

An emerging issue field to address a Grand Challenge? Organizational approaches to Children Online Security

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I. Introduction

In the developed world, the current generation of children consider internet as an integral and natural part of their lives, having grown up connected. With developing countries gaining online access at an increasing speed, over one third of internet users worldwide are under the age of eighteen (Livingstone, Stoilova, & Nandagiri, 2019). Digital technology is supposed to favor advances in the solution of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): poverty (SDG1), good health and Well Being (SDG3), quality education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5), prepare them for future good jobs and economic growth (SDG8), reduce inequalities (SDG10), responsible consumption (SDG12); even ameliorate conditions of peace and justice for them to grow up (SDG16). Research has shown that a wide range of children's rights depicted in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC; United Nations General Assembly, 1989) are being offered vast opportunities online, and thus they are supposedly positively affected by internet access, in itself is considered a right by children and many national legislations.

However, there is growing concern among parents, educators, politicians, and organizations regarding the possible risks children may encounter online. Regulations are being passed protecting consumers right to privacy online, recognizing Children's Online Safety (COS) requires specific attention, due to the complexity of this matter. In fact, several IT companies received multi-million fines for data privacy infringements both in Europe and the US. Google was deemed responsible of children's data protection infringements and using said data for

commercialization purposes on their You Tube platform without their parents' consent, and agreed on a plan to elevate children data protection that included a \$170 million dollar fine as well as a compromise for transparency where children are involved (New York Times, 2019).

Our systematic analysis of the literature concludes that since how to prevent possible online harms to children's well-being is a complex matter, it demands the collaboration of all key stakeholders involved and should be addressed at an issue field level (Zietsma et al. 2016). Several exchange fields are participating in the ongoing debate of how digital technology is transforming children's lives and how to provide a safer online environment for them. Industrial, professional and opposite social movements exchange fields are producing fragmented conclusions, sometimes in direct opposition to each other, to position their claims. An extended notion of Corporate Responsibility based on the social connection of all agents involved (Young, 2006) may be useful since the issue has transcended private, community and even national structures. Our preliminary findings present several interorganizational collaborations, with stakeholders of different fields interacting with one another with the purpose of negotiating coordination to respond to COS.

II. Why should firms be concerned about COS

There is growing consensus in literature that corporate responsibility (CR) is continually expanding upstream, downstream and even historically (Schrempf-Stirling, Palazzo & Philips, 2012). Of special interest to the debate around children online safety is Young's (2006) social connection approach to CR, that moves from a liability-based model to include the network of shareholders partaking with the social issue at hand to consider the broader consequences of their corporate activities (Schrempf, 2014). Responsibility is not solely based upon the possibility to prove causality between corporate actions and consequences for consumers, it derives "from belonging together with others in a system of interdependent processes of cooperation and competition" (Young, 2006, p. 119). Responsibility therefore is no longer only linked to causality, but on the social connection of an actor to an issue (Schrempf, 2014)

This new model of CR proposes a shared responsibility among corporate agents not only for the harm done (retrospective), but requests they refrain from causing possible future harms (proactive), and even do good as they do business (“political” CR). Background conditions that were considered static under liability CR should be scrutinized, questioned and changed to better address the social issue at hand (Schrempf-Stirling, Palazzo, & Philips, 2012).

Schrempf (2014) presented a useful model to assist in identifying when does a social issue become an issue for a corporation. She advanced three parameters: a business connection (through corporate activities); internal stakeholders’ cognition, and external stakeholder pressure. The combination of these three parameters assist in identifying the stakeholders’ network around a certain social issue, and how can they come to action to solve it.

Schrempf (2016) applied Young’s social connection CR model to illustrate several societal debates around CR issues such as the fast food’s industry responsibility in obesity epidemics; video game developers and their responsibility in increasing adolescent violence; and even historic CR that held companies responsible long after they had profited from actions done in the past, since their business appeared to have supported social injustices (such as companies dealing with illegal regimes). Building on the social connection CR model, she presented four types of responsibility: action responsibility (concrete CR behaviors that leads towards favorable solutions of the issue at hand); information responsibility (related to transparency duties, it can be defined as “providing balanced communication about the corporation products and its effects” (p. 321); damage control (addressing the potential consequences of products and services on consumers’ health and well-being) and participation responsibility (working together with network stakeholders to find solutions).

