2.4 Sexual Online Grooming – Prevention Concepts for the Protection of Primary School Children

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This article provides insights into the strategies of primary school children when confronted with sexual online grooming. Based on these insights, prevention measures that can be implemented in schools are to be designed to ensure the competent use of digital media and protect children from sexual online grooming. To approach the research gap of sexual online grooming, six fourth-graders were questioned about their media use and their behaviors on the Internet, using a qualitative guided interview and a supporting short questionnaire. The study revealed that explicit knowledge about sexual online grooming was not present. Furthermore, variation of individual behaviors in risky online communication settings became apparent. Because of the intensive use of digital media and uncertain strategies in online communication settings, comprehensive media education in school contexts seems to be essential.
Keywords: primary school, media use, high-risk communication settings, prevention measure

Introduction[1]

"I know with 100% certainty that you've probably played around with yourself … it's nature … you see or hear something that makes you horny, you get wet, and you want to masturbate" (Enders, 2004, p. 7, translated by the author).

Some people would probably not believe that the cited statement was made in a chat room for children. In 2004, the employees of "Zartbitter"[2] conducted undercover research in chat rooms that are intended for minors (Enders, 2004). They discovered that sexually influenced statements (as the quote above) are apparently common (Enders, 2004).

1 This article presents the shortened version of the author's bachelor thesis and was first published in *Ludwigsburger Beiträge zur Medienpädagogik*. Reference: Vogel, J. (2019). Online-Grooming. Präventionskonzepte zum Schutz von Grundschüler*innen. In Online-Magazin *Ludwigsburger Beiträge zur Medienpädagogik*, 20/2019. https://www.medienpaed-ludwigsburg.de/article/view/361/356

2 Link for further information: https://www.zartbitter.de/gegen_sexuellen_missbrauch/Aktuell/Wir_ueber_uns.php

Children and adolescents live in a world in which digital media and the using opportunities have a decisive influence on their daily life (Roll, 2017). In addition to common chat rooms, communication is also possible through social networks like Facebook, Instagram, and Co. (Roll, 2017). Even primary school children seem to maintain friendships or socialize easily with the help of digital media.

Considering the introductory statement, it is obvious that not all communication partners on the Internet strive for harmless everyday conversations. For this reason, the dangers and risks to which children may be exposed when using online communication must not be trivialized (Roll, 2017). In addition to forms of sexual harassment appearing randomly and isolated, there is a more manipulative way offenders use to satisfy their sexual desires at the expense of minors.

This phenomenon is called sexual online grooming (SOG). Adults build up trust in online communication settings over a longer period of time to abuse children and adolescents for their sexual intentions (Craven et al., 2006). With the increasing possibilities of virtual communication, there are countless ways of communicating with each other anonymously and (maybe) uninhibitedly (Katzer, 2014). Childrens and adolescents' intensified use of digital media increases the risk of getting in touch with potential offenders (Gottschalk, 2011).

School-based institutions are suitable to create appropriate prevention measures and offer protection against victimization of potentially affected children (Bustamante et al., 2019; Fryda & Hulme, 2014). Basic skills in the field of media education can be promoted as early as in primary school (Cheung, 2005). One approach for targeted prevention concepts is the examination and the assessment of how children react being exposed to SOG and what kind of existing strategies they use in dangerous and high-risk communication settings on the Internet. In this way, deficits can be detected and specifically compensated.

Research work on children's strategies and prevention concepts to protect against SOG has so far only existed in isolated cases (Vogelsang, 2017). Particularly primary school children have hardly been taken into consideration. Because of this deficit, the research question of the present article is:

How can prevention concepts be designed to protect primary school children from SOG based on their strategies in high-risk communication situations online?

With the help of this research question, practical measures for prevention concepts related to SOG will be derived to contribute to the protection of primary school children.

Strategies of children

In the past, strategies of primary school children in high-risk online communication settings concerning SOG have only been examined sporadically (Vogelsang, 2017). Nevertheless, it is possible to draw conclusions based on existing research on related topics. Part of this research is presented in this section.

