Subjective versus objective knowledge of online safety/dangers as predictors of children’s perceived online safety and attitudes towards e-safety education in the United Kingdom

# Details

## Year

2019

## DOI

10.1080/17482798.2019.1697716

## Issued

2019

## Language

English

## Volume

14

## Issue

3

## Start Page

## End Page

## Authors

Macaulay P.;Boulton M.;Betts L.;Boulton L.;Camerone E.;Down J.;Hughes J.;Kirkbride C.;Kirkham R.

## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Journal of Children and Media

## Publisher

Informa UK Limited

## Topics

* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Risks and harms
* Learning
* Literacy and skills

## Sample

329 children aged 8–11 years from five primary schools in the UK

## Implications For Educators About

Digital citizenship

# Abstract

Children are spending increasing amounts of time online prompting practitioners and parents to raise concerns about their online
safety. However, the impact of children’s subjective versus objective knowledge on their perceived online safety and attitudes
towards e-safety education remain unclear. Questionnaires were
used to assess children’s (N = 329, aged 8–11 years) perceived
online safety, subjective and objective knowledge of online
safety/dangers, and attitudes to e-safety education. While participants generally reported feeling safe online and perceived that they
had a good awareness of online dangers and how to avoid them
(subjective knowledge), they tended to be poor at articulating for
themselves exactly what those dangers were and how they personally could elude them (objective knowledge). This was especially
true of boys and younger children. Moreover, only subjective
knowledge of online safety/dangers significantly predicted perceived online safety. Together, these findings suggest that some
children may think that they know how to stay safe online but lack –
or at least be unable to articulate – objective knowledge that could
actually keep them safe. Consequently, there is a need to assess
children’s objective knowledge of online safety/dangers and to
provide appropriate education for children who currently lack it.

# Outcome

"what
children think they know about online dangers/how to stay safe online corresponds only
weakly with what they can actually articulate about these things. Moreover, while the
overall level of subjective knowledge of these issues was high (3.44 on a 1–4 scale),
participants could only articulate on average about two distinct responses to suggest they
actually had that knowledge. These results suggest a degree of complacency that might leave some young people vulnerable online and make risks more likely to lead to harm for
them... while boys had significantly lower objective knowledge of online safety/dangers than girls, they also felt significantly safer than girls. While
both subjective and objective e-safety knowledge together significantly predicted perceived safety, it was only subjective knowledge that did so uniquely (i.e., after controlling
the variance it shared with objective knowledge). Again, this might suggest that some
young people are complacent, i.e., “I think I know about online dangers and how to avoid
them, and so I can feel safe online”. The more desirable situation (i.e., “I do know about
online dangers and how to avoid them, and so I can feel safe online”) was not apparent in
present study and suggests e-safety educators should strive to promote more objective
knowledge of online dangers and how to stay safe while using the internet." (Macaulay et al., 2019: 387-8).