

CONCLUSIONS

This research on child online safety has aimed to shed light on the often misconceived relationship between the risks and opportunities faced by children and young people. Taking into account the perspectives

of both child protection advocates and advocates of freedom of information and expression, the preceding analysis focussed on the role of digital resilience in equipping children with the navigational tools required to stay safe when online, while also maximising the opportunities the internet provides.

As the results highlight, there is a positive correlation between exposure to risk and the ability to employ effective coping strategies, which suggests that increasing a young person's engagement with the online world fosters higher levels of digital resilience.

Moreover, due to the role of media skills and competencies in responding to risks online, it was found that young people with both high levels of internet literacy and a critical awareness of online content were able to effectively self-regulate their media usage. This also has a positive impact on the young person's digital resilience, and in his/her ability to adapt to and avoid stressful situations online.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends a stronger balance between security and freedom with a focus on initiatives fostering child online resilience through access and experience instead of technical and legislative restrictions. In particular, this study recommends to:

- 1 Promote the inclusion of enhanced digital literacy and internet safety education into school curricula from early childhood education and care, and to ensure the provision of ICT training for teachers and educators.
- 2 Foster extra-curricular activities aimed at promoting responsible and mutually respectful internet use for young people.
- 3 Improve and promote the existing hotline support services as a more reliable means to convey child concerns and to report problems.
- 4 Minimise the impact of overreaching content filters that might undermine a child's access to information and restrict a child's ability to learn, explore, and build resilience through active engagement with the online world.

THE RESEARCH

This multinational research explores the role of digital resilience (the ability to prevent and respond to online risk) in providing children with the skills and characteristics needed to navigate the internet safely.

Analysing the findings from children aged 9-18 in Nigeria, Kenya, Israel, South Africa, Turkey, and Russia; it investigates the ways in which young people can be encouraged to be resilient users.

ABOUT THINKYOUNG

ThinkYoung is the first think tank dedicated to young people. Founded in 2007, ThinkYoung has expanded to have offices in Brussels, Geneva and Hong Kong. It is a not for profit organisation with the aim of making the world a better place for young people, by involving them in the decision making process and by providing decision makers with high quality research on youth conditions. Think Young produces research papers, surveys, documentary movies and education programs.

As of today, ThinkYoung projects have reached over 600,000 young people.

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Think Young
We lobby for young people

DIGITAL RESILIENCE EMPOWERING YOUTH ONLINE

Practices for a safer internet use in the Middle East Africa and Russia Region: Nigeria, Kenya, Israel, South Africa, Turkey and Russia.



INTRO

The following overview presents the key findings from children in response to a survey investigating the role of digital resilience in positively impacting children's online engagement. Shedding light on how a digitally resilient young person responds to potentially risky online content, the research investigates the ways in which young people can be encouraged to be resilient users when online by analysing data from the following countries in the Middle East Africa


and Russia region: Nigeria, Kenya, Israel, South Africa, Turkey, and Russia.

The survey targeted children and young people between the ages of 9-18 and was administered in two parts: the first directly to respondents above the age of 16, and the second with the consent of parents (9-16 years*).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In response to the growing policy debate between online risk and opportunity, the following research aimed to shed light on child attitudes in dealing with online risk. Moreover, a focus was placed on integrating safety concerns with the promotion of a positive uptake of online opportunities for children, through the concept of 'digital resilience'.

Based on the survey administered, this research has first measured levels of digital resilience by analysing the responses adopted by young people to varying online risks. From these results, it has then sought to **investigate how children prevent and react to online risk, taking into account:**