Intending to uncover strategies when confronted with SOG, Wachs et al. (2012) interviewed a total of 518 fifth to tenth graders in four different schools. The survey made it possible to identify three dimensions of different strategies in online communication settings. Based on the cited research, the behavior patterns in sexual online harassment situations can be divided into *cognitive-technical behavior*, *aggressive self-assertive behavior* and *helpless behavior* (Wachs et al., 2012).

The *cognitive-technical behavior* is characterized by the questioning of the offenders' intentions. In this dimension, the children question the intention of the online communication. They try to break off the contact with the offender by asking him or her to end the communication. They also use technological help such as shutting down the computer or changing various settings on their accounts (Wachs et al., 2012). Grimm et al. (2008) were able to reveal similar children's strategies when experiencing harassment on the Internet. In their survey, young people between the ages of 13 and 21 stated that they reacted to sexual online harassment with ignorance or used the blocking function. Especially the use of the blocking function can be integrated as a technical behavior into the cognitive-technical dimension of Wachs et al. (2012). In addition, the results of Vogelsang's research (2017) can be classified into this heading. The online study with selection options investigated strategies in sexual online victimization situations of a total of 302 adolescents aged 14 to 17 years. Over 70% of the sample stated that they block communication partners when experiencing sexual harassment on the Internet. Besides, 60% of the respondents considered leaving the chat as an option.

Another dimension of action is the *aggressive self-assertive behavior* (Wachs et al., 2012). This dimension includes actions such as clearly stat-

ing that the communication is not wanted. Insults and threats are also expressed. Grimm et al. (2008) were also able to determine strategies in their study that show insulting the communication partner. A comparable selection option at Vogelsang's study (2017) that included insults and aggressive behavior was not given. However, 46% of the surveyed adolescents stated that they would clearly communicate if no further communication was wanted (Vogelsang, 2017).

The *helpless behavior* dimension explored by Wachs et al. (2012) can be assigned to strategies that solve unpleasant online situations only in a limited expedient way. Desperate requests to end the communication were made to the offender or (as a result of a lack of knowledge) no strategies were used. Also, in the study of Vogelsang (2017), 5% of the adolescents stated they would not take any further steps when experiencing sexual online victimization.

Overall, experiences of sexual online harassment are predominantly classified as unpleasant (Grimm et al., 2008). For this reason, strategies to end the communication are applied in the majority of cases. It is also worth mentioning that about 10% of the adolescents stated they had no knowledge of possible prevention and protection strategies against sexual online victimization (Vogelsang, 2017). Considering the research results, it must be noted that the surveys focused mainly on children in grades 5 to 12. Due to the age differences, the results cannot claim representativeness for primary school children.

Prevention

When considering the strategies of primary school children in high-risk communication settings (concerning SOG), it became clear that prevention measures are necessary to ensure appropriate protection. In the present section, insights into theoretical knowledge of prevention work, particularly with regard to school institutions, are given.

The term 'prevention' refers to measurements that can help to protect against hazards and risks. It ensures the physical and mental health of potentially vulnerable persons (Wachs, 2017). In principle, approaches of modern prevention concepts concentrate on "education, information and empowerment of risk groups" (Wachs, 2017, p. 172). Pure deterrence as well as prevention measures based exclusively on prohibitions are not effective and should therefore be avoided (Wachs, 2017; UBSKM, 2019). To enable

the competent use of digital media by children and adolescents, prevention work must focus aspects as "stimulation, support, encouragement [and] strengthening one's own strengths" (Braun, 2001, p. 123). Nevertheless, it must be noted that prevention measures can never guarantee full protection against victimization (Buskotte, 2001).

The small amount of the current researches on strategies of primary school children when confronted with SOG showed that further research is necessary, especially to develop corresponding prevention concepts. For this reason, further research was conducted with the help of an own empirical study.

The present study

The present study aims to identify strategies of primary school children when experiencing high-risk online communication. Based on these results, conclusions can be drawn on how to design prevention concepts to protect children against SOG.

