builds trust without making unrealistic promises.
"We may need to involve the pedagogue/psychologist, because their role is to provide support."	Prepares the child for the next steps.
"We don't have to go into details. It's enough for me to know how you feel."	Protects the child from retraumatization.
"Together with the psychologist/pedagogue, we will decide what would be best to do next. I only need your permission to share this with them."	Emphasizes the protective role of the school.

Afterward, the teacher should document what they observed or what was shared with them clearly and factually, without interpretations or assumptions. This documentation is important for further action and for coordination between the school and other institutions, if necessary.

In the following days and weeks, the teacher remains a supportive figure for the child. The teacher does not take on the role of investigator or therapist, but rather that of a safe and trusted adult who continues to support the child, encourage them, and cooperate with the school's professional support staff. This continuity of support is essential for preventing revictimization and strengthening the child's sense of safety.

During the first conversation with the child, every word carries weight. The way the teacher responds can either strengthen trust or close off the possibility that the child will continue to share. Some questions and comments, even when they may sound logical or well-intentioned, can trigger feelings of guilt, shame, or fear in the child. They may cause the child to withdraw, question themselves, or feel guilty for what is happening to them.

For this reason, it is important for teachers to know which types of wording should be avoided—not because they are "forbidden," but because they may unintentionally cause harm and undermine the trust that is essential for the child's further protection.

Question/comment to avoid	Why it is harmful
"What exactly did they send you? Show it to me."	Exposes the child to retraumatization and may create feelings of guilt or shame.

Question/comment to avoid	Why it is harmful
"Why did you send it to him?"	Blames the child and shifts the responsibility onto them.
"Who is to blame?"	May make the child feel pressured or interrogated.
"Are you sure you are not exaggerating?"	Minimizes the child's feelings and undermines trust.
"What did you do to make this happen?"	Suggests blame and creates additional shame.
"You have to tell me everything, right now."	Creates pressure and may cause the child to withdraw.
"It's nothing serious, it will pass."	Dismisses the child's feelings and reduces the likelihood that they will continue to share.

3.2. Communication and coordination with the school's professional support staff

When a teacher recognizes that a child is exposed to digital gender-based violence or that there is a risk to their well-being, the next step is to involve the school's professional support staff in a timely manner. Teachers should not remain alone in the process, nor should they attempt to investigate the case on their own. The role of the school's professional support staff is to carry out an assessment, plan further steps, and provide appropriate support.

The report should be clear and factual: what was observed, what was said, when it happened, and in what context. Interpretations or additional assumptions are not required. The professional support staff then conducts a risk assessment and decides whether further intervention is needed, including communication with parents or other institutions.

The teacher and the professional support staff should remain in regular coordination. Teachers may notice changes in behavior, reactions within the classroom, or new information emerging in digital spaces, and these observations are important for monitoring the situation. At the same time, school's professional support staff should inform the teacher about the next steps and what will be expected of them in the period ahead.

This coordination creates a clear and consistent support system in which the child does not feel left alone, and the school responds in a professional and organized manner.

3.3. Communication with parent/guardian

Communication with a parent or guardian is a sensitive step that must be approached carefully, at the right moment, and in a way that protects the child's trust. The goal is not to create panic or blame, but to ensure support and involve the family as a partner in the protection process.

A parent is contacted when the school's professional support staff assess that doing so is in the child's best interests. This may happen immediately if there is a risk to the child's safety, or after a short period if the situation requires gathering additional information. The child should be informed that the parent will be involved, except in cases where there is reason to believe that the parent is part of the problem or that involving them could place the child at further risk. In such situations, the school acts in accordance with child protection protocols and involves the competent institutions (Center for Social Work, Police Station).

The conversation with the parent should be calm, clear, and focused on the child's well-being. The teacher and the school's professional support staff should not accuse, make assumptions, or ask the parent to "prove" anything. Instead, they should share factual information: what was observed, what was reported, and which steps have been taken to protect the child. The parent should understand that the school is responding out of concern and care, not in search of blame.

It is important to avoid language that creates shame or pressure. Instead, communication should be solution-oriented: focusing on how the school and the family can work together to support the child, which resources are available, and what the next steps will be. The parent should know that the school will continue to monitor and support the child, and that the school's professional support staff will remain available for additional conversations.

In situations where a parent reacts with distrust, anger, or minimization, it is important for the school to remain calm and professional. The focus should always return to the child: their safety, their feelings, and their need for support. If the parent refuses to cooperate or if their reaction endangers the child, the school is obliged to act in accordance with child protection protocols and notify the competent institutions.

Communication with the parent is not a one-time event, but an ongoing process. In the following days and weeks, the school may organize additional meetings, share observations, and provide guidance on how the parent can support the child at home. This continuity creates a sense of stability and shared care, which is essential for the child's recovery.

3.4. Crisis intervention

Crisis intervention is necessary when a child shows signs of severe distress, fear, panic, or when there is an immediate risk to their safety. In such situations, the school must react quickly, calmly, and in a coordinated manner.

The first step is for the teacher to take the child to a safe and quiet place and ensure the presence of the professional support staff. During crisis situations, the priority is not gathering details or conducting lengthy conversations, but rather stabilization, calming the child, and risk assessment. The school's professional support staff takes over the assessment and decides whether there is a need for the immediate involvement of a parent, healthcare services, or other institutions.

If the child is experiencing acute panic, crying, trembling, or expressing fear that something bad will happen, the school's professional support staff focus on calming the child and restoring a sense of safety. The teacher remains present as a source of support, but does not lead the intervention.

In situations where there is suspicion of a serious threat, self-harming behavior, threats from others, or sharing of intimate content that may continue to spread, the school must immediately follow child protection protocols and notify the relevant institutions.

The crisis does not end with calming the child. The school's professional support staff prepare a follow-up and support plan for the days ahead, while the teacher receives clear guidance on how to monitor and support the child in the classroom and how to respond if signs of distress reappear.

3.5. Long-term support

Long-term support is essential for helping the child feel stable and protected after the initial intervention. Violence, especially digital violence, rarely ends in a single day. Its consequences may persist over time, which is why the school plays an important role in monitoring the situation and supporting the child's recovery and resilience.

The school's professional support staff develops a support plan that may include regular conversations, monitoring the child's emotional well-being, and assessing whether the child needs additional services outside the school setting. At the same time, the teacher remains attentive to behavioral changes, classroom dynamics, and possible new sources of pressure or distress.

It is important for the child to know that the school continues to be a safe space. This may include discreet checks about how the child is feeling, encouragement to participate in activities that strengthen confidence and resilience, and continued support if difficulties reappear.

Long-term support may also involve working with the class, when necessary, to prevent stigma, gossip, or revictimization. The school should ensure an environment in which the child does not feel isolated or labeled.

This process does not follow a fixed timeline—it continues for as long as the child needs in order to regain stability, feel safe, and continue functioning in school without fear or pressure.

Scenario 1: Quiet withdrawal and changes in behavior

The teacher notices that a child who was previously active and communicative has recently become withdrawn, avoids contact with peers, and frequently asks to leave the classroom. During breaks, the child sits alone, looks at his phone, and appears visibly distressed. The child does not say anything directly, but their behavior is a clear sign that something is weighing on him.