Schrempf (2014, p. 322, citing cited Roloff, 2007, p. 234) concluded that there had been an increase in multistakeholder initiatives (MSIs) in which “actors from business, civil society and governmental or supranational institutions come together in order to find a common approach to an issue that affects them all and

that is too complex to be addressed effectively without collaboration". The relevance of MSIs to better address GC has been recognized by literature (George et al, 2016; Zietsma et al, 2016; Furnari, 2016) as well as specifically established in Goal # 17 as the means to achieve all other sixteen SDGs.

III. Concepts

III. a) Grand Challenges (GC)

GC have been defined as "a specific critical barrier(s), that, if removed, would help solve an important societal problem with a likelihood of global impact through widespread implementation" (George et al., 2016: 1881). GC are described as long standing, multifaceted social issues that defy easy solutions (Ferraro et al., 2015). They contain critical barriers that render solutions implemented by individual organizations or government less effective (George et al., 2016). Partnerships are recommended to accomplish SDGs by 2030 (SDG17). GC are multidisciplinary, foster epistemological pluralism and call for the pursuit of unconventional ideas and novel approaches to tackle large, unresolved problems. Ferraro et al. (2015) identified three main dimensions of a GC:

complexity (many interactions and associations, emergent understandings and nonlinear dynamics), uncertainty (both problems and their evolution are difficult to forecast for the actors), and they are evaluative (problems can be approached and understood in multiple ways across jurisdictional boundaries). GC typically transcend geographic, economic, and societal borders, being multidisciplinary by nature. The greater the complexity and interdisciplinary of a challenge, the greater the number of concerned stakeholders. Key to enable successful interaction among heterogeneous actors over prolonged periods of time is to define a structure and rules of engagement (participatory architecture), accepting difference in points of view (Ferraro et al., 2015).

Hard-to-measure concepts such as COS are relevant to GC since they often indicate how people understand their situations, thereby shaping their actions. Ferraro et al. (2015) suggested linking GC to recent work on institutional complexity and the consequences of multiple institutional logics, being that organizations might be embedded in multiple (and sometimes even opposite)

normative orders. Managing coexisting multiple logics in times of institutional complexity, is a necessary organizational competency for engagement in GC.

III. b) Exchange and Issue Fields

Zietsma et al. (2016) defined exchange fields as a “community of organizations that interact together frequently and fatefully” (Scott, 1995: 207-208) in a “recognized area of institutional life” (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983: 148). A focal population of actors and their exchange partners, sharing practices, norms and references to a common identity. They might be classified into industry, professional and social movement exchange fields.

Being that the concept of organizational fields is vital to understand institutional processes and organizations (Scott, 1995), and they are often complex and pluralistic, Zietsma et al. (2016) complained that the literature had focused on common culture, shared networks, and boundaries (established through common meaning systems and intense relationships), relegating the differences among field types and their characteristics. They presented a scaffolding structure upon which to construct further research on institutional fields.

Especially relevant to our study is the differentiation between exchange and issue fields, per the purpose a field serve: to negotiate, govern and/or compete over meanings and practices that affect multiple fields. They typically contain a diversity of actors, “even including populations to their own institutional infrastructure that may be in different exchange fields”, and may be categorized within competitive, interstitial and bridging issue fields (Zietsma et al., 2016: 22).

Interstitial spaces are “small-scale settings where individuals positioned in different fields interact occasionally and informally around common activities to which they devote limited time” (Furnari, 2014: 11). Bridging issue fields exist when “issues are inherently cross-jurisdictional and will remain so over time, such as the governance of common resources or shared issues” (Zietsma et al., 2016).

III. c) Children Online Safety (COS)

Livingstone, Stoilova, & Nandagiri (2019: 12) applied Nissenbaum's (2003: 3) definition of privacy as "neither a right to secrecy nor a right to control, but a right to appropriate flow of personal information". Three elements are deemed critical by the authors: the notion of privacy as relational and contextual, the concept of appropriateness and the flow of data. This definition underlines the importance of relationships and possible power imbalances as research has demonstrated, specially between corporations that provide social online interaction in exchange for the use of their data, mostly ignored by consumers, or not fully understood. Either way, their informed consent was tainted by disinformation or lack of skills.

There are three main types of relationships or contexts that may affect online privacy both for children as adults: interpersonal privacy (how individuals share or withhold information from others); institutional privacy (data is used by public institutions such as school records or medical registries), and commercial privacy (how data is commercialized by private companies). Each of these kinds of privacies posed several challenges to children and elicited from them coping strategies (Livingstone, Stoilova and Nandagiri, 2019).