The guiding research questions were as follows:

1. *How do primary school children use digital media, especially social media?*
2. *How do primary school children (possibly) behave in high-risk online situations, especially situations concerning SOG?*
3. *How can prevention concepts (to protect primary school children from SOG) be designed for the use in school contexts (based on the research findings)?*

Primary school children can encounter different dangers and risks in online communication settings. In addition to considering strategies when confronted with SOG, the qualitative survey also addressed aspects of anonymity and identity manipulation as well as the handling of sensitive data. The qualitative approach was particularly appropriate because the field of SOG is considered to be researched only sporadically. Therefore, the present study does not aim to measure objective data but to reconstruct and understand the subjective view of the participants of the interviews (Helfferich, 2009; Flick, 2012).

Methods

Participants

The participants of the study consisted of four male and two female primary school children in fourth grade. Therefore, a total of six children (N = 6) were interviewed. The average age of the children was 10.5 years. All interviewed pupils live together with their parents. Five of the children have at least one sibling. A detailed insight into the short profiles of the interviewed primary school children (which could be created with the help of a short questionnaire) can be requested from the author of this article.

Procedure

In total, three qualitative interviews were conducted with a total of six primary school children (two children per interview) in May 2019. To find volunteers for the qualitative interviews, a call for participants was made. Therefore, 25 flyers describing the aims and procedure of the study were distributed in a selected primary school class. Six positive responses for voluntary participation were given.

The interviews took place at the primary school of the children. For this reason, the setting was familiar to the interviewed children. The provision of a separate room made it possible to conduct the interviews in an undisturbed atmosphere without external distractions. At the beginning of the interviews all participants were briefed on background information and research procedures.

Due to organizational constraints from the primary school, a limited time period (90 minutes) was available to conduct the interviews. Additionally, the interviews were designed as group surveys with two children per interview. However, the subjective view of each child remained the focus of attention, so that group dynamics were not examined (Schreier, 2004).

To answer the research question, a guided interview was embedded in a theatre script. With the help of a hand puppet named "Clara", a chat situation could be simulated. The theatre game made it possible to introduce the topic of SOG in a playful way. Therefore, the primary school children were not confronted with any insensitive content (Gläser & Laudel, 2010).

In the theatre situation, the hand puppet comes across an unknown user profile (Lena2010, profile picture of a girl with brown hair and a red dress)

in a chat room for children. During the communication, more personal details and intimate images were requested. To support the children's narrative flow, maintenance questions and control questions were used (Helfferich, 2009). The interviews were recorded and transcribed afterwards.

Measures

To capture the views and action strategies regarding SOG of the interviewed primary school children, a qualitative approach using a guided interview was implemented.

In the course of the guided interview, the following topics were addressed: the anonymity of chat partners, handling personal data on the Internet, action strategies for ending online communication, help and contact points for support. Moreover, an accompanying short questionnaire provided insights into biographical data (age, family constellation), the media equipment (technical equipment) and media use (access to the Internet, use of social media) of the interviewed children. The questionnaire was presented to the students after the interview and completed together.

Analysis

The collected data material was evaluated and analyzed using qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2015). In terms of the qualitative content analysis, parts of the interviews were coded and categorized.

Results

Media use of the interviewed primary school children

With the help of the short questionnaire, it was possible to gain insights into the media equipment as well as the media use of the interviewed children. A shortened overview is presented in the following table 1.

Table 1: Media use and equipment

Student	Gender	Age	Media equipment	Use of social media
1	female	10	smartphone, computer/laptop, tablet-pc	WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube
2	male	11	computer/laptop, gaming console, tablet-pc	YouTube
3	female	11	smartphone, computer/laptop, tablet-pc, TV	WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube
4	male	11	smartphone, computer/laptop, gaming console, tablet-pc, TV	WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube
5	male	10	smartphone, computer/laptop, gaming console, tablet-pc, TV	WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat. YouTube
6	male	10	smartphone, computer/laptop, gaming console	WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube

All of the respondents have access to the Internet at home. Two children can use this access without any restriction. All smartphone owners can also go online with their smartphones, and two children have also access to the Internet whilst on the move. According to their statements, all participants are online every day, most of them without being accompanied by other people. Only one student uses the Internet mainly together with siblings.

