SCROL

Safety for Children and their Rights OnLine

Exploring Children's and Parents'
Online Experiences and Safety in Nepal :
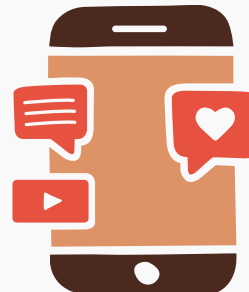
Perspectives from Child-Led Research

Background & Context

Nepal's rapid digitalisation has transformed children's internet and social media access, creating both educational opportunities and safety concerns.

While platforms like Facebook, Messenger, TikTok, and YouTube have become essential tools for education and social connections, they have also heightened the risk of the occurrence of Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE).

The combination of limited digital literacy among children, parents, and educators with unsafe internet practices has created an urgent need for enhanced online safety measures.

To address these challenges, Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL) and its partners, Center for Legal Research and Resource Development (CeLRRD), Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN) and Women Youth in Social Service Human Rights (WYESHR) launched the Safety for Children and their Rights OnLine (SCROL) Nepal programme in the Bagmati and Gandaki provinces and Kathmandu. As part of a broader initiative across multiple Asian countries and Kenya, SCROL Nepal protects children aged 12–18 from OCSE by building collaborative partnerships with families, communities, and law enforcement agencies to create safer online environments.

About the research

Research Objectives

To engage children and young people in researching online safety topics that matter and are most appropriate for them

To enable children to lead their research on online safety rather than being research subjects only

To bring children's and young people's perspectives into public debate and address online safety issues they identify as important and relevant to them.

TdH NL's approach is fundamentally rooted in placing children at the centre of all initiatives, recognising their unique perspectives and capabilities as active change agents. The SCROL programme demonstrates this principle through its innovative Child-Led Research component, empowering children as active and more informed researchers rather than passive subjects.

This participatory approach aligns with TdH NL's core belief that children should proactively participate in matters affecting their lives - as shown by young researchers developing research questions, conducting surveys and interpreting the impacts of data on their lives. The programme demonstrates how children can address online safety challenges meaningfully while ensuring their voices help formulate solutions. This approach enriches the quality of research for and by children and empowers them to be more capable advocates for their digital safety.

Methodology

The research methodology followed a comprehensive participatory approach. Initially, SCROL engaged child researchers through peer-to-peer OCSE prevention sessions in Bagmati and Gandaki provinces.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

84 children aged 11-17 years (64 from Bagmati and 20 from Gandaki) volunteering after receiving OCSE orientation. These young researchers received thorough training from partner organisations and maintained regular contact with peer educators throughout the project.

CHILD-LED RESEARCH

The research design was truly child-led, with 162 children collaboratively developing the questionnaire. From an initial pool of over 100 questions, they refined the final survey to include 7 questions for peers and 6 for parents. Using simple random sampling, researchers in Bagmati Province surveyed 320 peers and 128 parents, while those in Gandaki Province reached 123 peers and 83 parents.

STRICT ETHICAL GUIDELINES

Data collection followed strict ethical guidelines. The study ensured participant anonymity, voluntary participation, and informed consent. No remuneration was provided, and support services were available for participants requiring assistance with case reporting or mental health services. All collected data was processed through peer educators and partner organisations, who produced comprehensive reports for each province. Using any stories, photos, or videos required explicit participant approval.

Key Findings

Social Media Usage Patterns

According to the survey results, Facebook emerges as the dominant social media platform.

42% of respondents indicating it as their primary choice for online engagement.

YouTube is the second most popular platform, capturing:

26% of user preference.

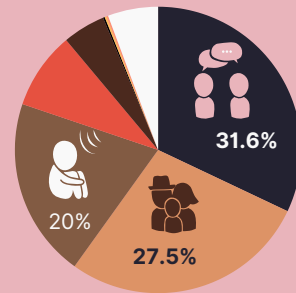Instagram maintains a significant presence.