What do we learn: Not every child will openly say what is happening to them. Changes in behavior are an important indicator that the teacher should gently and non-intrusively check in on the child's well-being.

Scenario 2: Responding to a message or call during class

During class, the child receives a message on their phone. The moment they see it, their face turns pale, their hands begin to shake, and they immediately switch off the phone. Then the child becomes visibly distressed, is unable to concentrate, and asks to leave the classroom.

What do we learn: A sudden and intense reaction to a digital message may be a sign of online harassment, threats, or the sharing of intimate content. After the class ends, the teacher should ask the child to stay and gently try to start a conversation with him.

Scenario 3: Non-intrusive first conversation

The teacher notices that the child has been distressed for several days in a row. After class, the teacher asks the child to stay for a few minutes and says in a calm tone: "I've noticed that you seem worried over the past few days. I want you to know that I'm here if you want to talk." The child may not immediately explain what is happening, but they begin to feel that there is a safe adult they can talk to.

What do we learn: The right approach is non-intrusive, warm, and free from pressure. The goal is to create space for conversation, not to extract information.

Scenario 4: Child reports directly

The child approaches the teacher after class and quietly says that he wants to talk about something that is happening to him. The child explains that someone has been sharing photos of him without permission. The teacher listens without interrupting and without asking additional questions. After the child finishes speaking, the teacher tells him that he did the right thing by asking for help. It is important for the teacher to express appreciation that the child chose to confide in him. The teacher then calmly asks for the child's permission to involve the pedagogue/psychologist so that, together, they can create a plan on how to help him.

What do we learn: When a child reports the situation directly, the most important thing is for the teacher to react calmly, not to ask for details, and, with the child's permission, to involve the professional support staff.

Scenario 5: Sharing information with other teachers or students

A teacher, believing they are “just asking for advice,” tells two colleagues that a child is experiencing problems related to shared photos. The information quickly spreads, and the child finds out that multiple people know about the situation. The child feels exposed and betrayed and refuses to continue conversations with the professional support staff.

What do we learn: Information should only be shared with the school's professional support staff and with individuals who are directly involved in protecting and supporting the child. Any unnecessary sharing of information undermines trust and may lead to revictimization.

Scenario 6: Sharing intimate photos without consent – urgent reporting required

The school's professional support staff receives information that a student is being exposed to the non-consensual sharing of intimate photos. The child is visibly distressed and fears that the content is spreading among peers. The teacher and the school's professional support staff immediately clarify what has been reported, without asking for unnecessary details or forcing the child to repeat the experience.

After a brief assessment, it becomes clear that the photos are intimate and are being shared without consent. The professional support staff explains to the child that this is a serious form of violence and that the school has an obligation to protect him. The parent is then informed, and the police are notified immediately, in accordance with legal obligations related for the protection of minors.

The school does not wait to “see whether it will stop,” nor does it attempt to resolve the case on its own. The non-consensual sharing of intimate images of a minor is a criminal offense, and the risk to the child can escalate very quickly. The police are the only institution that can prevent further distribution, provide evidence, and protect the child from additional harm.

What do we learn:

When intimate images of a minor are shared without consent, the school must immediately report the situation to the police. This is not merely a “school issue,” but a criminal offense that carries a high level of risk for the child. A rapid response is essential to prevent further distribution and ensure the child's protection.

4. Workshop modules for teachers

Module 1: Understanding the digital GBV

Objective of the module

Participants gain a basic understanding of what digital gender-based violence is, why it has a gender dimension, and the different forms in which it can appear.

Structure (45 minutes)

- 5 minutes – Brief introductory explanation
- 10 minutes – Mini-presentation (definitions and forms of DGBV)
- 20 minutes – Group exercise: scenario analysis
- 10 minutes – Discussion and drawing conclusions

Expected outcome

Teachers are able to recognize subtle and overt forms of digital gender-based violence and understand why girls are more frequently targeted.

Mini guide for the facilitator

The workshop begins with a brief introduction in which the facilitator sets a tone of safety, trust, and sensitivity. He can address the participants with the following words:

“Today we will talk about a topic that is sensitive, but very important for our work. We will approach it carefully, without unnecessary details, in order to understand how to protect students, especially girls, who are most often targeted.”

This introduction helps participants feel more at ease and reassures them that the space is safe for learning and sharing.

Then the facilitator moves on to a short presentation. He may explain:

“When we talk about digital gender-based violence, we mean situations in which someone uses digital tools to hurt, humiliate or control another person, most often a girl or young person who is in a vulnerable position.

At this point the facilitator introduces the gender dimension:

“Girls are more often targeted because there are strong gender norms and expectations related to their bodies, behavior, and sexuality. These pressures are also reproduced in digital spaces, where control, sexualization, and humiliation can escalate very quickly.”

He then explains the forms of digital GBV:

“Pressure to send photos, sharing content without consent, manipulation through messages, monitoring online activities, sexualized comments, and digital isolation—all of these forms affect girls much more often.”

The facilitator may also add:

“We will talk about realistic situations, but without going into details that could cause discomfort. The goal is understanding, not distress.”

This is followed by a 10-minute mini presentation (Power Point) on the definitions and forms of DGBV.

Group exercise: Scenario analysis (20 minutes)

The facilitator divides participants into 4–5 groups. Each group receives a different scenario involving a form of a digital GBV. The task is to identify whether the situation represents digital GBV, which form it involves, and why such situations most often affect girls.

Scenario 1 – Pressure to share content (“Just for me”)

Mila (16) receives messages from a boy in her class: "You look great in the last picture... if you want, send something just for me, no one else will see it." He's not aggressive, but he has sent her similar messages several times before. Mila feels uncomfortable because they attend the same classes together. She is not interested in him and does not want anything more with him, but she does not know how to tell him to stop sending such messages. Her friends tell her that "it's nothing serious," and that he is probably messaging her because he likes her.

Note for the facilitator: This behavior may not yet be qualified as DGBV, but if it continues, it may escalate into online harassment or digital stalking.

Scenario 2 - Non-consensual sharing of intimate content

Elena (17) sends a selfie to her boyfriend that was intended to be seen only by him. However, in an attempt to impress his friends, he shares the photo in a group chat. By the next day, half of the students have seen the picture. Several boys begin making comments such as: "You're seriously hot", "Call me whenever you want, I'll be ready and waiting for you," and other inappropriate comments. Elena feels exposed, but she is afraid to tell her parents.

Note for the facilitator: This scenario demonstrates a classic form of digital gender-based violence — the non-consensual sharing of intimate content. It is important for the groups to recognize that the responsibility lies with the person who shared the image, not with the girl, and that the consequences for her may be serious and long-lasting.

Scenario 3 – Controlling behavior (“I just want to know”)

Sarah (15) is in a relationship. Her boyfriend sends her messages throughout the day:

“Just text me when you get home.” “Why are you online, but not texting me?”

“I want to know who you’re spending your break with.” “I don’t like it when you go out with them, they’re not good for you.”

Sara believes this is a sign of “care.” Her friends tell her that this means he is paying attention to her and that “this is how boys act when they care about someone.”

But over time, Sarah begins to feel pressured. She notices that she has started avoiding being online, deleting messages so that she does not have to explain them, and feeling afraid to tell him that she wants to spend time with her friends because he might become angry.

Note for the facilitator: This scenario shows early signs of controlling behavior and digital isolation. Such behavior is often disguised as “care” or “jealousy out of love,” but it creates pressure, fear, and a sense of responsibility in girls. It is important for the groups to recognize that these messages are not romantic, but they are warning signs.

Scenario 4– Online sexual harassment

Iva (16) is very active on social media and sometimes posting multiple times during the day. She often receives DM’s (direct messages) from unknown boys commenting on her photos. Although she ignores them, they continue sending her messages. After she blocked them, they started messaging her from other accounts. Some of the comments make her feel deeply uncomfortable. She has started feeling afraid to walk home alone at night, and if she has no one to accompany her, she avoids going out altogether.

Note for the facilitator: This scenario demonstrates persistent sexual harassment and a violation of the girl's sense of safety, even when she does not respond to the messages. It is important for the groups to recognize that such messages are a form of violence, not "compliments," and that their consequences for girls can be serious and restrictive to their everyday lives.

Scenario 5 - Grooming ("Only you understand me")

Jana (14) plays an online game where she often communicates with other players. One of them, who introduces himself as "Leo, 16 years old," begins messaging her privately. Their conversations feel pleasant. He compliments her gaming skills and tells her that she is "much more mature than other girls her age."

Over time, Leo begins to ask her personal questions:

"What is it like at home for you?", "Who do you argue with the most?", "Who is closest to you?"

Jana feels understood and heard. He tells her: "You can trust me, I'm here for you."

After a few weeks, Leo suggests they switch to another app "where it's easier to chat". Later, he tells her: "Send me a photo so I can see you, just for me. It doesn't have to be anything special, just that I know who I'm talking to." Jana hesitates, but she feels as though she owes him something because he has "supported her so much."

Note for the facilitator: This scenario demonstrates classic elements of grooming: building trust, isolation, emotional dependence, and gradually crossing personal boundaries through increasingly inappropriate requests. Girls are often targeted because of vulnerability, a need for acceptance, and social pressure.

Suggested scenario 6 – Deepfake abuse ("Just kidding")

Lena (17) is active on TikTok and frequently posts dance videos. One day, she discovers that a student from another class has created a deepfake video in which her face has been placed onto another girl's body in a provocative pose.

The video begins circulating through several WhatsApp groups accompanied by the comment: "Lena finally loosened up."

Even though everyone says it's "just a joke", Lena feels humiliated and exposed. She is afraid that the video will reach teachers or her parents.

Note for the facilitator: Deepfake abuse is a growing risk. Although it is not a "real" recording, the consequences for girls are very real: shame, fear, loss of confidence, social isolation.

Instructions for the groups

The facilitator guides them with three questions:

1. Is the girl in the scenario a victim of some form of digital GBV?
2. If yes — which form?
3. Why do situations like this most often happen to girls?

Discussion and drawing conclusions (10 minutes)

The facilitator may say: "All of these scenarios are based on real-life examples. And all of them are forms of digital gender-based violence, because they create pressure, control, sexualization or humiliation, most often directed at girls."

He concludes with encouragement: "Recognition is the first step towards protection. In the next module, we will discuss how to respond when we notice signs of risk or when a child chooses to confide in us."

Supplement for the facilitator: Preparation for Module 1

Before leading the workshop, the facilitator should read the following sections of the handbook: Definition of digital gender-based violence, Gender component: why girls are more often targeted, Forms of digital GBV, Recognition scenarios.

Module 2: Psychological impact and recognition of DGBV in the school context

Objective of the module

Participants will understand how digital gender-based violence affects the emotions, behavior, and everyday lives of young people, and learn to recognize early warning signs within the school context.

Structure (45 minutes)

- 5 minutes – Introduction
- 10 minutes – Mini-presentation: psychological impact on youth
- 15 minutes – Group exercise: recognizing emotional and behavioral reactions
- 10 minutes – Mini presentation “What it looks like in the secondary school context”
- 5 minutes – Discussion and Conclusions

Mini guide for the facilitator

Introduction (5 minutes). The facilitator opens the module with a calm and supportive tone: "In this module we will talk about what happens *internally* to young people when they are exposed to digital gender-based violence. Although the violence happens online, we see the consequences in the classroom, in their behavior, learning, relationships, and sense of safety. Our role is not to diagnose, but to recognize when something is wrong and to offer support."

The facilitator creates an atmosphere of empathy: "Every signal is important. Sometimes the most subtle changes in a child's behavior are the very first things we notice."

Mini-presentation: Psychological impact on young people (10 minutes) using a Power point presentation. The facilitator concludes with encouragement: "Timely recognition and support can interrupt the violence and reduce its consequences."

Group exercise: Recognizing emotional and behavioral reactions (15 minutes). The facilitator divides participants into 3–4 groups. Each group receives a short scenario (below). Their task is to identify:

1. Which emotions do we see?
2. Which behavioral changes may be warning signs?
3. What would the teacher do—a non-intrusive and supportive way?

The facilitator may say: "We're not looking for a diagnosis. We are looking for *signals* that may tell us a student is dealing with something that goes beyond ordinary adolescent difficulties."

Scenario A "I don't want to go to that class"

Anna (16) suddenly starts avoiding a particular class. She frequently asks to leave "just for a moment." During breaks, she stands alone with her phone in her hand, visibly distressed. When the teacher asks her if she's okay, Ana answers briefly: "I'm fine, I'm just tired."

What should the groups recognize?

- fear, distress
- avoidance of certain spaces or people
- withdrawal
- possible signs of online pressure or ridicule

Scenario B "I don't feel like talking"

Mila (15) used to be very active in class. Over the past few weeks, she has become quiet, avoids participating, and whenever she receives a message on her phone, she immediately turns the screen face down. Her friends say that "something is happening on Instagram," but Mila does not want to talk about it.

What should the groups recognize?

- shame, withdrawal
- avoidance of conversations about phones/social media
- changes in communication patterns
- possible pressure, ridicule or sharing of content

Scenario C "I can't concentrate"

Elena (17) suddenly begins forgetting assignments, arriving late to class, and appearing exhausted. When asked if he is okay, she says: "Everything is fine, I'm just studying a lot." The teacher notices that she frequently looks at her phone with a worried expression.

What should the groups recognize?

- psychological overload
- concentration decline
- chronic tension
- possible continuous online pressure

This is followed by the mini presentation "What it looks like in the secondary school context" (10 minutes) using a Power Point presentation. After finishing the presentation, the facilitator asks several questions to encourage discussion:

1. Which of the early warning signs we discussed do you most often notice among students in your school?
2. How would you distinguish between "typical teenage behavior" and signs that something deeper may be happening?
3. Which dynamics affecting girls (pressure, control, peer pressure) feel most recognizable to you?
4. Which changes in school behavior would make you pay closer attention to a student?
5. What helps you — or what would help you — to notice that a student may be experiencing digital violence?

