EXPLORING PARENTAL PERSPECTIVES ON ONLINE SEXUAL RISKS AND HARM

Simone Eelmaa

University of Tartu

Abstract. Parents have a central role in mediating and teaching children about different risks. Parental awareness and beliefs significantly influence their prevention efforts. While the existing literature demonstrates that parents tend to be less aware of the different online risks children encounter, there is a considerable gap in understanding the intricacies of parental perception of both risks and harm. This study explores parental perspectives on online sexual risks and harm. Data were collected from 22 parents during focus group interviews (n=6) combined with activity-oriented questions. The findings suggest that parents perceive (the presence of) risk as something related to either parenting or specific child-related characteristics. Also, the level of harm was related to the presence of the child's (sexual) agency. According to parents, children with a sexual agency are less likely to be harmed than those without sexual agency. The study provides new considerations to inform policy responses and education program design.

Keywords: children, online risks, online sexual risk, parents, risk and harm, risk perception

1. Introduction

Online sexual risks (OSRs) are risks accompanying online practices with a sexual component that can either happen voluntarily (e.g., sexting) or involuntarily (e.g., sextortion). Livingstone and Smith (2014) offer another typology dividing online risks into three categories – risk from content (e.g., exposure to harmful sexual content), risk from contact (e.g., online grooming), and risk from conduct (e.g., initiating abuse). OSRs include but are not limited to online grooming, sexual solicitation, sextortion, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, sexually explicit content, child sexual abuse material (CSAM), sexting, and risky online sexual behavior, which could further develop into offline abuse (e.g., forced sexual intercourse). Online risks in both forms, risks to children and risks in which children engage (one does not exclude the other), are present in all virtual and online environments children use, from social networking sites (SNSs) to even gaming platforms (Byrne et al. 2016, Nakatsui 2018, Poudel 2018, Pujazon-Zazik et al. 2012).

While OSRs may have the potential to result in harm, it is worth noting that risk does not equal harm since harm implies adverse outcomes (actual physical or mental damage), and exposure to risk (the occurrence of an event that is associated with a probability of harm) does not automatically mean that one is harmed (Aven and Renn 2009, Livingstone 2010). Furthermore, research suggests that exposure to risk builds resilience (Livingstone and Görzig 2014). Thus, considering risk and harm synonymous would limit our understanding of children's online activities and exclude the positive experiences and learning opportunities online risks may entail (ibid.). The relationship between risk and harm is intricate and may be affected by various factors, including individual characteristics and environmental conditions (Livingstone and Smith 2014, Slavtcheva-Petkova et al. 2015). At the same time, we know that not all children who come across OSRs experience harm (Byrne et al. 2016).

Risk perception influences behavior (Ferrer and Klein 2015), particularly from the parents' perspective, as they are the primary agents in mediating and teaching children about different risks. Unfortunately, parental prevention efforts are often driven by misconceptions about child sexual abuse (CSA) and online grooming (AlRammah et al. 2019) or only focusing on teaching children about 'stranger danger' (Babatsikos 2011, Chen and Chen 2005, Deblinger et al. 2010). Understanding parental knowledge and perspectives on online sexual risks can provide valuable input for researchers, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders.

The current study builds on a previous study (Eelmaa 2021), where the author explored parental beliefs on the risk of child sexual abuse. As the data from that study revealed clear and distinctive patterns in the parental conceptualization of offline sexual risks compared to OSRs, that finding warrants further investigation. With that in mind, this study **aims** to explore parental perceptions of online sexual risks to children and the perceived resulting harm from such risks. For this purpose, answers to the following **research questions** are sought: (1) What do parents consider as online sexual risks to children? (2) In parents' mind, where and how do such risks occur? (3) How do parents view the harm related to these risks?

1.1. Online sexual risks and harm

Online risks are perceived as something that potentially creates danger for children when they engage in online-related activities (Staksrud 2016: 81). What specifically is considered a risk is highly dependent on the culture, the context of the discussion, and the people holding the discussion (ibid.). OSRs are risks accompanying online practices that have a sexual component. Children and adolescents may face a range of OSRs, such as grooming, sextortion, or exposure to inappropriate content (Livingstone and Smith 2014, Wolak et al. 2006). The proliferation of technological developments has further oriented and advanced emerging forms of OSRs, such as computer-generated CSAM or live-stream sexual abuse (Europol 2020). The EU Kids Online survey established that 15% of children between the ages of 9–16 received sexual messages online (Livingstone et al. 2011). In a more recent survey of 1,500 young people in the United States, approximately one third reported experiencing some form of online sexual coercion or unwanted exposure to explicit content (Ybarra and Thompson 2018). According to EU Kids Online, the number of experiences with sexual content increases with age (Tsaliki et al. 2014). All in all, we know that many children have encountered some type of OSRs.

The concept of risk can be challenging to define, as the term has different meanings across various academic disciplines. For this study, risk is defined as any event that could result in harm, with harm referring to actual negative outcomes (Aven and Renn 2009, Livingstone 2010). Measuring harm is even more complex as the type or severity of harm is not unambiguously linked to specific risks. What adds to the confusion is that harm is not always coherently defined in studies either. For instance, a cross-sectional study relying on data from a four-year research project (N=4453) on online risks to children surmised that 25.4% (n=1108) reported receiving at least one sexual request,[1] and while 71.2% perceived the requests as pleasant or common, 28.8% perceived the requests as bothersome (Kerstens and Stol 2014). Hence, we know that almost a third of children were bothered by sexual requests, but that does not tell us much about the harm they encountered.

Byrne and others (2016) evaluated children's experiences of harm by asking them if anything happened online that bothered or upset them in some way (for example, made them feel uncomfortable or scared). The study revealed that children find many issues concerning, including internet scams, pornographic pop-up adverts, hurtful behavior, unpleasant or scary news or pictures, discrimination, harassment, and people sharing too much personal information online (Byrne et al. 2016). Again, these findings inform us of online risks that have harmed children but do not tell us much about the type or severity of the harm experienced.

Studies further show that some children are more vulnerable than others after feeling bothered by a potentially harmful situation online (Vandoninck et al. 2010). The available evidence suggests that several factors are relevant in determining the likelihood of harm resulting from online risks. These include personality traits such

---

[1] These include questions about sex, requests for sexual intercourse, questions about genitals, requests to undress on a webcam, or a combination of previous.

as thrill-seeking, low self-esteem, and psychological difficulties, as well as social factors like peers or lack of parental support and digital factors such as online habits, digital literacy, and features of specific online platforms (Livingstone and Smith 2014). It seems that children who are already vulnerable in offline contexts are more prone to experiencing harm from online risks. Livingstone and Görzig (2014) found that older children, children with psychological difficulties, children who seek sensations, and children with risky online and offline behavior have a higher risk of encountering sexual messages online; that said, the variates are not identical with predictors of harm. The likelihood of harm was elevated with girls, younger children, and children with psychological difficulties. At the same time, sensation-seeking was linked to a lower probability of harm, suggesting that a higher degree of sensation-seeking builds resilience to harm.