14% of users favouring it as their main social platform.

Response to Online Negativity

The data reveals essential insights about youth coping mechanisms when encountering harmful online content.

A plurality of young users (31.6%) prioritise peer support by confiding in friends, while a slightly smaller proportion (27.5%) choose to discuss these issues with their parents. Notably, a concerning 20% of respondents internalise these experiences by keeping them private. This isolation can increase the risk of revictimisation and lead to mental health issues among children, highlighting potential areas for intervention.

31.6%
27.5%
20%

- Prioritise peer support by confiding in friends
- Discuss these issues with their parents
- Internalise these experiences by keeping them private
- Discuss with siblings
- Report to Police
- Others
- Teachers
- Ingore
- Customer Service Provider

Digital Safety Practises

78.6% of users

demonstrate awareness of basic online safety measures by consistently declining friendship requests from unknown individuals on Facebook, indicating a good foundation of protective behaviours.

Social Media Perception

The survey reveals a notable division in attitudes toward social media engagement.

49.2%
40.2%
No Idea

Express caution by discouraging peers from joining social platforms.

Maintain a positive outlook and actively encourage participation.

Neutral

Mental Health Impact

1 in 6 respondents

(17%) acknowledge experiencing psychological distress related to their online activities, highlighting the importance of mental health support in digital spaces.

66

"I compulsively check my Instagram for followers, likes, and views. For the past month, I haven't been able to sleep, eat, or interact with others because my best friend and I had an argument over a boy she liked. As revenge, she posted unflattering photos of me in my comments section. People are commenting that I'm ugly and have dark skin. I've lost many followers."

- Rishita (name changed)

Digital Account Security

78.6% of users

demonstrate strong ethical digital practices by maintaining strict account security, specifically avoiding trading or sharing their online and gaming accounts.
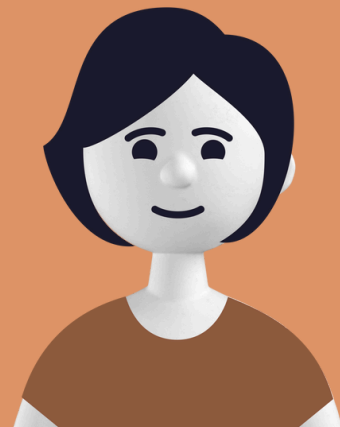
Parental Oversight Acceptance
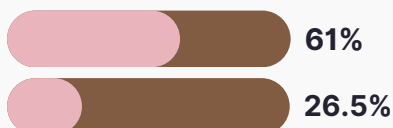
53%

more than half of young users

have a positive attitude toward parental monitoring and established online boundaries, suggesting a balanced approach to digital supervision.

" Monitoring and setting boundaries are good, they protect us from OCSE. However, they [parents] shouldn't interfere with our studies, privacy, or personal life." - Rima (name changed)

Parent-Child Digital Dynamics

50.7%

approximately half of the children express comfort using their devices in their parents' presence, suggesting a relatively balanced level of trust and openness in digital behaviour.

Parental Control Approaches
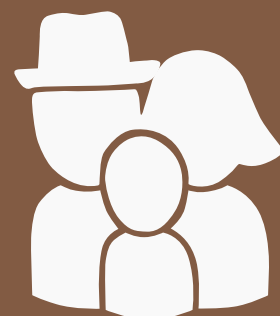
61%

26.5%

Regarding social media access, most parents (61%) opt for an open approach with unrestricted usage, while approximately one-quarter (26.5%) implement complete restrictions, revealing diverse parenting strategies in digital supervision.
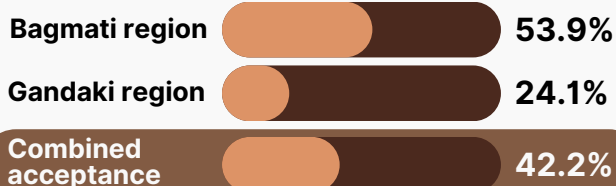
Child Protection Awareness

55% **(more than half of parents)**

lack knowledge about available reporting mechanisms for Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE), indicating a crucial gap in child safety awareness.

