Ways to avoid problematic situations and negative experiences: Children’s preventive measures online

# Details

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* Internet usage, practices and engagement
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## Sample

EU Kids Online held 113 individual interviews and 57 focus groups with children aged 9 to 16. In
total, 374 children (187 boys and 187 girls) from nine different European countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Spain, UK) participated

# Abstract

This article maps the various preventive measures 9 to 16-year-olds
may take when confronted with problematic online situations, and it assesses
how they differentiate preventive strategies based on online risk types. Boys
and girls are compared and potential changes in preventive measures as they
grow older are discussed. The reality of preventive measures is complex: Young
people adopt different types of preventive measures depending on the perceived seriousness and potential harm of the risky situation at hand. Proactive
problem-preventing measures are favored while support seeking is clearly a less
common strategy in preventing unpleasant situations online. Cognitive strategies such as planning, strategizing and reflecting are also quite common among
children’s intent on avoiding risky online experiences, and they can spur them
on from mere awareness to concrete preventive action.

# Outcome

"Across all types of risks, the dominant preventive measure is proactive problem-preventing strategies (avoidance strategies tackling the potential stressor and finding an effective way to avoid the problem). This comes as no suprise since preventive measures are virtually always active. The intention to undertake preventive action is often based on stories and advice from others, whether or not in combination with previous, direct or indirect experiences. As children’s range of reactive coping strategies becomes more elaborate as they grow older, it is the oldest age group in our study (14- to 16-year-olds) that evidence the most thorough preventive behavior. As children grow older, online communication practices and activities on SNS are equally on the rise. Correspondingly, their proactive preventive behaviors towards risks related to SNS, online communication and meeting new people online become heightened. Although both boys and girls acknowledge the importance of changing privacy settings as a protection against disturbing incidents online, the results indicate that girls are more communicative in both preventive and reactive contexts. They are more likely to seek social support when faced with problematic situations. That is assumed to be because it is socially more acceptable for girls to show insecurity." (Vandoninck d’Haenens, 2014, pp. 278-280)