

SOCIAL WORK APPROACHES TO DEALING WITH CHILD PROTECTION

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Protecting Children in the digital Age
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Outline

- Introduction
- Some statistics
- Key questions
- Justification for internet use among children
- Common internet uses
- E-safety
- Online risks
- Online safety stakeholders
- Research and interventions



Introduction

- Digital media environments increasingly mediate a host of activities and experiences important to children's cognitive, emotional and social well-being and, thereby, their **rights to provision, protection, and participation**.
- In the global North there is already a considerable body of theory, evidence and expertise regarding children's online experiences. But it is important to acknowledge that this may not apply to children's experiences in the global South (Livingstone & Bulger, 2013; UNICEF, 2012; OECD, 2011b, 2012).

Some statistics

- According to UNICEF estimates (Livingstone, Carr & Byrne 2015) one third of Internet users globally are children, with the proportion of Internet users likely to be higher in lower income countries where the Internet is rapidly penetrating all spheres of public life.
- Statistics by the ITU show that in developing countries, young people aged between 15 and 24 outnumber the general population by 2 or 3 times (ITU 2013, 150).
- Children spend more than 20% of their time on internet.

Key questions

- When and how does use of the internet (and associated online, digital and networked technologies) contribute positively to children's lives, providing opportunities to benefit in diverse ways that contribute to their well-being?
- When and how is use of the internet (and associated online, digital and networked technologies) problematic in children's lives – amplifying the risk of harms that may undermine their well-being?
- **“It is possible that, as internet access spreads, children's experiences of risks and opportunities are becoming intensified”**



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- The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated educational inequalities among Children-limited opportunities to access digital technologies such as the Internet, computers and tablets.



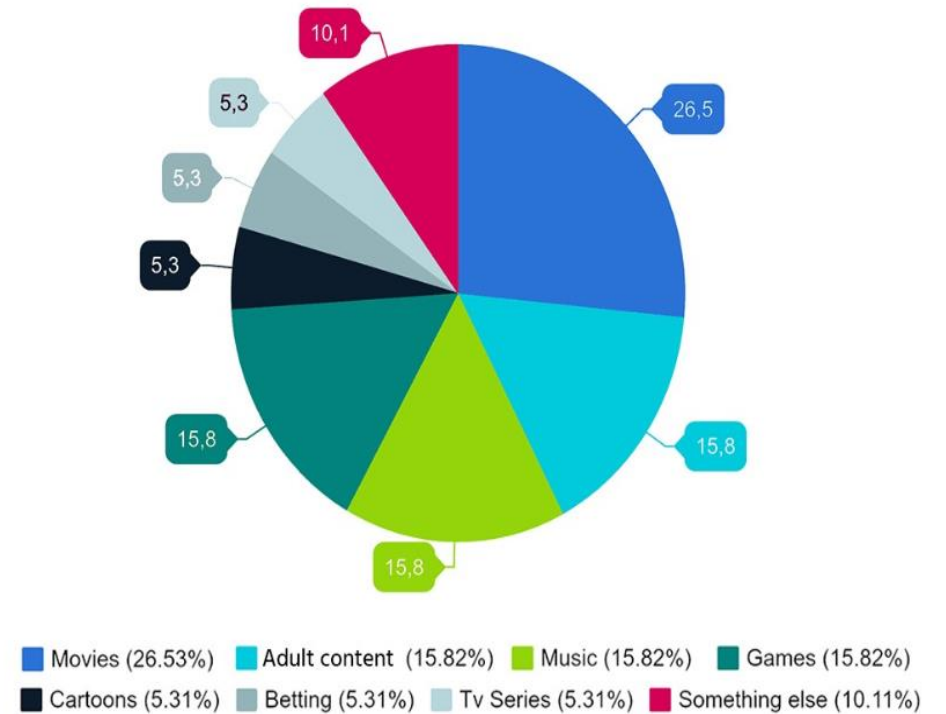
Justification for internet use among children

- As online access to anywhere is instantaneous, children can interact with anyone on the other side of the world.
- Contemporary society sees the availability of mobile phones, games systems, laptops and the plethora of other technologies as a necessity of modern society.
- Hence, it is evident that existence without technology is increasingly more difficult, as it has immersed all aspects of life and considered fundamental (Shillair et al., 2015; Yar, 2006, pp. 1-10; Willard, 2007, pp. 265-271).