Special recognition is given by literature to the way in which the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR), which took effect on 25 May 2018, recognized children as recipients of special data protection efforts. For the first time the EU established children's data was worthy of protection, and delineated specific requirements to ensure it:

"Children merit specific protection with regard to their personal data, as they may be less aware of the risks, consequences and safeguards concerned and their rights in relation to the processing of personal data. Such specific protection should, in particular, apply to the use of personal data of children for the purposes of marketing or creating personality or user profiles and the collection of personal data with regard to children when using services offered directly to a child. The consent of the holder of parental responsibility should not be necessary in the context of preventive or counselling services offered directly to a child." (Recital 38, GDPR)

Livingstone (2018, p. 19) underlined the urgent need to provide sounder empirical ground, specially concerning three key issues: children's media literacy (their awareness of both their digital rights and possible online risks); the harms needed to be avoided; and the "implied nature of family relations" regarding family dynamics (parental supervision, children's privacy from their parents, European families' media literacy to act as assumed by the GDPR).

IV. Methodology

COS has recently received much academic attention, expanding over several disciplines. To better identify, evaluate and synthesize the resulting literature we conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) (Booth, Papaioannou & Sutton, 2002) to answer our research question: How do interorganizational collaborations address COS?

Since our topic was multidisciplinary, we sampled a wide range of disciplines' databases, including Law, Management, Public Policy, Family Sciences, Education, Health, Technology/ Media and Communication Studies. This study focuses on the overlap of these areas.

We applied the snowball technique to identify further studies and references as cited in articles previously selected. Key researchers were identified and additional searches were performed to retrieve their most relevant publications. Due to the relevance, certain stakeholders web pages were periodically screened to retrieve reports with up to date findings on our subject (NGOs, transnational organizations, MSIs related to Children Well-being online and COS). We also conducted hand searches on selected journals.

A title screen review followed, sorting into relevant and non-relevant citations. All works that meet our criteria were tabulated to facilitate comparisons and contrasts among studies. We are currently on the final stage of our SLR, content screening.

IV. Preliminary Findings

While we are still on the stage of final selection and careful reading on our iterative process, some preliminary results have emerged.

While the debate surrounding the “datification of children” had recently caught public attention, there is growing consensus in literature that a paradox surrounds COS: while protecting children privacy online is of the uttermost importance, so is their right to connect and express themselves as freely as possible. Children should be considered as specific recipients of online protection. Age and other dimensions such as socioeconomic status, education, gender, skills render vast differences among children efficacy as online consumers. Parents and educators are urged to move from a discipline and controlling parenting style to a surveillance model that allows children active participation online while being protected. Media literacy is urgently needed for educators and children alike. Finally, the importance of rules and regulations to establish standards of control were recognized.

Most of the children worldwide perceive the internet as an integral part of their lives and may not be aware of the online risks they may be exposed to. Chernyavskaya and Livingstone (2015) described three groups of online risks for children: regarding content (including inappropriate, potentially dangerous, even illegal content); related to the ways children use the internet creating and sharing content online (cyberbullying, sexting, and their role as consumers in the e-commerce sector); and concerning their interaction with other individuals online that may result in grooming or meeting with abusive strangers. They concluded that the use of mobile devices increased these potential harms.

The initiatives that counteract said risks may also be divided into three groups, according to Chernyavskaya and Livingstone (2015): education, awareness-raising and research (including the publication of guidelines and training for responsible internet use); governmental regulation, coordination and standard

setting (such as the EU GDPR); and multi-stakeholder governance (including co and self- regulation) implemented generally by the private and non-governmental sector. Stakeholders may simultaneously participate at several levels, locally, nationally or even internationally.

Several kinds of MSIs are mushrooming around children digital wellness, with COS being the most cited challenge being addressed. We are currently in the final stages of mapping the international stakeholders network surrounding COS. Applying the three parameters of Schrempf's (2014) model (business connection, internal stakeholders' cognition and external stakeholder pressure) we will analyze whether they facilitate how can actors come to action to promote safer online environments for children.

V. Conclusion

Children online rights in the digital age require a difficult balance between their right of freedom (of speech, of reunion with others, of expressing themselves multi-modally) and their right to privacy. Our systematic literature review supports the idea that children online safety and data protection is indeed a GC (complex, not an easy or sole identifiable cause nor solution, multiplicity of actors). Corporations play an essential role in participating in interorganizational collaborations with other key network stakeholders to create safer online environments in which children may be protected and thrive.

Our study contributes to the growing stream of organizational approaches to GC. Building on the notion that GC demand collective action we have analyzed contributions from multidisciplinary academic sources to COS to identify which organizational forms are tackling COS.

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