Preventing Online Child Sexual Exploitation:
The Consistency and Duplication of Non-Government Organisation Guidelines

Problem

> Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) dedicated to child safety provide accessible information on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) education and prevention strategies for children and parents. This thesis looked at the consistency in messaging guidelines published by Australian NGOs regarding grooming, sextortion and capping prevention.

Aim

> The aim was to understand what is currently being published by Australian NGOs regarding OCSE prevention and to analyse the consistency and duplications between the guidelines.

Methodology

> This thesis thematically analysed 67 OCSE prevention guidelines published by 10 separate child safety NGOs.
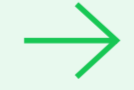
Key findings

The theme of 'do not talk to strangers', is the only theme to have 70% of the chosen NGOs publishing this prevention guideline. **Promoting the idea of 'stranger danger' is a disapproved prevention tactic** as it disregards those who access children online whom they know in the physical world.

The prevention guideline of encouraging **parents to implement privacy, security and parental controls was the least consistent prevention guideline analysed**, however this technique is heavily supported by academic literature.

Only two NGOs provided a definition for all OCSE crimes of grooming, sextortion and capping, both NGOs being stakeholders within the ACCCE. However, grooming had 70% of NGOs providing a definition.

Duplication was not commonly seen, as each NGO tends to interpret important guidelines and techniques in their own terminology.

Limitations

> This thesis disregarded prevention guidelines that quoted or linked to external government information if they were not clearly stated as purely the NGO's information. This also included the exclusion of any information or education resources that required email sign-up or were hidden behind paywalls. This was due to this information not being readily available to the general public and because one of the key demographics is children, and that information is not easily accessible.

Implications and recommendations

The factor of the 'primary protector' that is heavily relied on in the prevention of OCSE can be problematic as **not all children have that figure present in their lives**. OCSE guidelines should further elaborate on prevention guidelines targeted towards children without that protector and those who are at higher risk of OCSE such as those with mental illness and low socio-economic status.

If NGOs publish guidelines regarding strangers online, it is important they include that **children can be groomed online by an adult they know in the physical world** and state that 'online friends' are still strangers to the child.

Guidelines should also express the importance of parental supervision of their child's online activities; however, they should also include the importance of parent-child trust and that **heavy security, supervision and restriction, is not the most effective mechanism** in preventing OCSE harm.

Encourage NGOs to **provide the definitions of the full suite of OCSE crimes to their audiences**. Education is key to OCSE prevention and children may not even know a crime is occurring if they do not know that crime exists.