Common internet uses

- Internet and digital technologies for educational purposes
- Recreation
- Communication
- Entertainment

How do children spend their time online?



E-safety

- E-safety encompasses not only the internet but also electronic communications via mobile phones, games consoles and wireless technology (Byron, 2008).
- There is a need to educate children and young people about the benefits, risks and responsibilities of using information technology (IT) and to develop safer online behaviours both in and out of schools (Wright & Lawson, 2005).



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- The protection of children and other vulnerable groups are not without its difficulty, **as the internet is an unmanaged, open communication channel which supported anyone sending messages, discussing ideas and publishing material with limited restrictions** (Duerager and Livingstone, 2012).
- There is a wide range of information and material available on the internet, some of which is published for an adult audience and can include violence and adult content which are unsuitable for children to access (Jütte et al., 2014).
- Nonetheless, these features, among others, make it an invaluable resource used by millions of people every day (Sharples et al., 2009).

Online risks

- Just as in the real world, groups or cliques can form online, and activities that start out as harmless fun can quickly escalate to something more sinister (Willard, 2007, pp. 265-271; Griffiths & Kuss, 2015).
- As e-commerce continues to grow, children could give out financial information, for example, credit card details of a parent, which could result in unexpected consequences and charges (Carter, 2008, Sullivan & Beech 2004, pp. 248-261).



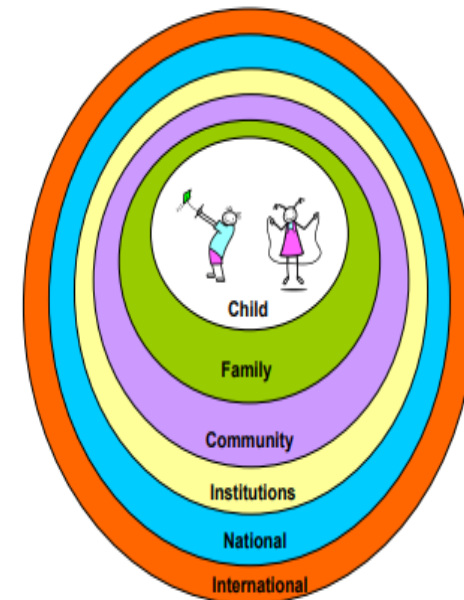
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- Sexual grooming, sexual exploitation and abuse
- Creation and distribution of child abuse images
- Online dimensions of child trafficking
- New threats to privacy, dignity, identity and reputation online
- Exposure to (diverse, extreme, illegal) pornography
- Personal data exploitation, misuse, unwarranted sharing or tracking in digital environments
- Hostility, hate, harassing and bullying content, contact and conduct online
- Inappropriate information and persuasion regarding self-harm, violence, suicide, pro-anorexia, drugs

Online safety stakeholders

- States
- Global Kids Online
- EU Kids Online
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- Families
- Researcher
- Internet society foundation
- Policy makers
- Children

Rings of Responsibility



Research and Interventions

- Tools for researchers:
 - a) Quantitative tools
 - b) Qualitative tools
 - c) Method guides

GLOBAL
KIDS
ONLINE

UN Convention on the rights of the Child

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child offers the most comprehensive human rights framework for advancing children's **protection** (from violence, abuse, harassment and exploitation); **provision** (or access to resources, knowledge, education and health information) and **participation** (civic engagement, freedom of expression and the right to privacy) in relation to digital technologies.
- Access to the Internet is closely linked to the ability to receive information and to exercise one's right of freedom of expression, and it can be regarded as a primary precondition for the enabling of the fulfilment of other digital rights.

Policy landscape

Child Protection System for Kenya



International and National policy landscape

- (a) child safety online (protection)
- (b) empowerment, awareness raising and digital literacy (provision) (OECD 2011; Baudouin et al. 2014).

International bodies

At the international level, there have been efforts to develop international regulatory bodies and forms of governance relating to the Internet, for example, through:

- the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)
- INHOPE
- Internet Governance Forum (IGF)
- The ITU.

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THANK YOU