Conclusions (5 minutes)

The facilitator concludes: "Recognizing the early signs is the first step." In the next module, we will discuss how to talk with a student in a careful, safe, and respectful way that honors her boundaries."

Supplement for the facilitator: Preparation for Module 2

Before leading the workshop, the facilitator should read the following sections of the handbook: Psychological impact on young people (emotional reactions, consequences on

self-esteem, learning and relationships, serious mental health risks) and What does digital GBV look like in the secondary school context (early warning signs, typical dynamics affecting girls, the role of peer groups, school events)

Module 3: Child-centered approach

Objective of the module

Participants will learn how to talk to a child who may be experiencing digital gender-based violence: carefully, safely, respecting child's boundaries and with an approach that puts the child at the center.

Structure (45 minutes)

- 5 minutes – Introduction
- 10 minutes – Mini-presentation: basic principles of a child-centered approach
- 15 minutes – Group exercise: how do we start a conversation?
- 10 minutes – Mini-presentation: creating a safe environment and supportive communication
- 5 minutes – Discussion and Conclusions

Mini guide for the facilitator

Introduction (5 minutes). The facilitator opens the module with a warm and calm tone: "In this module, we will discuss how to talk with a child who may be experiencing digital gender-based violence. The conversation itself is a sensitive moment and it can become a turning point. Our goal is not to interrogate, but to create a space in which the child feels safe, heard, and respected."

The facilitator adds: "A child-centered approach means we don't rush, we don't pressure, and we don't make assumptions." The child sets the pace — we follow it."

Mini-presentation: Basic principles of a child-centered approach (10 minutes). The facilitator explains the principles in a simple and practical way using a PowerPoint presentation.

The facilitator concludes: "Our role is to be a safe adult, not a judge or an investigator."

Group exercise: How do we start a conversation? (15 minutes). The facilitator divides participants into 3 groups. Each group receives a scenario and a task:

Task:

1. How would you start a conversation with the student?
2. Which statements are supportive?
3. Which statements should be avoided?
4. How would you maintain the conversation without creating pressure?

The facilitator may say: "We are not looking for perfect words. We are looking for warmth, non-intrusiveness, and respect."

Scenario 1 "I can see that something is bothering you"

The teacher notices that Sara (15) has been quiet over the past few days, avoids eye contact, and becomes nervous whenever she receives a message on her phone.

Group task:

- suggest an opening sentence
- identify what should NOT be said
- suggest supportive phrases

Scenario 2 “I don’t want to go out for break”

Ana (16) avoids going out at break time with a certain group of students. The teacher notices that she has started changing her route through the school.

Group task:

- suggest a non-intrusive way to open a conversation
- avoid making assumptions (“Are they doing something to you?”)
- suggest messages that build trust

Scenario 3 “I’m afraid to talk”

Elena (17) looks exhausted and worried. When asked if he is okay, she says: “I don’t want to talk about it. It will only make things worse.”

Group task:

- suggest a sentence that reduces anxiety
- demonstrate how to respect the child’s boundaries
- suggest a message that empowers the child (“You decide when we talk.”)

Mini-presentation: How to create a safe environment and start a conversation (10 minutes) using a Power Point presentation.

The facilitator can give examples:

- “I’ve noticed some changes in you over the past few days. I’m here if you would like to talk.”
- “You can tell me as much as you want—you’re in charge of the conversation.”
- “What is happening is not your fault.”

What should be avoided

- “Why did you send it to him?”
- “It’s probably not that serious.”
- “You should have been more careful.”
- “Tell me exactly what happened.” (pressuring)

“These messages reinforce shame and reduce trust.”

Supportive messages

- “It’s good that you told me.”
- “I understand that this is difficult for you.”
- “I’m here for you.”
- “We will go through this step by step.”

Conclusions (5 minutes)

The facilitator concludes: “Recognition is the first step towards protection. When a child feels that there is an adult who listens to and respects them, the chances of them seeking help increase significantly. In the next module, we will discuss how to respond and which steps to take when a child chooses to confide in us.”

Supplement for the facilitator: Preparation for Module 3.

Before the workshop, the facilitator should read the following sections of the handbook: Child-centered approach; How to create a safe environment; How to start a conversation with a child.

Module 4: The first conversation with the child and crisis intervention

Objective of the module

Participants will learn how to react in the first moments when they notice changes in a student's behavior or when she chooses to confide in them carefully, calmly, and with an approach that protects the child. In addition, participants will learn how to respond in situations involving crisis or immediate risk.

Structure (45 minutes)

- 5 minutes – Introduction
- 10 minutes – Mini-presentation: The first conversation with the child
- 15 minutes – Group exercise: What do we say, what don't we say?
- 10 minutes – Mini-presentation: Crisis Intervention
- 5 minutes – Conclusions

Mini guide for the facilitator

Introduction (5 minutes). The facilitator opens the module with a calm and steady tone: "This module focuses on the most critical moment - the first conversation with the child. The way we react in those first minutes can either strengthen trust or shut it down. Our goal is not to find out everything, but to create a sense of safety."

The facilitator adds: "When a child is distressed, we become their stable point of support. We don't rush, we don't pressure, and we don't ask for details. The child sets the pace, we follow it."

Mini-presentation: The first conversation with the child (10 minutes) using a Power point presentation. The facilitator explains: "When we notice a change in behavior or receive a report, the first step is to respond calmly and non-intrusively." The focus should be on establishing contact without pressure, ensuring privacy, active listening, supportive comments, setting boundaries in a calm manner, and documentation.

Group exercise: What do we say, what don't we say? (15 minutes)

The facilitator divides participants into 3 groups. Each group receives a scenario and should answer 4 questions:

1. How would you start the conversation?
2. Which statements are supportive?
3. Which statements should be avoided?
4. How would you maintain the conversation without creating pressure?

The facilitator may say: "We are not looking for perfect words. We are looking for warmth, stability and non-intrusiveness."

Scenario 1 "I can see that something is bothering you"

Sara (15) is quiet, avoids eye contact, and becomes nervous whenever she receives a message.

Goal:

- opening sentence
- what should NOT be said
- supporting phrases

Scenario 2 "I don't want to go out for break"

Anna (16) changes her route through school and avoids a particular group of students.

Goal:

- non-intrusive opening
- avoid making assumptions
- trust-building messages

Scenario 3 “I’m afraid to talk”

Elena (17) says: “I don’t want to talk about it. It will only make things worse.”

Goal:

- reduce anxiety
- respect for boundaries
- messages that empower the student

Mini-presentation: Crisis intervention (10 minutes) using a Power point presentation. The facilitator explains: “Crisis intervention is necessary when a child shows signs of severe distress, panic, or when there is an immediate risk.”

Discussion questions after the presentation on crisis intervention. The facilitator may say: “Now I would like us to reflect on what a crisis means in the school context and how we, as adults, can respond calmly and in a coordinated manner.” These questions will help us connect theory to real-world situations in the classroom.”