Parental acceptance of children's having alternative gender and sexual identity online

Parental acceptance of their children's alternative gender and sexual identity, e.g. LGBTQ+, discovered through social media varies across Nepal's regions.

Bagmati region	53.9%
Gandaki region	24.1%
Combined acceptance	42.2%

The Bagmati region shows higher acceptance (53.91%) than Gandaki (24.10%), with combined acceptance at 42.18%.

Bagmati region	29.7%
Gandaki region	45.8%
Combined resistance	36%

The remaining parents are uncertain (21.33%) or would seek specialist help (0.47%), suggesting more progressive attitudes in urbanised Bagmati.
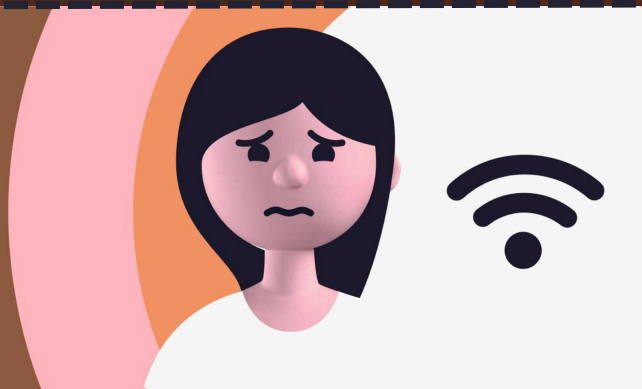
Key Recommendations

Drawing from our research findings, the following strategies to strengthen OCSE prevention and response are recommended:

For Children

1 Implement targeted awareness campaigns on online safety, focusing on handling stranger requests and avoiding phishing attempts.

2 Encourage children to share negative online experiences with trusted adults, as currently, 20% in Bagmati and 18% in Gandaki keep these experiences to themselves.

3 Establish accessible mental health support systems for children experiencing social media-related stress.

Continue expanding OCSE awareness through peer-to-peer sessions and campaigns about responsible social media use.

For Parents

1

Implement enhanced parental awareness programs about OCSE reporting mechanisms, as over half of parents lack this knowledge.

2

Introduce comprehensive cyber safety training in schools and community centres, covering privacy settings and threat recognition.

3

Promote open parent-child communication about online activities.

4

Develop more accessible and user-friendly reporting mechanisms for online exploitation.

5

Address victim-blaming attitudes through awareness programs while emphasising proper support for affected children

6

Provide education about online privacy risks and personal information sharing.
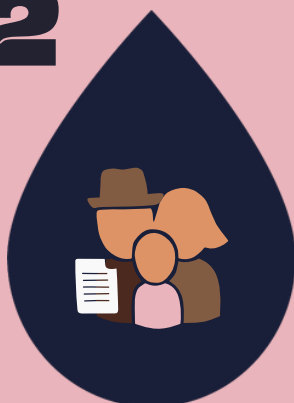
Current and Future Use of Findings

The research findings will be implemented through three key channels:

1

The first is dissemination and reflection through community workshops, where child researchers will present their findings to peers, parents, and local leaders. Schools will receive child-friendly versions of the research, and facilitated reflection sessions will help children and community members explore implications and develop solutions.

2

The second channel integrates these findings into SCROL's existing activities to enhance their relevance and effectiveness. This includes developing new materials and refining parent education programs to address the identified gaps in digital literacy and online safety awareness.

3

The third channel focuses on strengthening advocacy for improved online safety policies at local and national levels. We will collaborate with law enforcement to enhance reporting mechanisms and work with social media platforms to address the specific safety concerns identified in the study.

For more information, Contact us!

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