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EU Kids Online III

New findings on online resilience and how children cope with online risks.

Vulnerable children more likely to be upset in the online world

Children who find it difficult to manage their emotions, conduct and social behaviour 'in the offline world' are more likely to be upset in 'the online world', according to the latest report from EU Kids Online.

Most children do not feel bothered when confronted with online risks but children with psychological problems are less resilient; online risks upset them more often and more intensely. Moreover they tend to be passive instead of actively trying to solve the problem.

Researchers from EU Kids Online project, based at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), investigated the effect of three online risks: exposure to sexual content, online bullying and 'sexting' (exchanging sexual messages). They found that across all ages, children who are self-confident and free from emotional and social problems are less likely to feel bothered by these risks. Among those with psychological problems, the intensity of harm related to online risks is stronger and any negative emotions remain for a longer period of time.

The report also concludes that girls are more sensitive towards online sexual risks such as pornography and 'sexting'.

Children who reported feeling bothered online were asked about their responses to the upsetting event. Across all three risks, talking to somebody is the most popular coping strategy. When bothered by sexual content, 53% of UK children surveyed talk about it. This rises to 60% for sexting and 77% for online bullying.

When confronted with contact risks such as online bullying and sexting, about 4 in 10 children use problem-solving strategies such as deleting messages or blocking senders. A rather passive response is simply going offline for a while, a strategy used by 18% (sexting) to 25% (sexual images) of the children who felt bothered.

Most children use a combination of two or three strategies; especially deleting messages and blocking senders.

Dr Leslie Haddon at the LSE, a member of the team coordinating the survey, explains:

"The use of coping strategies in part depends on a child's psychological well-being. Children with low self-belief and children with psychological problems respond more passively or fatalistically to online risks that have upset them. They hope the problem will disappear spontaneously or go offline for a while rather than taking steps such as deleting messages or blocking senders".

The researchers offered a number of recommendations for parents and teachers. In general, supporting and monitoring children's online activity rather than restricting it tends to be more appropriate for stimulating children's online resilience.

Other recommendations include: teaching children about proactively deleting messages and blocking senders; help children to build self-confidence; paying special attention to girls coping

with online sexual risks, and promoting internet access and use among adults - as parents who are frequent internet users themselves feel more confident in guiding their children on the internet.

/end.

For more information:

The report "*How to cope and build online resilience?*" surveys European children's negative experiences online, and how they cope with this. The study is an in-depth analysis of those children who reported being bothered by an online risk at least once (971 children for sexual content, 1290 children for online bullying and 567 children for sexting).

For the full report, see

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20III/Reports/Copingonlineresilience.pdf>

For more information please contact Dr Leslie Haddon at l.g.haddon@lse.ac.uk or see www.eukidsonline.net

Information about the project and survey:

The EU Kids Online project aims to enhance knowledge of European children's and parents' experiences and practices regarding risky and safer use of the internet and new online technologies, and thereby to inform the promotion of a safer online environment for children. The project is funded by the EC Safer Internet Programme (SI-2010-TN-4201001).

EU Kids Online conducted a face-to-face, in-home survey among 25,000 9-16 year-old internet users and their parents in 25 countries, using a stratified random sample and self-completion methods in the case of sensitive questions.

Countries included in the survey are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK. In addition the project includes research teams from Croatia, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Russia, Slovakia and Switzerland.

In the UK the partner is the LSE

For more findings, see Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online. Other reports and technical survey details are at www.eukidsonline.net