1. Based on your experience, which situations would you recognize as “crisis situations” involving a student?
2. What do you think is the most difficult part for a teacher when a child is in panic or severe distress?
3. Which crisis intervention steps seem most important for protecting the child during the first few minutes?
4. What would a teacher's "calm presence" look like during a crisis?
5. What would help you feel more confident when facing a situation like this?

The facilitator may also add:

"There are no right or wrong answers." The goal is to reflect on how we can remain calm, protect the child, and collaborate with the school’s professional support staff. In moments of crisis, our stability can make an enormous difference.”

Conclusions (5 minutes)

The facilitator concludes: “The first conversation and crisis intervention are moments when the child needs us the most. Our calmness, attentiveness, and respect can make an enormous difference. In the next module we will talk about communication with professional support staff, parents, and long-term support.”

Supplement for the facilitator: Preparation for Module 4

Facilitator should read the following sections of the handbook: The first conversation with the child, Crisis intervention.

Module 5: Communication with professional support staff, parents and long-term support

Objective of the module

Participants will learn how to collaborate with the school’s professional support staff, how to communicate with parents in a way that protects the child, and how to provide long-term support after the initial intervention.

Structure (45 minutes)

- 5 minutes – Introduction
- 10 minutes – Mini-presentation: Communication with school's professional support staff and communication with parents/guardians
- 20 minutes – Group exercise: Communication Challenges
- 5 Minutes – Long-Term Support
- 5 minutes - Conclusions

Mini guide for the facilitator

Introduction (5 minutes). The facilitator opens the module with a professional and calm tone: "In this module we will talk about what happens *after* the first conversation and after the crisis." This is the moment when the school must function as a team - the teacher, the pedagogue, the psychologist, the parents, and the child. Our goal is to create a support network, not to leave the child alone with their experience."

The facilitator adds: "Communication must be careful, coordinated, and focused on protection, not on blame or punishment. This is especially important when parents react emotionally."

Mini-presentation: Communication and coordination with school's professional support staff and Communication with parents/guardians (10 minutes) using a Power Point presentation.

Group exercise: Communication challenges (20 minutes)

The facilitator divides participants into 3 groups. Each group receives a short situation and should respond to the following questions:

1. How would you communicate with the school's professional support staff?
2. How would you communicate with the parent?
3. What would you avoid?
4. What would be the next step in supporting the child?

Situation 1 – A parent who reacts with anger. The teacher invites the student's father to discuss noticeable behavioral changes and something the girl shared in confidence. The father enters the office visibly upset, speaking in a raised voice.

"How did you allow this to happen? What are you doing here?" he asks, without sitting down. The student stands beside him, looking at the floor and appearing visibly tense.

Form of violence: The student is receiving insulting and humiliating messages from peers through social media—online harassment and humiliation.

Goal:

- calming
- focus on support
- avoiding defensiveness

Situation 2 – A parent who blames the child. The mother comes to a meeting after being called by the school. The teacher explains that the girl appears distressed and that there are concerns about possible digital violence. The mother immediately reacts: "She must have done something herself. She is constantly on her phone. She never tells me anything at home." The girl shrinks into her chair, tears in her eyes, but says nothing.

Form of violence: Someone has shared a photo of the girl without her permission and is mocking her in a group chat—non-consensual sharing of content and peer humiliation.

Goal:

- protecting the child
- redirecting toward support
- avoiding confrontation

Situation 3 – A professional support staff that asks more information than the teacher has
After the first conversation with the student, the teacher goes to speak with the school pedagogue. The teacher explains that the girl appeared distressed but did not want to share details. The pedagogue asks: “Okay, but what exactly happened? Who is involved? What did she tell you? I need to know.” The teacher feels pressured, but knows that the child did not share anything more.

Form of violence: The student is receiving threatening messages from an anonymous profile—online threats and intimidation, with the sender’s identity unknown.

Goal:

- factual reporting
- setting boundaries
- avoiding pressure on the child

Discussion after the group exercise

The facilitator may say: “Now I would like us to reflect on what this looks like in real school situations. The goal is not to find perfect answers, but to understand what helps us remain calm, professional, and focused on the child.”

Discussion questions

1. What did you find most challenging in these scenarios?
2. Which strategies helped you remain calm and focused on the child?
3. How did you distinguish between what should be said and what should be avoided?
4. What would good coordination between the teacher and the school’s professional support staff look like in these situations?
5. What do you need as teachers in order to feel more confident in these kinds of conversations?

Guidance for the facilitator

The facilitator should: encourage short, clear answers in order to keep the discussion focused and manageable, and confirm good practices mentioned by participants.

Long-term support and Conclusions (5 minutes)

The facilitator explains: “Long-term support is essential for helping the child feel stable and protected. Violence rarely ends in a single day, and its consequences may last much longer. Long-term support may include: regular conversations with school’s professional support staff, monitoring the child’s emotional well-being, discreet checks, encouragement to participate in activities that strengthen and empower the child, work with the class to prevent stigma.

The facilitator concludes: “Our role is to create an environment in which the child is not alone. When the school functions as a team, the chances for healing, recovery, and protection are much greater.”

Supplement for the facilitator: Preparation for Module 5

Facilitator should read the following sections of the handbook: Communication with school’s professional support staff, Communication with parents/guardians, Long-term support.

5. Interactive online version of the handbook

QUIZ: "Is this digital violence?"

An interactive quiz based on realistic scenarios involving secondary school girls and young women.

Goal: To help girls recognize different forms of digital gender-based violence through situations that may appear “normal” but are not.

Format: For each scenario, the participant chooses:

- 1) **Yes, this is digital violence;**
- 2) **I'm not sure;**
- 3) **No, this is not digital violence**

Introduction: Welcome to the quiz “Is this digital violence?”

This quiz is here for you—to help you recognize situations that may have felt confusing, uncomfortable, or “not that serious,” but can still be harmful. You will see short scenarios inspired by real experiences of young girls. Your task is simply to answer based on how each situation seems to you.

This is not a test. This is a space where you can learn, recognize certain experiences, and understand that your feelings matter.

If any of the scenarios sound familiar, remember: You are not alone, it is not your fault and you deserve to feel safe — both online and offline.

When you're ready, start with the first scenario.

Situation 1:

“You post a photo of yourself wearing a new dress you bought, and people start leaving insulting comments about your appearance underneath it. Someone comments that ‘dressed like that, you were asking for it.’

- 1) Yes, this is digital violence;
- 2) I'm not sure;
- 3) No, this is not digital violence

Explanation:

This is *online harassment*. Insults and humiliation are not “just jokes”. They can affect your self-esteem and sense of safety. It's not your fault.”

This is *online harassment and a form of digital gender-based violence*. Comments that humiliate, sexualize, or blame you are not “just jokes.” They are attacks on your dignity and can affect your self-esteem and sense of safety. Messages like “you were asking for it” are based on harmful stereotypes and shift the blame onto you, even though you did nothing wrong. No one has the right to insult you or make degrading comments about your body.

Situation 2:

“You post your opinion that girls should have equal opportunities in sports. Under the post, several boys comment: “What does a girl know about sports; Women are not made for competition; Stay quiet, this is a men's topic.”

