

NEWSROUND

Ladies and gentlemen, today I want to address a critical issue that is affecting children in the Philippines: online sexual harassment. The internet has provided many opportunities for children to connect, learn, and play, but it has also brought new dangers, such as online predators who seek to exploit and harm children. Unfortunately, this is a growing problem in the Philippines, with one in three Filipino children at risk of experiencing online sexual abuse or harassment, according to a 2015 study by UNICEF.

Online sexual harassment is a severe problem, and it can take many forms, such as soliciting sexual content, grooming, and trafficking. It's not uncommon for predators to pose as friends, offer gifts or money, or blackmail children to send explicit photos or videos. These predators can also use online platforms to buy, sell, and distribute child pornography or arrange for sexual encounters with minors.

The impact of online sexual harassment on children is devastating. It can cause emotional and psychological trauma, affect their relationships and self-esteem, and put them at risk of physical harm. It can also lead to long-term consequences, such as depression, anxiety, and even suicide. Unfortunately, 98% of the sexually abused children in the Philippines are girls, according to the 2015 Child Protection Network Annual Report. It states that 87% of all cases of sexual violence are girls, 11.7% of which occurred in the family home. Young girls are far more affected by STDs and HIV/AIDS, and they are usually illegally recruited and victims of sexual discrimination.

Year after year, the situation is getting worse, and it is directly linked to a persistent culture of discrimination towards girls and women in families and society, as well as a lack of services and equipment enabling teenagers to be taken care of, especially girls living on the streets, who are victims of sexual abuse. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that 96% of 12-17-year-olds in the Philippines are online, and they all face the risk of online sexual abuse and exploitation.

A recent report estimates that at least 2 million children in the Philippines were subjected to online sexual abuse and exploitation in the past year alone. The ground-breaking Disrupting Harm in the Philippines research found that 20% of internet-using children aged 12-17 had experienced online sexual exploitation and abuse in the last year alone. Experiences reported by children included grooming, being offered gifts or money in exchange for sexual acts, and being threatened or blackmailed to engage in sexual acts.

This is a critical issue, and it requires urgent attention from all stakeholders. Parents, teachers, law enforcement agencies, and the government must work together to

address this problem. We need to educate children on how to stay safe online and how to identify and report online predators. We also need to provide counseling and support services to children who have been victims of online sexual harassment.

Furthermore, the government must take measures to strengthen laws and regulations against online sexual harassment and provide better resources and facilities to enable law enforcement agencies to tackle this issue effectively. It is our collective responsibility to protect our children from harm, and we cannot allow this problem to continue. Since, it exists in France too, According to a 2020 report from the French National Observatory for Violence in Schools, approximately 12% of French students reported experiencing cyberbullying at least once in their lifetime. A 2020 survey by the French Institute of Public Opinion found that 54% of French children between the ages of 11 and 18 had experienced online harassment at least once. Of those who experienced harassment, 29% reported feeling anxious or stressed, and 22% reported feeling helpless.

In conclusion, online sexual harassment is a grave issue that is affecting children in the Philippines. It is our responsibility to take action to protect our children from harm. Let us work together to create a safe and secure online environment for our children, where they can learn, play, and grow without fear of exploitation or abuse. Thank you.

Useful Vocabulary

STDs, or sexually transmitted diseases, are infections that are passed from one person to another through sexual contact. There are many different types of STDs, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, genital herpes, and human papillomavirus (HPV), among others.

HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus, is a virus that attacks the immune system, making it difficult for the body to fight off infections and diseases. HIV is most commonly spread through sexual contact, sharing needles or other injection drug equipment, or from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.

AIDS, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, is a condition caused by the advanced stage of HIV infection. It is characterized by a weakened immune system and a higher risk of developing certain infections and cancers. While there is currently no cure for HIV or AIDS, antiretroviral therapy (ART) can help people with HIV live longer, healthier lives and reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to others.