Strategies when confronted with sexual online grooming

With the help of the theatre play, behavioral patterns and strategies in online communication settings of the interviewed primary school children could be identified. They are presented in the following section.

Dangers and risks in online communication

The majority of the interviewed children reflect possible intentions of unknown chat partners. The potential (fraudulent) intention of the communication partner is already critically examined at the beginning of the chat situation. Although the unknown user account asks the hand puppet at the beginning only about its well-being, some primary school children are critical and suspect malicious intentions.

In the setting of the theatre play, the primary school children consider the exchange and subsequent theft of their personal data as dangerous. It

is suspected that the communication partner wants to steal information such as telephone numbers or addresses. When being asked explicitly for their home addresses, one student assumes that the communication partner wants to commit a burglary. Also the danger of a hacker attack is taken into consideration.

Student 1 *(Line 50)*: Hm, that someone just wants to fool her?
Student 6 *(Line 419)*: Maybe if you don't know the (.) uh, well, the chatter.
Student 6 *(Line 421)*: And (.) and he contacts you just like that, for no reason.
Student 3 *(Line 264)*: Because (.) um, that might be for example a stranger. And he breaks into the house and (.) yeah, it is not safe.
Student 3 *(Line 251)*: Maybe it is a hacker.

Some children also suspect that the communication partner intends a meeting in the offline world. The students realize that malicious intentions of communication partners on the Internet do not always solely concern online communication but may also aim for personal meetings. Above all, media-influenced ideas of kidnapping (for example a transport in a van) are expressed. A sexual intention is not mentioned at any time during the interview. Even when explicitly requested to send a picture dressed in underwear, the children do not mention that the communication partner could pursue sexual intentions.

One student suggests the targeted search by adults for younger children as a possible intention. However, the student does not address an explicit danger such as SOG.

Student 1 *(Line 79)*: Hm. If (.) uh for example he or she asks if you live here, then (.) he wants to meet Clara.
Student 1 *(Line 84)*: Um, because he wants to meet her. And (2s) then (2s) yes, (3s) for example, takes her with him.
Student 4 *(Line 269)*: Um. The strange ma//man or woman could (.) come into your house and (2s) take you away.
Student 5 *(Line 469)*: And, and (.) um, it can also be (.) that he just comes with a car and just rings the bell and pretends that he wants to deliver you//something and then//
Student 5 *(Line 473)*: He grabs you and then he puts you in the back of a van.
Student 5 *(Line 392)*: Maybe someone who is also just looking for children.

Anonymity and identity on the Internet

Anonymity and identity play an important role in online communication. Not only the concealment of one's personality but also the manipulation of Internet profiles is possible in online settings (Wachs, 2017).

When the hand puppet is confronted with the unknown user account, half of the interviewed primary school children are skeptical about it. The true identity, which is suspected behind the user profile, is characterized as negative. The information of the profile is stated as deception and the children do not trust them.

The counterpart to these children trusts the information. Although these children also recognize that it is never possible to draw conclusions about true identities from Internet profiles, they nevertheless trust the information of the profile and use it to determine the identity of the communication partner. Gender, age, and appearance are derived from the provided profile information.

Student 1 *(Line 45)*: Um (3s) maybe he is someone who just wrote this name down (.) but is someone else.
Student 2 *(Line 54)*: Someone pretends to be different and then um (.) um (.) writes *I want your number*. And then um (.) there is a bad guy.
Student 5 *(Line 413)*: False identity, especially with those numbers.
Student 5 *(Line 425)*: Because it says 2010. Maybe he or she is just pretending (2s) he is born in 2010?
Student 2 *(Line 48)*: Or 2010 could be her birth date.
Student 3 *(Line 213)*: Hm, she might have brown hair? (5s) Red dress?
Student 4 *(Line 217)*: Because (.) on the picture, it looks like this.

Handling sensitive data

The interviewed primary school children are critical of the passing on of personal data. Three children state they are handling sensitive contact data such as addresses or telephone numbers with reflection and would not reveal them in online communication settings. The passing on of sensitive picture material is also viewed critically. One student clarifies this statement and emphasizes that he would not send his pictures, even if they cannot be traced back to the identity of the children (for example, pictures without a face).

Some children consider the indication of their name and age to be harmless. Also the exchange about everyday school topics or meeting point arrangements with friends is not considered risky. One student considers the passing on of sensitive picture material to be harmless if it happens within the circle of friends.

When looking at the results, it is important to note that the behaviors mentioned by the children in the interview setting may not correlate with real behaviors when confronted with SOG. This assumption can be justi-

fied in particular by the fact that some children are critical of the disclosure of their own personal data but give contradictory advice to the hand puppet in the interview setting.

Student 2 *(Line 94)*: Not where you live or the phone number, the address.
Student 3 *(Line 262)*: And you are neither allowed to say your last name.
Student 5 *(Line 550)*: Because even without a face, she'll know what you look like.
Student 4 *(Line 261)*: But you can say what your name is. And how old you are.
Student 5 *(Line 475)*: You are allowed to talk about things like: Oh look, this homework was hard! or (.) Look, um (.) can you come down for a moment? Like with my brother, because he lives above me (.) and just things like that.
Student 6 *(Line 500)*: You could send it to a friend, when you are in underwear.

Blocking the chat partner

To end the online communication and break off contact with the chat partner, one of the interviewed students mentions the blocking button. This possibility of breaking off contact is already brought up by this student when being asked about his living place. He is aware of the blocking function and (presumably) has the courage to use it.

Student 5 *(Line 441)*: You can also//you can simply (.) if someone writes to you, you can also block him immediately.
Student 5 *(Line 546)*: Actually I know such situations. I would have blocked him already at the first question.

Deleting the chat

In addition to the function of blocking the communication partner, the deletion of the chat is also considered by two interviewed children. In contrast to the blocking function, the delete function does not have a permanent character on most platforms. It removes the message history only temporarily. Often the communication partner still has the opportunity to contact the person. It could not be determined in detail whether the interviewed children are aware of the difference between the blocking and deleting function.

Student 2 *(Line 111)*: Hm. (2s) Delete her from the Chat for Kids list?
Student 3 *(Line 291)*: Hm, she can (.) still delete the number.

Keeping up the contact

The majority of the interviewed children name behavior patterns that keep up the online communication by asking or answering questions. By asking questions, the primary school children try to determine the identity or the intention of the chat partner. These strategies do not lead to the termination of the communication. It must be mentioned that the maintenance of contact does not need to be desired by the children. Those behaviors can result from the fact that the primary school children do not consider the contact to be risky or do not have any alternative action strategies.

There are also obfuscating behaviors that encourage the communication partner to provide further answers. Identical to the strategy of asking questions, there is also no interruption of communication. When being asked about their home addresses, the interviewed children respond by mentioning it being a secret. Statements like this may encourage the communication partner to ask further questions. One student expressed the naming of a wrong address. In this way, he tries to avoid concrete statements, but the communication is not explicitly stopped.

A further form of maintaining contact is the initiation of a personal meeting. When asked to indicate their home address, one student suggests a personal meeting in a park. The contact is not only maintained by suggesting this meeting in the offline world but also even intensified if the suggestion is implemented. In principle it is necessary to consider if the children may be applying a previously learned strategy (in online communication settings) that recommends meeting Internet acquaintances only in public places.

Student 1 *(Line 113)*: Um (.) why? You can write: *Why do you want to know this?*
Student 3 *(Line 291)*: And (2s) uh (.) and she can write: *Who are you?*
Student 2 *(Line 74)*: Tell her: *This is a secret.*
Student 6 *(Line 458)*: Or just give her the wrong address.
Student 2 *(Line 88)*: They should meet in the park.
Student 2 *(Line 91)*: So that they get to know each other better.

Defense

Two of the interviewed primary school children responded to the request of sending a sensitive picture (in underwear) by rejecting it. The fourth graders clearly stated that this request of the chat partner will not be followed up. However, only one student mentions a subsequent action strategy

which leads to the termination of the contact (blocking the communication partner).

Student 3 *(Line 294)*: And she can say: I don't send photos with underwear.
Student 5 *(Line 456)*: Or maybe say: No.

Help from outside

The support of external reference persons can help primary school children to act appropriately in unpleasant online situations and end communication settings in a goal-oriented manner. The following section describes which contact persons the interviewed primary school children mentioned, if assistance was needed.

Close relatives and friends

During the interview, four of the children name their parents as the first point of contact in unpleasant online situations. One student specifies this information and explicitly names his mother. All primary school children who have an older brother would also ask him for help. Other siblings are not mentioned. The primary school children also state they would turn to friends they trust. The children do not consider asking a third person for help during the interview situation by themselves. Only when the interview leader gives them an impulse, the fourth-graders name the above-mentioned contact persons.

Student 4 *(Line 306)*: My parents.
Student 5 *(Line 510)*: She can just (1s) she can tell her mother.
Student 5 *(Line 528)*: Um (.) maybe, tell her brother or (.) family.

Discussion

The results of the study underline the frequent and mostly autonomous use of digital media for communication. The focus of the present research was to analyze the children's strategies in high-risk online communication settings, especially when confronted with SOG.

In principle, it can be said all the interviewed children are at least informed about single dangers and risks of online communication. However,

neither the term SOG nor possible offender strategies for building up trust were discussed in the interview setting. The displayed strategies of the primary school children in high-risk online situations differ. Nonetheless, the majority of the children do not react appropriately in high-risk communication settings. The study results highlight the necessity to sensitize society and children especially to the dangers of SOG. Based on these insights, conclusions on preventive measures to protect children against SOG can be drawn.

Limitations

According to the qualitative procedure, the present study cannot claim to be representative. Since the evaluation of the data was always carried out in terms of the described aspects, this standardization made it possible to at least ensure partial objectivity. Moreover, the simulation of the theatre play merely represents "What if …?" situations. The primary school children indicated that they *would* react in certain cases in a certain way. Therefore, the transferability of the present study results are limited since the analyzed advice about how to deal with SOG was given to a hand puppet.

Implications and outlook

The results showed that no homogeneous level of knowledge and action can be expected when pupils are confronted with dangers and risks on the Internet. Therefore, preventive measures to protect against SOG must be implemented to support primary school children when dealing with dangerous and risky situations online.

It is indispensable to familiarize primary school children with the dangers and risks of digital media (Rauh, 2016). The interviewed children did not mention any SOG experience during the interview setting. Thus, it is necessary to do preventive awareness-raising work (in primary schools) so children can recognize the danger of SOG and, depending on their initial situation, apply appropriate strategies. In particular, the awareness-raising work in school settings must focus on the manipulative procedures of offenders but should not generate fear or panic. The aim is to help children to use digital media confidently and fearlessly.

Furthermore, children must develop awareness that they can never be sure about who is hiding behind Internet profiles (Weißer Ring e. V.,

2019). Therefore, it is important to discuss anonymity and identity on the Internet with children. The available results have shown that the majority of children are generally critical of anonymous profiles. Nevertheless, some primary school children rely on profile information and trust them. The possible manipulation of profile pictures and information must therefore be addressed in appropriate prevention units. Communication with unknown chat partners should be handled with caution and reflection.

Considering the available results, the handling of personal data in chat situations must be trained in preventive work. Teachers must make clear that sensitive information such as telephone numbers or addresses should never be passed on. Even if the chat partner assures secrecy of the data, the children must be aware that the passing on of information bears risks and should be avoided. Anonymity on the Internet can also be used advantageously for one's protection. Since SOG offenders use children's personal information for selection or manipulation, sensitive data must be treated with caution, both when published on social networks and when passed on in online communication settings. Children must internalize the importance of handling their own private information carefully (Weißer Ring e. V., 2019).