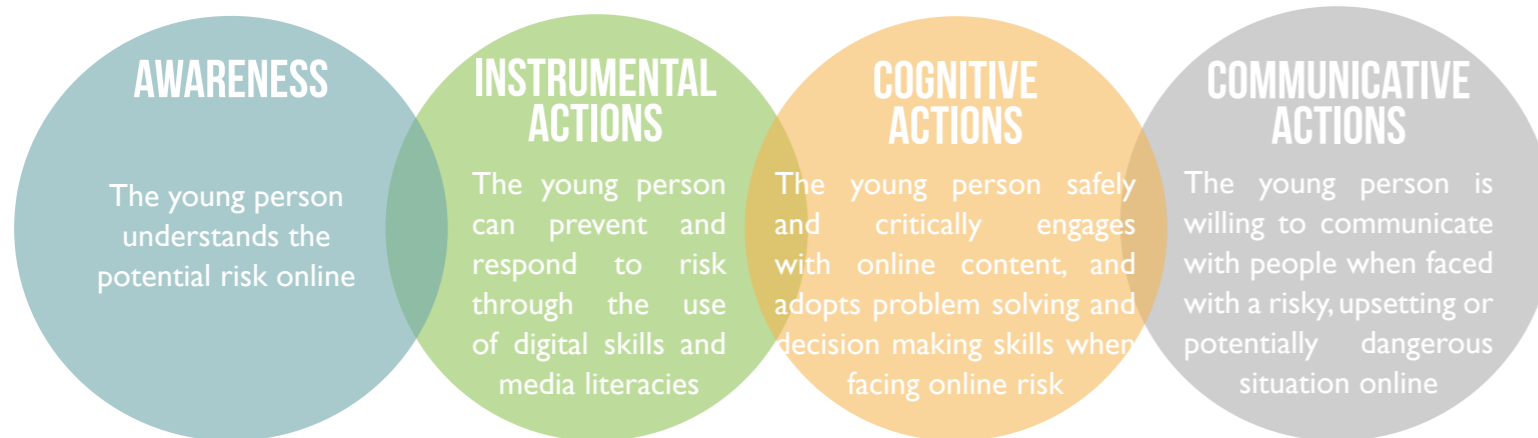
 The impact of awareness and self-regulation in understanding the potential for risk, and in engaging with online content in a resilient manner.

 How children and young people can enhance their levels of resilience through communication and from seeking advice.


 The role of media skills and digital literacies in improving resilience, and the types of responses used by technologically adept young people.


WHAT IS DIGITAL RESILIENCE?

Drawing on the most prevalent scientific literature on resilience, the report presents the fundamental characteristics of the ideal digitally resilient young person, encapsulated by:



The concept of digital resilience includes both a preventive and reactive phase where at first young people are able to self-regulate and avoid online risk and, when faced with risk, are able to employ coping mechanisms in order to respond to the risky or harmful situation in a problem focused manner.

 **PREVENTIVE RESILIENCE**
Resilience strategies employed to avoid risk including instrumental (using technical skills to avoid risk) and behavioural (avoiding risk through specific safety behaviours and online awareness).

 **REACTIVE RESILIENCE**
Resilience strategies adopted after coming into contact with an online risk. These include:

- 1 Instrumental (using technical skills).
- 2 Confrontational (confronting the source of the risk).
- 3 Communicative (seeking advice).
- 4 Disengagement (ignoring the risk).

*In gaining parental permission for the 9-16 year olds a very clear statement of intent was given to parents/guardians in advance, outlining the exact purpose of the study, sharing the exact questions and giving assurances that the data would be treated anonymously.

OVERALL FINDINGS

Amongst the preventive resilience actions, young people are likely to use instrumental/technical skills, with 78% likely to modify privacy settings to avoid unwanted contacts, and 64% likely to have software to avoid unwanted content. Amongst these, 59% had been exposed to this risk. Moreover, 89% of children are also likely to keep their password completely secret.

Similarly, when responding to risk young people are also confident using digital skills, with 58% who would change their password when personal information is misused, and 36% who would report the problem online. 17% of the children surveyed had experienced this risk.

While 21% had experienced cyber-bullying amongst the top reactions in response to this risk, 51% of all children would block and report a potential cyber-bully and 48% would delete the contact.

Children are comfortable in both disengaging from risk and communicating risk, with 40% who would initially ignore a stranger who contacted them online, and 29% who would seek advice from a parent/guardian. 30% reported to have experienced this.

Young people show a critical awareness in their use of the internet, with 72% being careful about what they say or post online, and 64% avoiding suspicious material.

Young people above 16 years old are more likely to use technical/digital skills to respond to risk than their younger fellows.

Frequent use of the internet (time and range of uses) increases risk exposure yet builds resilience as greater internet use fosters increased navigational skills and awareness.

Children are likely to keep their password completely secret



Children change their password when personal information is misused



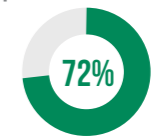
Children would block and report a potential cyber-bully



Children would initially ignore a stranger who contacted them online



Children are careful about what they say or post online



THE ONLINE RESILIENT YOUNG PERSON

The graphical representation below illustrates how well children in the Middle East Africa and Russia region fare in comparison to the ideal digitally resilient young person, who would score 3 points in each area of resilience. Each child obtains a score from 0 to 3 depending on how many cognitive, instrumental and communicative strategies he or she is likely to adopt. As the scores highlight, children in the MEAR region are most likely to adopt cognitive actions in response to risk.