- 1) Yes, this is digital violence;
- 2) I'm not sure;
- 3) No, this is not digital violence

Explanation:

This is gender-based and sexist hate speech. Comments that silence or belittle you just because you are a girl are a form of discrimination and violence. Stereotypes that girls "don't understand sports," "aren't good enough," or "shouldn't speak" are harmful and are intended to humiliate and exclude you. It's not your fault.

Situation 3:

"An intimate photo that you sent to your boyfriend—who you have now broken up with and aren't together with—is shared in a group chat with your classmates."

- 1) Yes, this is digital violence;
- 2) I'm not sure;
- 3) No, this is not digital violence

Explanation:

This is *non-consensual sharing of intimate content*. Sharing without consent is a serious form of violence. An intimate photo that you shared in trust should never be posted or forwarded without your consent, neither by a former partner nor by anyone else. This behavior is a betrayal of trust, a violation of your privacy, and a form of blackmail and humiliation. The responsibility lies entirely with the person who shared the photo, not with you.

You have the right to privacy, respect, and safety — both online and offline.

Situation 4:

"A boy you like asks you to send him 'a picture just for him,' and says that he will also send you 'a picture of himself just for you.'"

- 1) Yes, this is digital violence;
- 2) I'm not sure;
- 3) No, this is not digital violence

Explanation:

This is *sexual harassment*. Pressure to send intimate photos is a form of violence, even when it appears "sweet" or "romantic." When someone asks you for an intimate photo, even if it's a guy you like, it can create pressure and expectations that may feel difficult to refuse. The phrase "I'll send one too" does not automatically make the situation safe. Sometimes it is used to persuade you to do something you may not actually feel comfortable with. Intimate images should never be requested, expected, or exchanged under pressure—even when it is presented as romance. Your body and your photos belong to you. You have the right to say no without feeling guilty.

Situation 5:

"Your partner tells you that if you really love him, you will share your location with him."

- 1) Yes, this is digital violence;
- 2) I'm not sure;
- 3) No, this is not digital violence

Explanation:

This is *digital stalking*. Asking for your location "as proof of love" is a form of control. Love should not require surveillance. When someone tells you that you should send them your location 'if you love them', that's pressure, not love.

True love doesn't require surveillance, checking, or constantly monitoring where you are and who you are with.

This kind of behavior can create fear, guilt, and the feeling that you constantly need to justify yourself, and that is not healthy.

You have the right to privacy and your own boundaries, even in a relationship. It is not your fault if someone tries to present control as care.

Situation 6:

"About half an hour after you part ways, your boyfriend texts you: Did you get home? Just checking if you're okay. He doesn't ask for your location, he doesn't insist, he just asks once."

- 1) Yes, this is digital violence;
- 2) I'm not sure;
- 3) No, this is not digital violence

Explanation:

This is not digital violence. This is an example of normal, healthy care. The difference is that there is no pressure, control, or demand to explain where you are. Care is voluntary and does not limit your freedom. The partner asks once, without pressure, without requesting your location, and without expecting you to answer immediately.

The difference is that caring doesn't make you feel guilty, tracked, or controlled. Caring is gentle, voluntary, and doesn't violate your boundaries.

This is communication that respects your freedom and privacy.

Situation 7:

"An edited video featuring your face is being shared among students."

- 1) Yes, this is digital violence;
- 2) I'm not sure;
- 3) No, this is not digital violence

Explanation:

This is *deepfake abuse*, a serious form of digital gender-based violence. Even though the video is fake, the harm it causes is very real and can affect your reputation, self-esteem, and sense of safety.

Using your face in edited content is an attack on your privacy and dignity. This behavior is humiliating, intimidating, and can be used for blackmail or manipulation.

It is important to know: It's not your fault because someone misused technology to hurt you.

The responsibility lies entirely with the person who created or shared the video.

Situation 8:

"Your boyfriend messages you: Why didn't you text me yesterday after you got home? You must have gone somewhere else after we parted ways. Then he adds: But okay, it's fine, call me when you can. He doesn't press you further, he doesn't demand explanations, he just asks once."

- 1) Yes, this is digital violence;
- 2) I'm not sure;
- 3) No, this is not digital violence

Explanation:

This is a gray area. The question “Why didn't you text me” doesn't have to be violence, it may come from worry or insecurity. However, the part where he assumes that you've “gone somewhere else” can create pressure, guilt, or a feeling that you have to justify yourself. What matters most is how the interaction makes you feel. If messages like this become frequent, if he starts demanding explanations, becoming suspicious, or trying to control you, then this behavior may develop into digital stalking or manipulation. Healthy communication should not make you feel guilty, stalked, or constantly under suspicion. Care should feel respectful and should not cross your boundaries.

Situation 9:

“Your boyfriend takes your phone whenever he wants and reads your messages without asking you. He tells you that if you're faithful to him, there's no reason not to give it to him.”

- 1) Yes, this is digital violence;
- 2) I'm not sure;
- 3) No, this is not digital violence

Explanation:

This is control of digital devices, a form of digital gender-based violence. No one, not your partner, not your friend, not your family member, has the right to read your messages without permission.

When someone takes your phone without asking and justifies it with “if you love me” or “if you're faithful to me,” that's pressure and manipulation. This behavior violates your privacy, undermines trust, and creates a feeling that you constantly have to justify yourself or prove something.

Your devices, your messages, and your boundaries belong to you. It is not your fault if someone tries to present control as proof of love.

Situation 10:

“Your partner messages you: I love you so much, and that's why I always want to know where you are. That's the only way I feel calm. He tells you it's out of ‘love’ and that he ‘just cares about you.’”

- 1) Yes, this is digital violence;
- 2) I'm not sure;
- 3) No, this is not digital violence

Explanation:

This may sound romantic, but it is actually a form of control. When someone says they need to know where you are “so they can feel calm,” it creates pressure and the feeling that you constantly need to explain yourself. This is not love—it is an attempt to track your movements and set boundaries for you.

Real care does not require surveillance, location, or constant reporting. This kind of behavior can easily develop into digital stalking and restriction of your freedom.

You have the right to privacy, to your own boundaries, and to a relationship where someone does not control you under the excuse of love.

What the final quiz flow looks like

A scenario appears on the screen

Short, visually clean, with an icon - phone, message, group chat; The user chooses an answer: Yes, I'm not sure, No; Explanation appears (2–3 sentences); The next scenario

appears.

Message at the end:

Thank you for completing the quiz. If you recognized any form of digital gender-based violence and would like to talk to someone, contact us at.... Don't forget that you are not alone. We are here to help you stop the violence.

Indicator-compass

This tool helps girls recognize whether something happening to them online is a low, medium, or high-risk situation.

Introduction: This tool was created to help you better understand how you feel in the digital world and in the different online situations you may experience.

It's not a test, it doesn't evaluate you, and it doesn't tell you what you "should" do.

It simply gives you space to pause, reflect, and see where you are on the map of your safety. You will see several statements describing different online situations. Choose the ones that apply to you, honestly, without pressure. There are no right or wrong choices. Every choice is just a step towards greater clarity.

The result will help you understand whether you are currently in a low, medium, or high risk zone and what you can take next.

