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# "He Won't Stop Texting Me, But They're Nice Texts": The Normalisation of Technology-Facilitated Abuse in Adolescent Relationships

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## Abstract

Technology is increasingly embedded within young people's intimate relationships, creating opportunities for coercion, surveillance, and control. Technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (TFVAWG) often emerges through behaviours that initially appear ordinary, caring, or desirable, making abuse difficult to recognise in its early stages. Drawing on a rapid evidence review and semi-structured interviews with practitioners from policing, education, healthcare, local government, and the third sector, this study examines how harmful digital behaviours become normalised within adolescent relationships. The analysis identified patterns in early warning signs, escalation pathways, and the social processes through which abuse may be obscured or minimised. Findings suggest that persistent messaging, requests for intimate images, digital monitoring, password sharing, and other forms of boundary testing are frequently interpreted by young people, and sometimes adults, as indicators of affection, trust, or relationship commitment rather than potential warning signs. Gendered peer cultures, relationship norms, and everyday digital practices further contribute to the normalisation of coercive and controlling behaviours, blurring distinctions between care and control and shaping how power is negotiated within adolescent relationships. Practitioners also highlighted challenges associated with rapidly evolving digital environments, including AI-generated abuse. Rather than conceptualising technology-facilitated abuse as a series of isolated incidents, the findings demonstrate how abusive behaviours can become embedded within everyday relationship practices. Understanding these processes is essential for strengthening gender-sensitive prevention, education, and responses to technology-facilitated abuse affecting young people.

**Keywords:** Adolescent Relationships; Coercive Control; Digital Abuse; Gender Norms; Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls