

CONCLUSIONS

and technical skills in response to risk. Alongside being covered in South African schools, the Department of Telecommunication and Postal Services also contributes in improving child online protection, by working with organisations such as the Film and Publication Board.

Interestingly, and despite these efforts, South African children represent the highest percentage of children who have come across each of the online risks present (apart from online approaches by strangers). However, despite facing risk more often than children in the other countries, South African children demonstrate a more developed aptitude in dealing with risk and are more likely to adopt communicative, instrumental, and cognitive abilities in order to deal with risk when online.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve on an already positive set of results for South Africa, this report recommends to further:

- 1** Promote the inclusion of enhanced digital literacy and internet safety education in school curricula.
- 2** Improve and promote hotline support services as a reliable means to convey child concerns and report problems.
- 3** Minimise the impact of overreaching content filters impacting a child's access to information.

THE RESEARCH

This multinational research explores the role of digital resilience (the ability to prevent and respond to online risk) in providing children with the skills and characteristics needed to navigate the internet safely.

Analysing the findings from children aged 9-18 in Nigeria, Kenya, Israel, South Africa, Turkey, and Russia; it investigates the ways in which young people can be encouraged to be resilient users.

ABOUT THINKYOUNG

ThinkYoung is the first think tank dedicated to young people.

Founded in 2007, ThinkYoung has expanded to have offices in Brussels, Geneva and Hong Kong. It is a not for profit organisation with the aim of making the world a better place for young people, by involving them in the decision making process and by providing decision makers with high quality research on youth conditions. Think Young produces research papers, surveys, documentary movies and education programs.

As of today, ThinkYoung projects have reached over 600,000 young people.

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Think Young
We lobby for young people

DIGITAL RESILIENCE EMPOWERING YOUTH ONLINE

Practices for a safer internet use in Nigeria, Kenya, Israel, South Africa, Turkey and Russia.

COUNTRY BRIEFING: SOUTH AFRICA



INTRO

The following overview presents the key findings from South African children in response to a survey investigating the role of digital resilience in positively impacting children's online engagement. Shedding light on how a digitally resilient young person responds to potentially risky online content, the research investigates the ways in which young people can be encouraged to be resilient users when online by analysing

data from Nigeria, Kenya, Israel, South Africa, Turkey, and Russia.

The survey targeted children and young people between the ages of 9-18 and was administered in two parts: the first directly to respondents above the age of 16, and the second with the consent of parents (9-16 years!).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In response to the growing policy debate between online risk and opportunity, the following research aimed to shed light on child attitudes in dealing with online risk. Moreover, a focus was placed on integrating safety concerns with the promotion of a positive uptake of online opportunities for children, through the concept of 'digital resilience'.

Based on the survey administered, this research has first measured levels of digital resilience by analysing the responses adopted by young people to varying online risks. From these results, it has then sought to **investigate how children prevent and react to online risk, taking into account:**

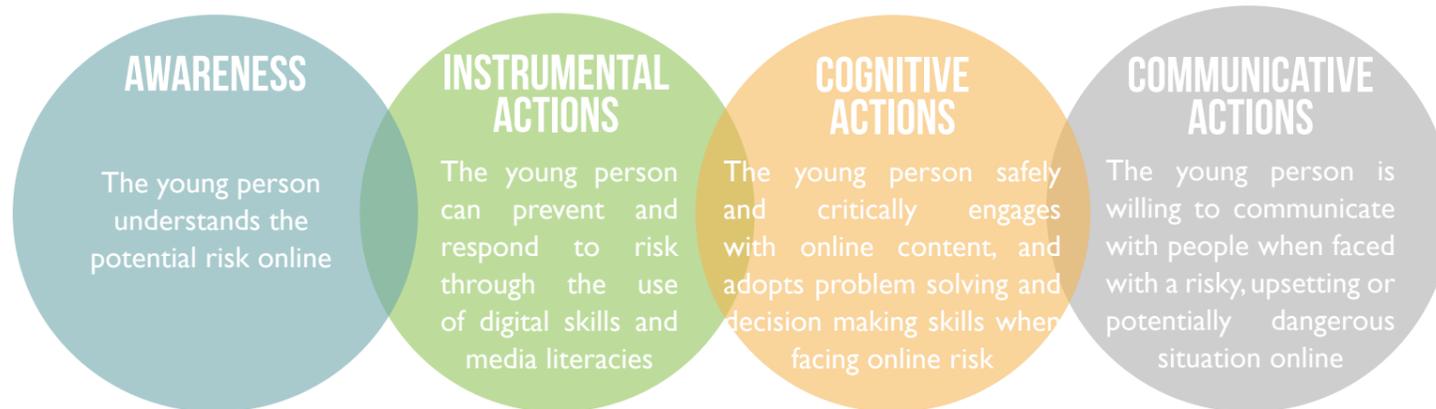
 The impact of awareness and self-regulation in understanding the potential for risk, and in engaging with online content in a resilient manner.

 How children and young people can enhance their levels of resilience through communication and from seeking advice.

 The role of media skills and digital literacies in improving resilience, and the types of responses used by technologically adept young people.

WHAT IS DIGITAL RESILIENCE?

Drawing on the most prevalent scientific literature on resilience, the report presents the fundamental characteristics of the ideal digitally resilient young person, encapsulated by:



The concept of digital resilience includes both a preventive and reactive phase where at first young people are able to self-regulate and avoid online risk and, when faced with risk, are able to employ coping mechanisms in order to respond to the risk or harmful situation in a problem focused manner.

 **PREVENTIVE RESILIENCE**
Resilience strategies employed to avoid risk including instrumental (using technical skills to avoid risk) and behavioural (avoiding risk through specific safety behaviours and online awareness).

 **REACTIVE RESILIENCE**
Resilience strategies adopted after coming into contact with an online risk. These include:

- 1 Instrumental (using technical skills).
- 2 Confrontational (confronting the source of the risk).
- 3 Communicative (seeking advice).
- 4 Disengagement (ignoring the risk).

¹In gaining parental permission for the 9-16 year olds a very clear statement of intent was given to parents/guardians in advance, outlining the exact purpose of the study, sharing the exact questions and giving assurances that the data would be treated anonymously.

KEY FINDINGS

Children in South Africa are relatively confident in preventing risk through instrumental actions, with 71% likely to modify privacy settings to avoid unwanted contacts, and 61% likely to have software to avoid unwanted content. Amongst all South African children, 63% had been exposed to inappropriate content. Furthermore, 87% are likely to keep their password completely secret.

Moreover, when responding to risk young South Africans are also confident using digital skills, with 58% who would change their password when personal information is misused and 43% who would use the report button. 23% of the children surveyed had experienced this risk.

While 39% had experienced cyber-bullying, amongst the top reactions in responding to this risk, 59% of children in South Africa would delete the contact of a bully and 48% would seek advice from a parent/guardian.

Children in South Africa are comfortable in both communicating and disengaging from risk, with 54% stating they would immediately ignore a stranger who contacted them online and 43% would seek advice from a parent/guardian. Amongst all South African children, 41% had experienced this risk.

Young people in South Africa show a critical awareness in their use of the internet, with 74% very careful about what they say or post online, and 68% likely to avoid suspicious material.

In response to a request from an online contact to meet in person 70% of children in South Africa would refuse to meet and 16% would seek advice from a friend.

Children in South Africa are likely to keep their password completely secret



Children in South Africa change their password when personal information is misused



Children in South Africa would delete the contact of a bully



Children in South Africa would immediately ignore a stranger who contacted them online



Children in South Africa are very careful about what they say or post online



Children in South Africa would refuse to meet an online contact in person



THE ONLINE RESILIENT YOUNG PERSON

The graphical representation below illustrates how well children in South Africa fare in comparison to the ideal digitally resilient young person, who would score 3 points in each area of resilience. Each child obtains a score from 0 to 3 depending on how many cognitive, instrumental and communicative strategies he or she is likely to adopt. It also compares the results in relation to the average resilience scores from the MEAR region.