Remember: you are not alone, you are not to blame for someone else's behavior, and you deserve to feel safe — both online and offline.

Has someone (a boyfriend, friend, classmate, acquaintance, stranger):

- "Asks you to send him intimate photos of yourself."
- "Follows you on all your profiles and reacts to everything you post."
- "Humiliates you in group chats."
- "Blackmails you with messages or photos."
- "Tells you that he 'cares about you' and that's why he wants to know everything you do and who you spend time with when you're not together."
- "Wants to know your location at all times."
- "Takes your phone without permission and checks your messages."
- "Makes you feel guilty when he sets boundaries."
- "Convinces you that you're overreacting when something hurts you."
- "Shares something about you without asking for your permission."

RESULTS:

Low risk (When the girl selects 0–1 indicator. This means that: the situations she experiences do not involve pressure, control or threats, communication is generally healthy and she has clear boundaries and is able to recognize them)

Message for the participant: It's great that you recognize your own boundaries. That means you know what you are comfortable with and what you are not. Here are a few ways to strengthen your digital boundaries even more:

- set privacy settings on your profiles,
- choose who you trust,
- and always listen to your gut feeling/intuition. Your safety matters most.

Medium risk (When the girl selects 2–3 indicators. This means that there are some signs of unhealthy dynamics, perhaps there is confusion, guilt or pressure, the situation may worsen if it continues).

Message for the participant: Some of these situations can be confusing or hurtful, and that's completely understandable. It is good that you are recognizing them. Here is what you can do:

- talk to someone you trust,
- set clear boundaries,
- and pay attention to how you feel when communicating with that person.

Your feelings matter and deserve attention.

High risk (When the girl selects 4 or more indicators, or selects at least one of the "critical" indicators. Critical indicators are: blackmail, threats, non-consensual sharing of intimate content, deepfake abuse, pressure to share location, control of devices (reading messages, taking the phone), monitoring all social media profiles in a controlling way, guilt-based manipulation ("if you love me..."))

Message for the participant: This is a serious situation. You are not alone, and it is not your fault that someone is behaving this way toward you. It is important to seek support from a trusted adult, a friend, or a professional support service. There are safe steps you can take and you don't have to take them alone. Your safety and dignity come first.

Interactive mini-game: "What would you do?"

Introduction: Welcome to the interactive stories. Here you will step into situations that can happen to many girls online, in a relationship, with friends, or former partners.

Your task is simple: choose what you would do.

There are no right or wrong choices. Each choice simply leads to a different path—showing how the situation might develop, what may be safer, and what could place you at greater risk.

This is not a test. This is a space where you can learn without fear. Each story will guide you through different branches, like a small interactive game.

Everything you read is designed to help you recognize: What is care, what is pressure, what is control, and what is violence.

And remember: you are not alone, you are not to blame for someone else's behavior, and you always have a choice.

When you are ready—enter the first story.

Starting story

"Your ex-partner messages you: I have photos of you. If you don't call me tonight, I'll share them."

You have 4 choices:

1. I block him.
2. I call him to stop.
3. I message a friend.
4. I report him.

Option 1: "I block him."

Outcome:

You block him, but a few hours later you receive a message from another profile: "I know you saw the message. If you don't call me, I'll share them."

New choices:

- 1.1 I block this profile too.
- 1.2 I save the evidence and ask for help.

1.3 I message him and tell him to stop.

→1.1. "I block this profile too."

Outcome:

He may create even more profiles.

Blocking alone does not stop blackmail.

Message: It is understandable that you want to cut off contact. But in situations involving blackmail, the safest step is to save evidence and seek support.

→1.2. "I save the evidence and ask for help."

Outcome:

This is the safest choice in this branch.

Message: It is brave not to handle this alone. Saving evidence and asking for support reduces the blackmailer's power.

→1.3. "I message him and tell him to stop."

Outcome:

He becomes more aggressive: "Oh, so you are here. Come on, call me."

Message: Blackmailers often become more persistent when they see you react. It's not your fault — but this is not a safe strategy.

Option 2: "I call him to stop."

Outcome: He replies coldly: "Okay. But you'll call me every night."

New choices:

2.1 I agree so he will stop.

2.2 I hang up and block him.

2.3 I hang up and ask for support.

→2.1 "I agree"

Outcome: The blackmail continues. Each time you give in, a new demand appears.

Message: "It's not your fault that you feel pressured. But blackmail never truly stops when someone gives in to it."

→ 2.2 "I hang up and block him."

Outcome: He starts messaging from another profile.

Message: "Blocking someone is a natural reaction, but in situations involving blackmail, it is important to save evidence and seek support."

→ 2.3 "I hang up and ask for support."

Outcome: This is the safest choice in this branch.

Message: "It's brave to cut off contact and ask for help." Blackmail is serious, and you should not have to deal with it alone."

Option 3: I message a friend."

Outcome: Your friend tells you: "This is serious. Let's save the evidence."

New choices:

3.1 I listen to my friend and save the evidence.

3.2 I'm scared and message my ex-partner.

3.3 I ask my friend not to tell anyone.

→3.1 "I save the evidence."

Outcome: This is the safest choice.

Message: "You are not alone. When someone is blackmailing you, the support of a friend is a huge strength."

→ 3.2 "I message my ex-partner."

Outcome: He becomes more aggressive.

Message: "Fear is normal. But blackmailers use fear to gain more power."

→ 3.3 "I ask my friend not to tell anyone."

Outcome: You remain alone with the burden.

Message: "It's understandable to be afraid. But in situations involving blackmail, silence protects the blackmailer, not you."

Option 4: "I report him."

Outcome: The platform is reviewing the case. You save the evidence and ask for help.

New choices:

4.1 I tell a trusted adult.

4.2 I try to handle it on my own.

4.3 I block him immediately.

→ 4.1 "I tell a trusted adult."

Outcome: This is the safest choice in the entire game.

Message: "This is a serious situation. It's brave to ask for support. You are not alone."

→ 4.2 "I try to handle it on my own."

Outcome: The burden is becoming too heavy.

Message: "You do not have to handle this alone. Blackmail is violence, not your responsibility."

→ 4.3 "I block him immediately."

Outcome: It's good that you're cutting off contact, but it's important to save evidence before blocking him.

Message: "Blocking someone is part of the process, but evidence is key to your safety."

Final message for the entire mini-game

"Blackmail is a serious form of digital violence. You are not alone, it is not your fault, and you do not have to go through this by yourself. There are safe steps you can take, and there are people who can help you."

Interactive mini-game: "Stalking and Control"

The introduction is the same as in the previous game.

Starting story

"Your boyfriend messages you: Where are you? Why didn't you reply right away? Send me your location right now."

You have 4 choices:

1. I send him my location.
2. I tell him that I don't want him to check on me.
3. I ignore him.
4. I message a friend and ask what I should do.

Option 1: "I send him my location."

Outcome: He immediately replies: "Okay. And next time, send it right away, so I don't get upset."

New choices:

1.1 I tell him I will not always send my location.

1.2 I keep sending it so that there are no arguments.

1.3 I block him.

→ 1.1 "I tell him I will not always send my location."

Outcome: He gets angry: "Why?" What are you hiding?"