Of course, there is evidence of a variety of detrimental physical, emotional, psychological, and social outcomes (Copp et al. 2021, Slavtcheva-Petkova et al. 2015, Jonsson 2015, Say et al. 2015); however, most such studies focus on OSRs that fall under the sexual abuse umbrella, and hence, do not cover OSRs that do not constitute sexual abuse. Then again, harm from sexual abuse is far more self-evident than from other online sexual risks. A categorization of some type would help us to better understand and evaluate harm.[2] For example, feeling uncomfortable presumably does not equal to detrimental outcomes such as self-harming or depression, yet the term 'harm' seems to cover all three examples.

Without any distinction, it is easy to exacerbate the already existing societal fears and anxieties surrounding the topic.[3] The intersection of sexuality and the online world is complex and often misunderstood (Tiidenberg and Van Der Nagel 2020). As Sonia Livingstone pointed out, research on children's online experiences can sometimes seem like a race to uncover the scariest findings.[4] Moreover, the so-called scary findings can easily be used to distort public perception of the issue, cause an overreaction to potential risks and result in policies that are less evidence-based and more emotion-driven. The central narratives present in discussions about sexuality and the online world paint a worrisome picture colored with fear and danger (Tiidenberg and Van Der Nagel 2020).

---

[2] Perhaps a good starting point could be Ofcom's generic model of harm, where different types of harmful outcomes for adults were divided between four main categories, i.e., psychological, physical, economic, and societal harm. – "How people are harmed online: testing a model from a user's perspective". *Ofcom* (2022), pp. 23–26. Available online at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/online-research/how-people-are-harmed-online>. Accessed on 24.03.2023.

[3] Though not specifically about children, Tiidenberg and Van Der Nagel (2020), in the *Trifecta of anxieties* chapter, provide a compelling explanation about the underlying connotations driving the moral panics about sex and social media. Particularly interesting is their position on shaming as the main tool of moral panics, framing it as a form of social control that regulates behavior and maintains (or at least is meant to maintain) the tacit order of society.

[4] A presentation titled "Online risk and harm in childhood: a critical analysis and new findings" given by S. Livingstone in a video (2012). Available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCqyaV3b-DY>. Accessed on 24.03.2023.

The protectionist agenda surrounding the topic – though the goal of the agenda itself unquestionably laudable – can inadvertently amplify the perceived danger and risk associated with it, potentially hindering meaningful discussion and exploration. It is essential to recognize that alongside risks, online environments offer a multitude of positive experiences and learning opportunities, and that not all encounters with online risks lead to harm, particularly given that the current pool of knowledge shows a link between experiencing risks and developing resilience. More studies are needed that clearly distinguish risk from harm (and even harm from harm) and investigate those separately without the premise that any sexual risk is always inherently harmful.

1.2. Parental knowledge and perception on OSRs

When discussing risk management, we must distinguish between risks and the perception of risks. Risk assessment involves scientific and technical evaluations of the likelihood and potential consequences of an event or a hazard (Klinke and Renn 2002). On the other hand, risk perception is more personal and subjective, shaped by individual experiences, their level of knowledge, emotional responses, and so forth (Renn 2004). Understanding risk perception is crucial since perception governs decision-making and can have significant implications for risk management strategies. In short – our way of perceiving risks dictates our behavior.

Parental knowledge of online possibilities and activities of adolescence is identified as a protective factor, yet research suggests that parents tend to underestimate their child's engagement in risky behaviors as well as their experiences of harm online (Liau et al. 2008, Livingstone and Bober 2004, Sukk and Soo 2018, Symons et al. 2017). Similarly, Byrne and others (2014) found that parents underestimate risks, such as talking to strangers and exposure to sexually explicit material. A more recent study demonstrated that more than 20% of parents are entirely unaware of their child being worried about something they saw on the internet (Soldatova and Rasskazova 2019).

In a study examining the awareness and mediation strategies of parents with children between the ages of 11 and 14, the awareness of online risks such as sexual solicitation, online victimization, and graphic sexual content was frequently expressed. Nevertheless, as many parents had such experiences with unintentional exposure to online sexual content, e.g., from mistyping a word, their knowledge is likely related to their own experiences, but not from trying to enhance their digital literacies and make sure to be up to date with current online risks (Allison 2018). The same study highlighted pornography as one of the main reasons parents restrict their children's social media access. Sorbring (2014) found that parents worry more about the safety of their daughters online, including the possibility of them encountering dangerous individuals, being bullied, or distressed by online content. Thus, it seems that the perceptions of risk and harm differ between boys and girls encountering different online risks.

When discussing parental prevention efforts, prior studies have revealed that parents tend to judge child sexual abuse as a low risk to their children (Chen and Chen

2005, Collins 1995, Collins 1996, Finkelhor 1984) and, due to such beliefs, do not engage in CSA prevention activities or discussion with their children (Collins 1995, Eelmaa 2021). Besides the reluctance to discuss the matter with their children due to low-risk assessment (Collins 1996), some parents have insufficient knowledge or lack confidence (Walsh et al. 2012), and some fear that discussion about CSA would cause children to know too much about sex (Chen et al. 2007).

Similar patterns are seen with online risks. A 2019 study found that 84% of parents worldwide are worried about their children's online safety, yet on average, parents spend talking to their children about online safety a total of 46 minutes through their entire childhood (Kaspersky 2019). According to parents, the most harmful online threats are sexual or violent content, developing internet addiction, and receiving anonymous messages or content inciting them to carry out violent or inappropriate activities (ibid.).

Another issue is that misconceptions regarding child sexual abuse and online grooming are still prevailing. For example, one still-common practice is teaching children mainly about stranger danger (Babatsikos 2011, Chen and Chen 2005, Chen et al. 2007, Deblinger et al. 2010). A strong focus is on conveying the possible consequence of kidnapping as a result of sharing information or establishing relationships with strangers (Iglesias et al. 2015). This reflects a common misconception that sexual predators are mainly strangers who prey on children, when in fact, friends and other acquaintances make up a substantial portion of perpetrators (Bahali et al. 2010). A report from showed that sexual abuse in 30 to 50 percent of cases was perpetrated by other adolescents, in most cases, by boys (Vizard et al. 2007). In general, these numbers match with online forms of sexual offending against children (Sklenarova et al. 2018). Henceforth, parents are not giving children adequate messages about online safety. Furthermore, Collins (1995) found that some parents feel that if they are good enough parents and can keep their children safe, they do not need to teach their children about safety or other prevention matters.

When it comes to the potential risks that children may face, these risks are often magnified by adults' wish to protect. Meanwhile, previous research has shown that people tend to overestimate the likelihood of low-probability events and underestimate the likelihood of high-probability events (Kahneman and Tversky 2103). For instance, parents may perceive the threat of online predators grooming their child as greater than the risk of their child bullying others online (Staksrud 2016: 71). That notion deserves some consideration. On the one hand, parents are largely unaware of the things their children do online and what bothers them; on the other hand, they overestimate certain risks (e.g., kidnapping by a stranger) and take action based on those estimations (e.g., talk to their children about stranger danger).

Allowing the anxieties surrounding the topic to navigate may lead to harmful policies that restrict digital freedoms and perpetuate unhelpful stereotypes, ultimately failing to empower young people to navigate the online realm with confidence and responsibility (Staksrud 2016: 159-163, Tiidenberg and Van Der Nagel 2020). Parents have a substantial role in preventing online risk behavior and harmful online experiences (e.g., Livingstone and Helsper 2008, Khurana et al. 2015). For instance,

parental awareness about online activities increases the likelihood of child disclosure about experiences with cyberbullying (Cerna et al. 2016), and when children share their online experiences with their parents, they are less likely to engage in risky online behavior (Liau et al. 2008).

For parents to offer adequate guidance and support, parental knowledge about children's online activities and experiences is paramount. Parents are largely unaware of their children's engagement in risky online activities, including encounters with OSRs. At the same time, parents seem to take action against certain risks they consider probable and harmful (e.g., restricting the use of social media to protect their children from exposure to pornography). Parents can help their children to prevent or cope with troubling experiences and risky behaviors online, as well as provide emotional support when things go wrong. Building on prior research, parental perspectives on online sexual risks to children and the perceived harm from such risks are explored.

2. Materials and methods

I sought to explore the discourses and patterns parents use to conceptualize online sexual risk and the recurring harm. Social constructionism is the epistemological foundation this study is built on (Crotty 1998: 42-44). Qualitative methods enabled to explore and uncover how parents understand and make sense of OSRs and their underlying attitudes and perceptions about the topic. The study was designed and piloted from spring 2019 until the beginning of empirical data collection in late 2019. Though a real-time individual interview mode was initially planned, a dyadic interview setting for collecting data on this topic appeared impractical. Firstly, discussion in a group setting facilitates the natural flow of a conversation, where the cooperation between participants elicits responses without much interference from the researcher.

In most cases, the dynamic of reciprocally stimulating a conversation is absent in individual interviews where the participant merely answers specific questions directly. The group dynamic has the potential to produce more diverse topics and themes, as the interactional setting may feel more comfortable and encouraging for participants (Frith 2000, Morgan and Krueger 1998), as well as less constraining. Secondly, the interplay between participants enables insight into the language and vocabulary (Frith 2000) commonly used to describe a specific matter. As language is a form of social practice and is determined by social structures (Fairclough 1989: 22-27), the interactional approach helps to understand better the metalevel of these discussions, the possible roots of their views, and the use of language that is comfortable and intelligible for participants. The data collection process in focus groups provides an additional facet to the data – interactions between participants (Kitzinger 1994). Ergo, focus group interviews combined with activity-oriented questions (Colucci 2007) were utilized for collecting data.

2.1. Recruitment and participants

Participants were recruited using online possibilities, i.e., via a mailing list and a Facebook group. A maximum variation sampling was used to reflect a range of demographics (such as gender, age, ethnicity, and family demographics). An invitation to participate was forwarded via primary and secondary schools' mailing lists and a neurodivergence-themed Facebook group. Schools were selected by the largest public schools by student population from three different regions across the country. The Facebook group was chosen to include the voice of parents of neurodiverse children (n=2). Parents who did not have school-aged children, good command of Estonian, or had only adult children, were excluded from the study.

Twenty-two parents between the ages of 26-to-47 participated in the study. Participants were parents of 1 to 4 children (55 % of children were daughters). All participants had at least one school-aged child; around half of the participants were also parents of toddlers or preschoolers. Though all fathers interested in participating in the study were included in the sample (n=6), mothers represented the majority (n=16). Good command of the Estonian language was determined during recruitment efforts. Though the designated sample included 29 eligible participants, seven people withdrew or did not attend for different reasons.

One of the constraints of this study is that all parents lived either in urban or suburban areas, meaning parents from rural areas were not represented in the study. The sample was relatively homogeneous regarding participants' socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnicity. Further research with more diverse samples could help to overcome this limitation. Though fathers' perspective was represented in this study, more than two-thirds of the participants were mothers; thus, this study can provide limited insight into fathers' accounts. As some gender differences between attitudes were established, an equal representation of both genders may help to capture such differences better. The sensitive nature of the study during recruitment efforts was explained to parents. Participants were randomly assigned to groups, except in one interview where parents of the same household insisted on participating in the same group. Financial incentive was not provided for participation.

2.2. Study procedure

All interviews took place in Estonia, in urban and suburban areas in three different counties. Data was gathered using a combination of focus group interviews and creative research methods. Six focus group interviews were conducted with 22 parents. Three focus groups included mothers and fathers and three only mothers. Interviews were audio-recorded, and the length varied from one to two hours. Focus groups consisted of three to max four participants. The small number of people in groups was chosen purposively for two main reasons – to ensure all participants could actively partake in conversations and to provide a more intimate and secure atmosphere for discussions. Bigger groups would have made these goals more difficult to achieve.

Upon meeting, participants were introduced to each other and accosted with

refreshments of their preference and an opening conversation about participating in research. Besides starting a conversation between participants, I got some insight into their thoughts, worries, and expectations regarding their participation in the study. At the beginning of the interviews, the research aims, ethical and legal considerations of participation, and what would be done with the results were explained; we agreed upon some ground rules for discussions. I explained that there are no right or wrong answers, that everyone's views are important, and that one can always refrain from participating or take back their overall consent without the need to explain anything (Sherriff et al. 2014). We agreed to respect others' views and refrain from judgments on others' accounts. I assured participants that in case of any distress or discomfort, they could always refrain from participating, take a break, or decide not to participate in the study. I also explained my role as a moderator rather than a participant in discussions. Afterwards, every participant's informed consent and permission to use an audio recorder was elicited. For background information, parents were asked to state their age, the number of children they have, and the age and gender of their children. Safeguarding and supporting participants' psychological and emotional well-being was central throughout the research process (Sherriff et al. 2014). While facilitating focus groups, due attention was given to the general atmosphere of discussions, participants' interactions, and any visible distress. Interactions between participants were mostly limited to encouraging sharing, even in accounts of subversive views.

2.3. Data collection

The study was designed in three stages, each focusing on a separate topic: general knowledge of sexual risks, knowledge and perceptions of risks, and prevention of OSRs and CSA. Each stage started with an assignment prescribed to be completed either as a group or individually and was followed by a group discussion apart from the 2nd stage, which had two assignments. Around 15 minutes were given for each assignment and the following discussion in the group (accounting for an estimation of 60 minutes). The activity-oriented approach was chosen due to the sensitive nature of the study as discussion concurrent or following practical activities may help to reduce stress and discomfort with the topic, allow participants more time to reflect and organize their ideas (Golucci 2007), and engage all participants simultaneously in the deliberation of their answers. Before assignments, participants were reminded that there is no consensus requirement and that all views are valuable.

For the first assignment, participants were given a pen and paper and asked to do the following: "Please map sexual risks[5] together as a group and provide a

---

[5] The term sexual risks was not further defined or explained; it was up to participants to decide what and how they define as sexual risks. Additionally, the assignment did not include a reference to children because the pilot test showed that framing the question (in different ways) that includes the phrase children leads participants or creates a bias (e. g., sexual risks to children, sexual risks children may encounter, sexual risks that threaten children, sexual risks children may be exposed to, etc.). In the pilot test, the Estonian word for children, for some reason, made participants focus on younger children. Also, the pilot showed that using the term would need either an explanation that children in this study mean anyone under 18 or should be accompanied by a term referencing to adolescents

meaning to each risk"[6] (translated from Estonian). The exact format was chosen by participants; mainly, concept maps and lists were used. In the second stage, participants were given two assignments. Firstly, to individually draw or write down whom they considered as a person who would sexually harm children, and then to present and discuss their views in the group. And then to work together as a group and create a profile of children who, according to their views, are at risk.[7] The last assignment was a combination of case vignettes and role enactments (role-play) on issues related to CSA prevention, disclosure, and help-seeking. Assignments were conducted without the moderator's interference. After finishing each assignment, follow-up questions were asked by the moderator to elaborate on or specify things that seemed unclear.[8] After finishing the discussions, I asked how participants felt about discussing such topics. Parents were keen to ask about possible approaches to issues or available resources on the topic; the most common concern was how to start these conversations with their children. I answered their questions[9] and agreed to provide more detailed information and resources later via email.

2.4. Data analysis

For the transcription of data, all participants were given a pseudonym, and all references to personal data, such as names or places, were redacted to ensure the protection of participants' rights and interests. To approach the research questions, a six-step thematic analysis was employed on the focus group data: (1) transcribing and familiarizing oneself with the data; (2) initial coding; (3) theme search; (4) systematization of themes into a thematic map; (5) defining and naming the themes; followed by (6) analysis and writing the article (Braun and Clarke 2006). The inductive data-driven approach was used to answer research questions.

Three major themes were identified: accidental encounters, voluntary encounters, and involuntary encounters. Each theme was named while trying to capture the

---

(though this term is not exclusively limited to people below 18). However, excluding any reference to children in the assignment did not seem to cause confusion. Participants were informed during recruitment and at the beginning of interviews that this study focuses on online risks to children.

[6] The phrase '*risks*' (in Estonian) was used since the pilot test showed that (Estonian) phrases *exploitation, abuse* or *crime* create a strong disposition towards (physically) violent acts. The phrase '*risks*' was found to be the most suitable for the study.

[7] As parents already mapped out and discussed different acts they consider as sexual risks, the assignment did not need to specify further.

[8] Some examples of follow-up questions: *"you mentioned earlier that they must be sick, can you tell me what do you mean by that?", "you mentioned a dysfunctional family, can you explain that a little?", "can someone please explain me again what role does bad parenting have?", "you mentioned that they should learn these things at school, can you clarify what was meant by that?".*

[9] To be clear, I was not explaining to parents what and how they should do or say. As prior to joining academia, I worked for a government agency as a sexual abuse prevention expert, and one of my duties was creating informational and instructional materials about CSA prevention for parents, institutions that work with children, etc. I did rely on my previous experience, but my main role after the interviews was more about calming the parents' anxieties about dealing with the topic in general and helping them to find the right resources (e.g., where can one find trustworthy materials or where can one turn with certain specific concerns).

overarching meaning of each category. The themes (encounter types and related explanations) are not provided to represent accurate or objective depictions of OSRs and related harm but as constructions of subjective perceptions and beliefs held by parents who participated in the study.

3. Findings

3.1. Voluntary encounters rarely harm teens but may harm younger children

A voluntary encounter means a child knowingly and willfully engaging in online sexual activities. Most commonly, it was the case with sexually explicit material (SEM). By sexually explicit material, parents meant visual and textual materials which depict sexual acts such as pornography, sexting, and online sexual discussions (e.g., forum posts about sexual fantasies, live chat room talks). Textual material, such as texts about personally encountered sexual experiences or sexual fantasies, was mentioned in around half of the focus groups. This was a particular concern of chat rooms and forums meant for adults. Regarding SEM, encountering pornography was mentioned by all parents as a source of concern. While discussing pornographic material, parents did not mean child sexual abuse material (CSAM) but visual pornographic content depicting adults. Parents consider SEM harmful for younger children but not as much for adolescents. The central source for concern with pornography was the potential misconceptions it feeds.

According to parents, there are two types of misconceptions. Firstly, the distorted representation of the dynamics of sexual activities in pornography, particularly as sex is rarely depicted as a form of intimacy or deeper connection but more as separate mechanical acts related to genitals and sexual climax. Examples of distorted representations mentioned were simultaneous orgasms, dominant men, and the always willing and submissive women, talking dirty, slapping women, etc. The second type of misconceptions mentioned by parents were unrealistic beauty standards and body representations such as hyper-fixating on perfect bodies, big breasts, heavy makeup, etc. Then again, some parents expressed that teenagers already understand pornography is all acting and has little to do with real life.

Besides the distorted representations, another concern parents mentioned about voluntary engagement with SEM was that it may influence younger children to try out things that they have seen on other children:

> *"It can give them ideas... and later they go and try out with others. I've heard about something similar where boys watched porn and then at school held a girl down and forced her to have sex with them..."*

At the same time, most parents said that younger children usually do not have sexual interest (to seek SEM online) compared to adolescents. Voluntarily encountering SEM online was described as a *'rather a normal thing teenage boys do',* yet paradoxically, the attitudes differed regarding girls. In one discussion, the

given reason for the gender disparity was that boys become sexually 'interested' or active earlier and that boys, in general, have more interest in watching pornographic content than girls do. At the same time, sexting and other risky online sexual behavior (such as posting provocative pictures, using dating apps, or talking to strangers) were more often associated with teenage girls. Around half of the parents described *'some girls'* as *'liking the risks'*. All in all, voluntary encounters were generally not considered harmful, particularly concerning adolescents; potential harm was acknowledged for younger children, yet it was mitigated by the belief that sexual interest develops later.

3.2. Accidental encounters are most harmful to children

An accidental encounter was described as something that happens without any agency or knowledge from the child for such an encounter to take place, meaning a child does not want to come across such material or situation, and when the encounter happens, it has nothing to do with the child's sexual risk behavior. The central element here is the unexpectedness of the occurrence. Parents gave three examples of accidental encounters with OSRs – a stranger sexually soliciting a child, an accidental encounter with SEM, and 'gay propaganda'.[10] Though parents described strangers sexually soliciting a child as downright bothersome and scary, some parents considered such encounters as the easiest to solve.

> *"In my mind, it's not that complicated. If you don't want some strangers to talk to you, you just set your account to private. [...] but let's say, for whatever reason, you allow a stranger to enter* [into a conversation]. *Let's say, by accident – you think it's someone else. And then the dude is a full-on perv, asking for whatever or showing stuff. You're not gonna stay and talk to some creep who scared you – of course, you block him."*

Parents explained that accidental encounters with SEM happen when children are, for instance, searching information online or playing games and a pop-up with SEM appears. Gay propaganda was mentioned in half of the focus groups and apparently mainly occured on children's social media news feeds (e.g., an article or event related to 'gay propaganda'). Here, the central idea was that gay propaganda negatively impacts children and young people, especially those in their teenage years. A common source for gay propaganda was said to be social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Parents mentioning this concern characterize it as a particularly problematic issue since, in their belief, the propaganda is incorporated into commonly used platforms and presented as news or discussion topics, commercials, and so on. One parent claimed that children and young people are targeted explicitly by gay propaganda due to their age-related vulnerability to such content.

Accidental encounters were seen as scary, uncomfortable, or otherwise harmful. Though parents said that strangers sexually soliciting children could be immensely bothersome and scary for young children, they further thought that this was not a

---

[10] The author uses the term 'gay propaganda' here as it is a direct translation of the term parents used.

very likely risk. Particularly as (according to parents) their children know not to start talking to some stranger online. Some parents added that strangers would even have access to their children as their children are using specific mechanisms that prevent such encounters (e.g., without mutual friends, strangers cannot send friend requests). Parents generally agreed that accidental encounters are most bothersome and harmful, especially for younger children.

Though some parents included the risk of coming across CSAM of other children online, it was only discussed in one focus group meaning parents are primarily concerned about children encountering sexually explicit material of adults. Sexting ('sending nude pictures') was not considered CSAM. The differentiation was made by producing or distributing CSAM being a criminal offense where the offender is usually an adult, and voluntarily sending nude pictures between teenagers as a fairly stupid decision, but not a criminal one.

Online sexual crimes against children were not considered accidental encounters but either involuntary or, oddly, even voluntary. Voluntary does not mean that children somehow willingly 'become' victims, but as parents explained, children willingly take such risks that lead to victimization (the notion is explained in more detail in Chapter 3.3.).

3.3. Involuntary encounters do not happen randomly

An involuntary encounter is different from an accidental one as it entails someone else's agency, meaning an involuntary encounter is done or shown to a child by someone else. At involuntary encounters the children did not want the specific sexual encounter, yet they were voluntarily and knowingly in a situation where such an encounter was likely to occur. Parents explained that involuntary encounters were, e.g., sextortion, online sexual exploitation, sexual solicitation, and online grooming. Sexual solicitation was conceptualized as any act of encouraging children to talk about sexual activities or engage in sexual activities. Parents considered strangers as the primary source of risk here, but not peers or acquaintances.

> *"I have always explained why you cannot talk to strangers or post your pictures publicly. Well, you won't let a stranger approach you on the street. Online it's different; some kids want that kind of attention."*

Online sexual crimes (or, as parents usually expressed, 'online grooming by pedophiles and perverts') were clearly distinguished from offline sex crimes such as rape or other sexual violence, though it was acknowledged that online grooming might lead to offline sexual abuse. For some reason, the harm was not considered equal regarding offline sexual abuse. One reason was that the parents had somewhat stereotypical views about rape and sexual violence in general, meaning that they considered 'real' rape as something that is usually committed by a (drunk) stranger, in a dark alley, with extreme violence, causing the victim terrible injuries and lifetime trauma. In contrast, online sexual abuse and exploitation, according to parents, is not as severe as there is no physical bodily injury or trauma present.

The other reason was the way parents considered the child's agency. Online grooming was always conceptualized as involuntary or voluntary but never accidental. The line of reasoning was that for one to be groomed, you must engage in a conversation, and according to parents, grooming cannot take place with just two sentences – one must willingly and knowingly engage in the conversation for long periods. Some parents expressed that if the child does not want to be groomed, then why do they still knowingly engage in such encounters where it is possible. In most focus groups, the risky behavior of engaging in conversations with strangers was connected to parenting, and certain characteristics children might have (such as being smart, a good student, an obedient child, etc.).

> *"Smart kids will not go along with such things. Parenting has a lot to do here."*

Involuntary encounters were generally not considered as truly or actually harmful. According to parents, children are aware of the specific risks they might encounter and are not as harmed as children who encounter unexpected risks. Secondly, according to parents, involuntary encounters cannot happen randomly; the child must do something for such things to happen. An example was that a random person could not force you to do something if they do not have anything on you; hence you must have given them something. The most common example was voluntarily sexting with a friend or a boyfriend who then demands more sexual material or experiences using threats or pressuring.

4. Discussion

Parents who participated in the study have a relatively good general overview of different sexual risks children may encounter or experience online, yet most parents lack a deeper and more accurate understanding of how and where such risks occur. A somewhat surprising finding was that the so-called gay propaganda was categorized as an OSR by parents, as this has not been (at least to the author's knowledge) evident from previous studies. This supports the notion that risks are culturally framed (Staksrud 2016: 51). Considering that social and cultural discourses shape parental views on the matter, the political situation and public discussions in Estonia at the end of 2019 may have had some effect. For instance, one of the topics that gained much attention that year was the public discussion about 'gay propaganda' in schools and kindergartens. Unfortunately, a more detailed analysis of how participants' family structure and political (or other) views influenced their categorization of gay propaganda is not possible as such data were not gathered in this study. Perhaps future studies could investigate this matter.

Another thing evident from the data was that though parents could describe different types of OSRs and give real-life examples of these risks, the general understanding of OSRs is instilled with stereotypes, rape myths, and misconceptions.

Particularly when it comes to the dynamics of online sexual crimes. Parents often distinguish between online and offline abuse to mitigate the seriousness of the latter. It does not seem that parents do this on purpose but more due to a lack of a proper understanding of online sexual abuse. Even so, differentiating one from the other may be counterproductive, as parents seem more concerned with "real" physical bodily injuries and perhaps do not understand that the consequences of online sexual abuse may be as severe. People who are abused online experience as much harm as those abused offline, although the impact depends on the severity of the abuse, the length and frequency, and other factors (Whittle et al. 2013). Overall, unwanted sexual experiences online can be harmful to children and youth, just like situations taking place in real-world.

Parents did name some platforms (such as dating platforms and chatrooms) and some specific SNSs (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat) where children and young people could encounter OSRs. For the most part, parents seem to limit OSRs to specific platforms that have some inherent or more obvious sexual component to them (e.g., dating platforms, pornographic websites, chatrooms, etc.). In contrast, studies have shown that OSRs can be encountered in virtually all platforms children use, for instance, even on popular gaming platforms such as Growtopia (Poudel 2018) or Roblox (Nakatsui 2018). Parents tend to believe that when children are not allowed to use specific platforms, they are less likely to encounter OSRs.

In accordance with prior studies, the data indicated that regardless of being aware of different OSRs, parents tend to believe that their children are less likely to encounter such risks (Byrne et al. 2014, Eelmaa 2021, Sukk and Soo 2018, Symons 2017). Interestingly, parents seem to explain the presence of a risk with two factors – parenting (or, more accurately – the lack of it) and specific child-related characteristics (e.g., attention-seeking or risk-taking behaviors). This finding aligns with previous studies that have found similar links between parental perceptions of sexual abuse risk (Collins 1995, Eelmaa 2021). Likewise, Byrne and others (2014) found that parents tend to think that their children are smarter than others while online, which in turn contributes to the increasing likelihood of underestimating some risky online behaviors. Though participants were not wrong in a sense, as studies have established a link between encountering risks and certain parenting practices or sensation-seeking behavior, those results only indicate a higher probability. Children who are not sensation-seeking are not entirely immune to either risk or harm; they are merely less likely to encounter risks yet more likely to encounter adverse effects. Current discussion is not meant to amplify potential harm. As the literature holds, most encounters with OSRs do not lead to harm. The discussion is more about how parents react when their child comes across something worrying.

When discussing how OSRs are encountered, similarly limited understandings prevail. The central element in parents' minds is the child's own agency. According to parents, most encounters with OSRs happen because children want these things to happen. That notion became evident when discussing involuntary encounters with OSRs, where parents found that, for instance, online grooming cannot happen without the child's agency. Such attitudes reflect attributing blame and

responsibility on victims, which unfortunately is not uncommon. For instance, with alarming encounters with OSRs, the focus is often on victims, their actions, and their responsibility to prevent abuse (Angelides 2013, Walker and Sleath 2017). Similar attitudes produce more stigma and may hinder children's willingness to report bothersome encounters. This prompts the question that if children are deemed responsible for their safety, wouldn't it be pertinent to teach them the skills that can contribute to a safer online experience?

The stereotypical understanding of OSRs was evident in other types of risks, too, besides online sex crimes. For instance, when discussing encounters with pornographic content, boys are given more leeway than girls, as voluntarily encountering sexually explicit material online was seen as a rather normal thing that boys do. Likewise, risky online sexual behavior is more often connected to teenage girls and explained with phrases like attention and thrill-seeking. As prior studies have found, the realization of sexual risk is a relatively gendered discourse (Angelides 2013, Eelmaa 2021, Walker and Sleath 2017), meaning girls' actions are often presented as deviant or flirty, yet paradoxically, the same voices often approve of the same actions when done by boys. The unfortunate consequence is that girls will be more blamed and stigmatized when encountering the same OSRs as boys.

Parents seem to conceptualize the potential harm of online sexual risks to a child's agency. Though parents are not wrong in some assertions, such as associating sensation seeking with lower harm probability or that younger children experience harm more likely (Livingstone and Görzig 2014), the general message is far more concerning. Data suggests that sexual agency is the key determinant in deciding whether an encounter was or can be harmful or not.

As the distinction was often made between young children and adolescents, it seems to be a juxtaposition of the young, innocent child versus a deviant sexual seductress, while again, the measure of innocence or deviancy is sexual agency. The general message appears to reflect that when developing sexual agency, negative encounters, if not 'real' physical violence or crimes, cannot be that alarming anymore – quietly implying a pornified theme that developing sexual agency makes everyone interested in sexual encounters.

Previous studies have shown that harm is connected to various factors, such as personality traits and social and digital factors (Livingstone and Smith 2014). Nevertheless, no data supports the notion that a bothersome encounter causes less harm to people who have developed sexual agency. Such assertion seems to have deeper roots in sexual scripts and stereotypical views about victimization, particularly sexual victimization (Christie 1986, Eelmaa and Murumaa-Mengel 2022). Perhaps the most concerning implication of such attitudes can be found when children who have had bothersome encounters with OSRs seek help or support from parents. At least from studies about disclosing sexual abuse, we know that attitudes children (even perceive to) receive are critical determinants of whether they get the help and support needed (Eelmaa and Murumaa-Mengel 2022, Reitsema and Grietens 2016).

Implying that only certain people are genuinely affected by bothersome experiences reinforces the notion that some people are more deserving of support and empathy
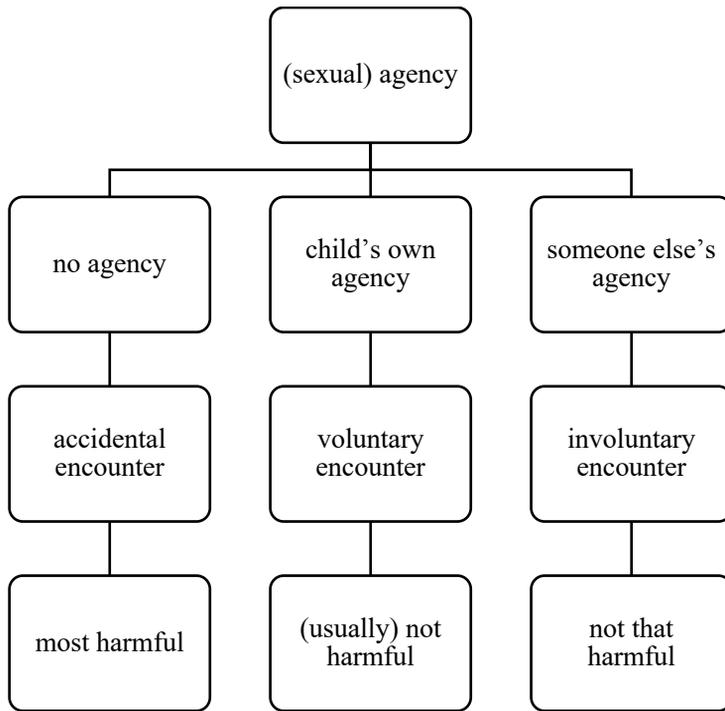
Figure 1. Schematic division of parental views on encounter types
with online sexual risks and harm.

than others. This can further marginalize and stigmatize those already vulnerable and may discourage them from seeking help or guidance. Therefore, it is imperative to challenge and dismantle harmful attitudes and beliefs about victimization that contribute to the normalization of stereotypical views and misconceptions about OSRs, and that discourage children from seeking help.

5. Conclusions

The current study explored parental perspectives on online sexual risks and harm. Though parents are relatively knowledgeable about what types of OSRs children might encounter, they tend to lack a deeper understanding of how and where OSRs can be encountered. All in all, the question of how online sexual risks occur in parents' minds is largely related to certain types of children (for instance, such who disobey their parents or who are not good students) and certain types of parents (e.g., those who are not 'good parents'). Furthermore, parents unnecessarily limit OSRs to specific platforms, creating a false sense of security when thinking that OSRs

are limited to platforms with a more specific or evident sexual element (such as pornographic websites or dating platforms).

In practice, policymakers and other stakeholders often fixate on preventing OSRs. The presence of risk itself is not inherently harmful but can be helpful for children to develop the requisite skills and build resilience. That notion does not include the risk of sexual abuse, as preventing experiences with OSRs that constitute sex crimes is obviously merited. Considering other OSRs that do not constitute sex crimes (such as encounters with SEM or sexting), a more targeted focus is advised to firstly raise parental awareness (e.g., about where and how OSRs can be encountered), and secondly, more focus should go into ensuring that children who are harmed have resources they can rely on. When parents believe online risks are not as harmful or might even attribute blame to children instead of providing them with necessary help and support, they are presumably amplifying the harm. Thus, it would be beneficial to ensure that materials or guidelines are available to parents to know how to address situations where their child has had a bothersome encounter with OSRs without causing further harm.

Future studies with more representative samples are needed to better uncover how parents conceptualize online risks and harm and how parental perceptions impact decisions (such as prevention efforts and parental mediation). It would further be helpful to uncover whether and how parental perceptions of harm affect children who have had unpleasant encounters online.

Acknowledgments

Address:
Simone Eelmaa
Institute of Social Studies
University of Tartu
Lossi 36-411
51003 Tartu, Estonia
E-mail: simone.eelmaa@ut.ee

References

Allison, Kendra (2018) *Online risks, sexual behaviors, and mobile technology use in early adolescent children: parental awareness, protective practices, and mediation.* Doctoral dissertation. Available online at <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/4950>. Accessed on 30.12.2022.

AlRammah, Aidah A., Shaher M. Alqahtani, Suha S. Al-Saleh, Syed Wajid, Ahmed G. Babiker, Abdul AK Al-Mana, and Hend H. Al-Shammari (2019) "Parent-child communication and preventive practices for child sexual abuse among the general population: a community-based study". *Journal of Taibah University Medical Sciences* 14, 4, 363–369. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.jtumed.2019.06.005

Angelides, Steven (2013) "Technology, hormones, and stupidity: the affective politics of teenage sexting". Sexualities 16, 5-6, 665–689. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460713487289

Aven, Terje and Ortwin Renn (2009) "Risk governance: an introduction". In T. Aven and O. Renn, eds. *Risk governance: coping with uncertainty in a complex world*, 1–21. London: Earthscan.

Babatsikos, Georgia (2011) "Australian parents, child sexuality, and boundary setting: informing preventative approaches to child sexual abuse". *Child Abuse Review* 19, 2, 107–129. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/car.1102

Bahali, Kayhan, Ramazan Akçan, Aysegul Y. Tahiroglu, and Ayse Avci (2010) "Child sexual abuse: seven years in practice". *Journal of forensic sciences* 55, 3, 633–636. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1556-4029.2010.01357.x

Braun, Virginia and Victoria Clarke (2006) "Using thematic analysis in psychology". *Qualitative research in psychology 3*, 2, 77–101.

Byrne, Jasmina, Daniel Kardefelt-Winther, Sonia Livingstone, and Mariya Stoilova (2016) "Global Kids Online research synthesis, 2015–2016". UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti and London School of Economics and Political Science. Available online at <www.globalkidsonline.net/synthesis>. Accessed on 30.12.2022.

Byrne, Sahara, Sherri Jean Katz, Theodore Lee, Daniel Linz, and Mary McIlrath (2014) "Peers, predators, and porn: Predicting parental underestimation of children's risky online experiences". *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 19, 2, 215–231. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12040

Cerna, Alena, Hana Machackova, and Lenka Dedkova (2016) "Whom to trust: the role of mediation and perceived harm in support seeking by cyberbullying victims". *Children & Society* 30, 4, 265–277. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12136

Chen, Jing Qi, and Da Guang Chen (2005) "Awareness of child sexual abuse prevention education among parents of Grade 3 elementary school pupils in Fuxin City, China". *Health education research* 20, 5, 540–547.

Chen, Jing Qi, Michael P. Dunne, and Ping Han (2007) "Prevention of child sexual abuse in China: Knowledge, attitudes, and communication practices of parents of elementary school children." *Child abuse & neglect*, *31*, 7, 747–755. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyh012

Christie, Nils (1986) "The ideal victim". In Ezzat A. Fattah, ed. *From crime policy to victim policy: reorienting the justice system*, 17–30. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Collins, Mary Elizabeth (1995) "Factors influencing parents' perceptions and behaviors regarding the threat of sexual abuse: 8th national symposium on doctoral research in social work". *Ohio State University. College of Social Work.*

Collins, Mary Elizabeth (1996) "Parents' perceptions of the risk of child sexual abuse and their protective behaviors: findings from a qualitative study". *Child Maltreatment* 1, 1, 53–64.

Colucci, Erminia (2007) "Focus groups can be fun: the use of activity-oriented questions in focus group discussions". *Qualitative health research* 17, 10, 1422–1433.

Copp, Jennifer E., Elizabeth A. Mumford, and Bruce G. Taylor (2021) "Online sexual harassment and cyberbullying in a nationally representative sample of teens: prevalence, predictors, and consequences". *Journal of Adolescence* 93, 202–211. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2021.10.003

Crotty, Michael (1998) "The foundations of social research: meaning and perspective in the research process". *The foundations of social research*, 1–256. Melbourne: SAGE.

Deblinger, Esther, Reena R. Thakkar-Kolar, Eloise J. Berry, and Christine M. Schroeder (2010) "Caregivers' efforts to educate their children about child sexual abuse: a replication study". *Child Maltreatment* 15, 1, 91–100. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559509337408

Eelmaa, Simone (2021) "My daughter is not like that: a qualitative study of parental perception on child sexual abuse risk". *Discourse* 7, 2, 56–80. DOI: https://doi.org/10.32603/2412-8562-2021-7-2-56-80

Eelmaa, Simone and Maria Murumaa-Mengel (2022) "Who is worthy of help? Constructing the stereotype of the 'ideal victim' of child sexual abuse". In Daniela Stelzmann and Josephine Ischebeck, eds. *Child sexual abuse and the media,* 261–278. Baden-Baden: Nomos. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748904403-261

Europol (2020) "Exploiting isolation: offenders and victims of online child sexual abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic". European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation. Available online at <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/europol_covid_report-cse_jun2020v.3_0.pdf>. Accessed on 30.12.2022.

Fairclough, Norman (1989) *Language and power*. London and New York: Longman.

Ferrer, Rebecca A. and William M. Klein (2015) "Risk perceptions and health behavior". *Current opinion in psychology 5*, 85–89. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2015.03.012

Finkelhor, David (1984) "The prevention of child sexual abuse: an overview of needs and problems". *Siecus Report* 13, 1, 1–5.

Frith, Hannah (2000) "Focusing on sex: using focus groups in sex research". *Sexualities* 3, 3, 275–297.

Iglesias, E. Jiménez, M. Garmendia Larrañaga, and M. Á. Casado del Río (2015) "Children's perception of the parental mediation of the risks of the Internet". *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* 70, 49–68.

Jonsson, Linda S. (2015) *Online sexual behaviours among Swedish youth: characteristics, associations and consequences*. Doctoral dissertation. *Linköping University Electronic Press.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.3384/diss.diva-114542

Kahneman, Daniel, and Amos Tversky (2013) "Prospect theory: an analysis of decision under risk". In Leonard C. MacLean and William T. Ziemba, eds. *Handbook of the fundamentals of financial decision making.* Part I, 99–127. (World Scientific Handbook in Financial Economics Series, 4.) New Jersey et al.: World Scientific.

Kaspersky (2019) "Parents fear for kids' online safety but aren't putting time in to talk about it. Kaspersky's family campaign report". Available online at <https://media.kasperskydaily.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/92/2019/09/12065947/family-campaign-report-final.pdf>. Accessed on 30.12.2022.

Kerstens, Joyce and Wouter Stol (2014) "Receiving online sexual requests and producing online sexual images: the multifaceted and dialogic nature of adolescents' online sexual interactions". *Cyberpsychology* 8, 1–15. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5817/CP2014-1-8

Khurana, Atika, Amy Bleakley, Amy B. Jordan, and Daniel Romer (2015) "The protective effects of parental monitoring and internet restriction on adolescents' risk of online harassment". *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 44, 5, 1039–1047. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-014-0242-4

Kitzinger, Jenny (1994) "The methodology of focus groups: the importance of interaction between research participants". *Sociology of health & illness* 16, 1, 103–121. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.ep11347023

Klinke, Andreas and Ortwin Renn (2002) "A new approach to risk evaluation and management: risk-based, precaution-based, and discourse-based strategies 1". *Risk Analysis: An International Journal* 22, 6, 1071–1094.

Liau, Albert Kienfie, Angeline Khoo, and Peng Hwa Ang (2008) "Parental awareness and monitoring of adolescent internet use". *Current Psychology* 27, 217–233. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-008-9038-6

Livingstone, Sonia and Magdalena Bober (2004) "UK children go online: surveying the experiences of young people and their parents". London: LSE Research Online.

Livingstone, Sonia and Ellen J. Helsper (2008) "Parental mediation of children's internet use". *Journal of broadcasting & electronic media* 52, 4, 581–599.

Livingstone, Sonia (2010) "E-youth:(future) policy implications: reflections on online risk, harm and vulnerability". Available online at <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/27849/1/eYouth_(future)_policy_implications_(LSERO_version).pdf>. Accessed on 30.12.2022.

Livingstone, Sonia, Leslie Haddon, Anke Görzig, and Kjartan Ólafsson (2011) *EU kids online II: Final report*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online. (EC Safer Internet Plus Programme Deliverable D6.5). Available online at <https://eucpn.org/sites/default/files/document/files/5._eu_kids_online_-_final_report.pdf >. Accessed on 24.03.2023.

Livingstone, Sonia and Peter K. Smith (2014) "Annual research review: harms experienced by child users of online and mobile technologies: the nature, prevalence and management of sexual and aggressive risks in the digital age". *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry* 55, 6, 635–654. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12197

Livingstone, Sonia and Anke Görzig (2014) "When adolescents receive sexual messages on the internet: explaining experiences of risk and harm". *Computers in human behavior* 33, 8–15. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.12.021

Morgan, David L. and Richard A. Krueger (1998) *Analyzing and reporting focus group results*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483328157

Nakatsui, K. Erika (2018) *A parent's dilemma: a study of parent's decision-making process and their children's online gaming behaviour*. MA Thesis. University of Alberta. Available online at <https://era.library.ualberta.ca/items/1de6216e-b819-4569-924f-c2a90d777649/view/0cf67fd4-261e-4372-93d7-6695773dc17e/Nakatsui_Capstone_2018.pdf>. Accessed on 24.03.2023.

Poudel, Diana (2018) *Osalusvaatlus mängus Growtopia*. [Participatory observation in Growtopia game.] University of Tartu. Available online at <https://kool.digiabi.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Poudel-Growtopia.pdf>. Accessed on 30.12.2022.

Pujazon-Zazik, Melissa A, Stephanie M. Manasse, and Joan Orrell-Valente (2012) "Adolescents' self-presentation on a teen dating web site: a risk-content analysis". *Journal of Adolescent Health* 50, 5, 517–520. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2011.11.015

Reitsema, Anne Margit and Hans Grietens (2016) "Is anybody listening? The literature on the dialogical process of child sexual abuse disclosure reviewed". *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 17, 3, 330–340. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838015584368

Renn, Ortwin (2004) "Perception of risks". *Toxicology letters* 149, 1–3, 405–413.

Say, Gökçe Nur, Zehra Babadağı, Koray Karabekiroğlu, Murat Yüce, and Seher Akbaş (2015) "Abuse characteristics and psychiatric consequences associated with online sexual abuse". *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 18, 6, 333–336. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2014.0494

Sherriff, Nigel, Lisa Gugglberger, Caroline Hall, and Julie Scholes (2014) "'From start to finish': practical and ethical considerations in the use of focus groups to evaluate sexual health service interventions for young people". *Qualitative Psychology* 1, 2, 92–106. DOI: https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/qup0000014

Sklenarova, Halina, Anja Schulz, Petya Schuhmann, Michael Osterheider, and Janina Neutze (2018) "Online sexual solicitation by adults and peers: results from a population based German sample". *Child abuse & neglect 76*, 225–236. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.11.005

Slavtcheva-Petkova, Vera, Victoria Jane Nash, and Monica Bulger (2015) "Evidence on the extent of harms experienced by children as a result of online risks: implications for policy and research". *Information, Communication & Society* 18, 1, 48–62. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2014.934387

Soldatova, Galina U. and Elena I. Rasskazova (2019) "Parental unawareness about online risks in adolescence: prevalence and psychological factors". *Psixologičeskii žurnal,* 40, 1, 71–83. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31857/S020595920002251-2

Sorbring, Emma (2014) "Parents' concerns about their teenage children's internet use". *Journal of Family Issues* 35, 1, 75–96. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X12467754

Staksrud, Elisabeth (2016) *Children in the online world. risk, regulation, rights*. London and New York: Routledge.

Sukk, Marit and Kadri Soo (2018) "EU Kids Online'i Eesti 2018. aasta uuringu esialgsed tulemused". [Preliminary results of the EU Kids Online Estonia 2018 survey.] V. Kalmus, R. Kurvits, and A. Siibak, eds. Tartu: University of Tartu.

Symons, Katrien, Koen Ponnet, Kathleen Emmery, Michael Walrave, and Wannes Heirman (2017) "Parental knowledge of adolescents' online content and contact risks". *Journal of youth and adolescence* 46, 2, 401–416. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0599-7

Tiidenber, Katrin and Emily Van Der Nager (2020) *Sex and social media*. Emerald Publishing. Available online at <https://www.perlego.com/book/1359615/sex-and-social-media-pdf>. Accessed on 11.03.2023.

Tsaliki, Liza, Despina Chronaki, and Kjartan Ólafsson (2014) *Experiences with sexual content: what we know from the research so far*. London: LSE. Available online at <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/60143/1/__lse.ac.uk_storage_LIBRARY_Secondary_libfile_shared_repository_Content_EU%20Kids%20Online_EU_Kids_Online_Sexual%20content%20report%20%202014.pdf>. Accessed on 30.12.2022.

Vandoninck, Sofie, Leen d'Haenens, and Veronica Donoso (2010) "Digital literacy of Flemish youth: how do they handle online content risks?". *Communications* 35, 4, 397–416. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-5170-5_5

Vizard, Eileen, Nicole Hickey, Leslie French, and Eamon McCrory (2007) "Children and adolescents who present with sexually abusive behaviour: a UK descriptive study". *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology* 18, 1, 59–73.

Walker, Kate and Emma Sleath (2017) "A systematic review of the current knowledge regarding revenge pornography and non-consensual sharing of sexually explicit media". *Aggression and violent behaviour* 36, 9–24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2017.06.010

Walsh, Kerryann, Leisa Brandon, and Lisa Chirio (2012) "Mother-child communication about sexual abuse prevention". *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 21, 4, 399–421. DOI: https://doi.org/10.10 80/10538712.2012.675424

Whittle, Helen C., Catherine Hamilton-Giachritsis, and Anthony Beech (2013) "Victims' voices: the impact of online grooming and sexual abuse". *Universal Journal of Psychology* 1, 59–71. DOI: https://doi.org/10.13189/UJP.2013.010206

Wolak, Janis, Kimberly J. Mitchell, and David Finkelhor (2006) "Online victimization of youth: five years later". *National Center for Missing & Exploited Children Bulletin* #07-06-025. Alexandria, VA. Available online at <https://www.unh.edu/ccrc/sites/default/files/media/2022-03/online-victimization-of-youth-five-years-later.pdf>. Accessed on 24.03.2023.

Ybarra, Michele L. and Richard E. Thompson (2018) "Predicting the emergence of sexual violence in adolescence". *Prevention Science* 19, 4, 403–415. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-017-0810-4