The Roles of Individual Characteristics and Liberalism in Intentional and Unintentional Exposure to Online Sexual Material Among European Youth: A Multilevel Approach

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* Risks and harms
* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Social mediation
* Literacy and skills
* Digital and socio-cultural environment
* Content-related issues

## Sample

This study draws on the survey data collected in the international research project EU Kids Online II (25 European countries, where approximately 1,000 children aged 9– 16 years were interviewed together with their parents in each participating country (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK).

The pool of subjects who responded to questions about exposure to online sexual material consisted of European children aged 11–16 who use the internet (N = 18,709, boys = 50 %). The present study was based on 11,712 participants (girls = 50 %) who responded to all targeted questions.

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Creating a safe environment for children online

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine how young
people are intentionally or unintentionally exposed to sexual
material on the internet. A sample from the EU Kids Online II
project, including youth (N = 11,712, 11–16 years, 50 % girls)
from 25 countries, was used to examine predictors of unintentional
exposure to online sexual material (EOSM) via pop-up
images and intentional EOSM on adult/X-rated websites.
Using a multilevel analysis, we considered several individuallevel
predictors (psychosocial characteristics, patters of internet
use, and parental mediation), one country-level predictor (mean
cultural liberalism of the country), and cross-level interactions.
Except for gender, the study did not identify any specific
patterns of individual-level predictors for unintentional and
intentional EOSM: age, sensation seeking, sexual intercourse,
amount of time spent online, level of digital skills, and degree
of restrictive mediation predicted both types of EOSM.
Intentional EOSM was more often reported by boys, while
unintentional EOSM occurred to a similar degree among boys
and girls. Finally, living in a country with a stronger culture of
liberalism predicted a greater likelihood of intentional but not
unintentional EOSM and also was associated with smaller
gender differences in intentional EOSM.

# Outcome

"With the exception of gender, similar individual characteristics, including patterns of internet use, were linked to both distinctive forms of exposure to online sexual material (EOSM). Predominately older youth, those who had had experience with sexual intercourse, those who scored higher on sensation seeking scale, who spent an increased amount of time online, and who had developed digital skills, were more likely to report both forms of EOSM. Restrictive parental mediation seemed to inhibit both intentional and unintentional EOSM. For unintentional EOSM, the effect of this mediation strategy remained stable across all the countries studied, but for intentional EOSM, variation across countries was observed. Living in countries with a stronger tendency toward liberalism is not associated with unintentional EOSM. On the other hand, this cultural context affects not only the prevalence of intentional EOSM, but also gender differences. The more liberal the country is, the less likely boys predominate over girls in intentionally accessing sexually
explicit websites." (Ševčíková at al., 2014, pp. 113-114)