Message: When someone reacts with suspicion to your boundary, that is a sign of control, not care.

→ 1.2 "I keep sending it."

Outcome: Requests become more frequent. "Send it to me when you leave and when you arrive too."

Message: Giving in to pressure often leads to even more control. It is not your fault—this is a power dynamic.

→ 1.3 "I block him."

Outcome: He messages you from another profile: "Why are you blocking me? I'm just worried about you. You know I love you more than anyone."

Message: Blocking someone can help, but in situations involving controlling behavior, it is important to seek support and set clear boundaries.

Option 2: "I tell him that I'm not comfortable with it."

Outcome: He replies: "How can you not be comfortable with it? I just love you."

New choices:

2.1 I explain it again.

2.2 I tell him we will talk about it in person.

2.3 I ask him to stop pressuring me.

→ 2.1 I explain it again.

Outcome: He says: "Okay, but you should still send me your location."

Message: When someone hears your boundary but ignores it, that is a sign of control.

→ 2.2 "We'll talk about it in person."

Outcome: In person he seems calmer and softer, but the next day he asks for your location again.

Message: Controlling behavior often repeats itself, even if the situation temporarily calms down.

→ 2.3 "I ask him to stop pressuring me."

Outcome: He backs off: "Okay... I'll try."

Message: This is a good sign, but it's important to pay attention whether he truly respects your 'no'.

Option 3: "I ignore him."

Outcome: He sends 5 more messages: “Why are you ignoring me?”, “Where are you?”, “Send me your location!”

New choices:

3.1 I reply briefly.

3.2 I block him.

3.3 I tell him that this scares me.

→ 3.1 “I reply briefly.”

Outcome: He calms down for a moment, but the next day he asks for your location again.

Message: Ignoring the behavior may calm him down momentarily, but it doesn't solve the controlling dynamic.

→ 3.2 “I block him.”

Outcome: He messages your friend: “Why isn't she answering me?”

Message: When controlling behavior starts extending toward your friends, it is a serious sign that you may need support.

→ 3.3 “I tell him that this scares me.”

Outcome: He apologizes: “I didn't want to scare you... I'm just insecure.”

Message: Insecurity is not an excuse for controlling behavior. It's good that you're honest, but it is important to pay attention to whether the behavior really changes.

Option 4: “I message a friend and ask what I should do.”

Outcome: Your friend tells you: “This is not normal. Let's think about what you can do.”

New choices:

4.1 I listen to my friend and set a boundary.

4.2 I get scared and send him my location.

4.3 I ask my friend not to get involved.

→ 4.1 “I set a boundary.”

Outcome: You message him: “I'm not comfortable with you asking for my location. Please stop.”

He responds with silence, but doesn't ask for your location again.

Message: This is a healthy step. Setting boundaries is an act of courage, not rudeness.

→ 4.2 “I send him my location.”

Outcome: Your friend tells you: “I know this is hard for you, but this will get worse.”

Message: “Fear is normal. “But controlling behavior often grows stronger when you give in.”

→ 4.3 “I ask my friend not to get involved.”

Outcome: You remain alone with the situation, and the messages become more frequent.

Message: You do not have to handle this alone. Controlling behavior is serious and deserves support.

Final message for the entire mini-game

Control is not love. Demanding your location, constantly checking on you, and acting suspicious are not signs of care—they are signs of digital stalking. You have the right to privacy, boundaries, and a relationship where someone does not control you. You are not alone.

Interactive mini-game: “Edited Video / Deepfake”

The introduction is the same as in the previous game.

Starting story

"It's morning. Your friend sends you a message: Hey... I think you should see this She sends you a link to a video that's circulating among students - your face is mounted on someone else's body."

You have 4 choices:

1. I open the video.
2. I ask my friend what's in the video.
3. I report the link immediately.
4. I ignore it and pretend it doesn't exist.

Option 1: “I open the video.”

Outcome: You watch the video and feel shocked, ashamed and scared. You start receiving messages from unknown profiles.

New choices:

- 1.1 I share it with my friend and ask for help.
- 1.2 I message the person who made it (if I know who it is).
- 1.3 I repost the video to prove it is fake.

→ 1.1 “I ask for help.”

Outcome:

Your friend helps you save evidence and report the video.

Message:

“It is brave not to handle this alone. The edited video is abuse, not your fault.”

→ 1.2 “I message the person who made it.”

Outcome: He replies: “What are you going to do to me?” Everyone already saw it.”

Message: Perpetrators are often encouraged when they see you are scared. It's not safe to communicate with them.

→ 1.3 “I repost the video and explain that it is fake.”

Outcome: The situation gets worse — the video spreads even more.

Message: “It's understandable that you want to prove it's fake. But sharing it again only increases the vicious circle.”

Option 2: “I ask my friend what's in the video.”

Outcome: She tells you: “It's not real. It's edited. But people are already sharing it.”

New choices:

- 2.1 I ask her to send it to me so I can see it.
- 2.2 I ask her to help me report it.
- 2.3 I ask her not to tell anyone.

→ 2.1 “I want to see it.”

Outcome: You watch it and feel even worse.

Message: "You do not have to watch the video to know that it is abuse. Your feelings are valid even without seeing it."

→2.2 "We report it together."

Outcome: This is the safest choice in this branch.

Message: "Support from a friend is a huge strength. Reporting is a brave step."

→2.3 "I don't want anyone to know."

Outcome: The silence protects the perpetrator. The video continues to circulate.

Message: "Fear is normal. But you do not have to handle this alone."

Option 3: "I report the link immediately."

Outcome: The platform is reviewing the case. →3.1 You save the evidence.

New choices:

3.1 I tell a trusted adult.

3.2 I block everyone who sends me the video.

3.3 I try to find out who created it.

→ 3.1 "I tell a trusted adult."

Outcome: This is the safest choice in the entire game.

Message: The edited video is serious abuse. It's brave to ask for support.

→ 3.2 "I block everyone."

Outcome: It's good that you're protecting yourself, but the evidence is important.

Message: Blocking people is part of the process, but it does not solve the problem on its own.

→3.3 "I investigate on my own."

Outcome: You become involved in a dangerous situation, and the perpetrator may become more aggressive.

Message: You don't have to find the perpetrator yourself. That's the job of adults and competent services.

Option 4: "I ignore him."

Outcome: The video continues to circulate. Some students start whispering.

New choices:

4.1 I confront the group sharing the video.

4.2 I ask a friend for help.

4.3 I withdraw and stop talking to anyone.

→4.1. "I confront them"

Outcome: The group mocks you: "Well, it's not real, what's your problem?"

Message: "You don't have to confront a group alone. That's too heavy a burden."

→4.2 "I ask for help."

Outcome: Your friend helps you save evidence and report the video.

Message: Support is key.

→4.3. "I withdraw"

Outcome: You feel even more isolated.

Message: Withdrawing is a normal reaction to shame, but it does not resolve the situation. You deserve support.

Final message for the entire mini-game

The edited video is abuse, not your fault. You did nothing wrong. There are safe steps you can take, and there are people who can help you and ways to protect yourself. You are not alone.”

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