Since it seems only partially realistic to completely prohibit uploading images (due to the frequent use of social media applications), prevention measures should include at least familiarize children with appropriate privacy and profile settings. With the help of these settings, the publicity of information can be restricted and a first hurdle for SOG offenders can be created.

In addition to awareness-raising work, it is essential to suggest suitable strategies to the children with which they can ward off contact attempts by offenders (Katzer, 2014). The results of the study showed that not all children have strategies that lead to the termination of communication. To end the contact in a targeted manner, it makes sense to block the chat partner (Weißer Ring e. V., 2019). Therefore, on one hand, the technical function must be presented and explained to the children, and on the other, it must be made clear that blocking a communication partner is allowed at any time. When looking at the results, it is also important to note that deleting the chat partner (as mentioned by the primary school children) may not be as effective as blocking. In general, it is relevant to encourage children to break off the contact completely. Sexual online grooming offenders should not be given the opportunity to influence the children by manipulation and continue with involving them in the conversation.

It is also important to offer contact points to which children can turn should they be uncertain. Contact persons can also provide help if the offenders make contact again. The person of trust must offer the primary school children appropriate help in all possible phases of SOG. Children should not be given the feeling that they may only turn to outsiders when they are victimized (Vogelsang, 2017). The results show that primary school children prefer to contact people within the family. In principle, this behavior is appropriate if the family members have sufficient media competence to help the children effectively; therefore it should be encouraged. At the same time it is important to also suggest non-family contact points such as aid organizations or teachers who can be contacted.

If preventive measures are taken, the peer-to-peer method, which is currently still rarely implemented, can be considered (Katzer, 2014). Peer-to-peer education refers to the educational and preventive work of children by their peers (Katzer, 2014). Advantages are not only the relationship of trust that children have for the so-called "scouts" but also the relief of teachers if media education support is provided by scouts (Katzer, 2014). Since the "generational-logical process" (Friedrichs & Sander, 2010, p. 284) of passing on knowledge from older to younger generations is no longer consistently implemented in the case of media literacy, but rather competencies and instructions of media use are also exchanged within the peers (Friedrichs & Sander, 2010), it would make sense to support this process. Whether or not this concept can already be integrated in primary schools requires further research.

Strengthening one's self-confidence is important in prevention measures. Younger children in particular must be made aware that they can trust their feelings when a situation seems strange to them (Freelance, 2018). Prevention should therefore also include the strengthening of self-confidence and encourage the children to make their limits clear (Wachs, 2017). Despite the implementation of prevention concepts, it cannot be ignored that even children who are experienced and self-confident in dealing with digital media are inferior to the strategies of offenders. There is an imbalance of power between offenders and those affected (Wachs, 2017). It must be made clear, both in awareness-raising work and in the discussion of how to act in online communication situations, that the children are not to blame if the contact continues or if offenders contact them again (Buskotte, 2001). It must also be emphasized that, even if preventive measures are disregarded, the blame always lies with the offenders and never with the children affected (UBSKM, 2019). Identical to other prevention concepts,

prevention in schools must therefore not be expected to completely prevent children from being affected (Marquardt-Mau, 2002).

Nevertheless, primary schools are able to enabling comprehensive prevention against SOG (in this volume, see Kimmel et al. in chapter 4.2). Not only explicit subjects such as SOG but also general media education is important and therefore should be taken into consideration. Teachers can use media education to help primary school children acting self-confidently and critically when using the Internet. For the future, it would therefore be desirable to implement a sustainable media education starting as early as in primary school.

Ethical approval

This study has been conducted in strict adherence to established ethical guidelines for scientific research. The ethical considerations and principles governing this research align with recognized standards and regulations to ensure the welfare and rights of all participants involved (informed consent, anonymity/ pseudonymity and confidentiality, voluntary participation, beneficence and non-maleficence, transparent communication).

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