USING MOBILE APPS TO PROMOTE CHILDREN AND YOUTH ONLINE SAFETY

Advice and support needs from a child and youth centred perspective

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The Apps4eSafety Project

**Object:** study the viability of using mobile apps to promote children and youth online safety

**Main objectives:**

i) understand children and youth needs and motivations in regard to online safety issues, in terms of guidance and support, from their own perspectives

ii) analyse how mobile phone application may respond to these concerns and expectations
Children and Youth Online Safety

i) when involved in situations causing discomfort, doubt or distress, youngsters might find it difficult to ask for guidance and help from adults, fearing reprimands and punishment (youngsters frequently confide and rely on peers, rather than parents or teachers)

ii) from a child and youth centred perspective, that is, considering their own motivations, agendas and peer cultures, advice and support needs, in regard to these issues, remain fairly unclear
‘Screen time’ is an obsolete concept. As digital media become integrated into all aspects of daily life, it is more important to consider the context and content of digital media use, and the connections children and young people (and parents) are making, or not, than to consider arbitrary rules about time.
Online Safety Apps

- Issues addressed: cyberbullying, inadequate content, child tracking, time limiting, broader educational approaches on digital etiquette and safety.

- Mainly parental controls and pedagogical approaches. Only two apps prompted an active participation of children, eliciting their autonomy needs, and/or parent-child interactions.

- Review papers (USA) argue that, while a parental control approach is overwhelmingly present, these apps register low use (no review of apps from a European perspective was identified).
Research is needed to

i) find ways to reach out to children and youth at an early stage of a potential harmful online experience, particularly those at higher risk of harm;

ii) produce and disseminate children and youth centred guidance and means of assistance, capable of addressing youngsters’ specific needs and expectations;

iii) Supporting positive approaches, that foster communication and collaboration between parents and children, namely in the case of online safety mobile apps.
Methodology

**Approach:** Research with children [1] / participatory methods

**Target-group:** 8-14 years old

**Contexts:** informal settings (e.g. community centres, youth associations)

**Techniques:**
- focus group (5 so far, 10-11 years old)
- thematic and discourse analysis

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https://osf.io/cxjeh/
Needs from children's perspectives – preliminary ideas

“safety”

identity
belonging
social capital
peer norms

https://osf.io/cxjeh/
contacting friends

sharing daily experiences

watching /making cool videos

who's watching

https://osf.io/cxjeh/
Building bridges?

- how to share safely – **not sharing is not an option**
- how to distinguish **types of strangers** and what/how to share with each of them
- differentiate **types of personal data** and what/when/how to share them
- unpack the celebrity cult ...
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