

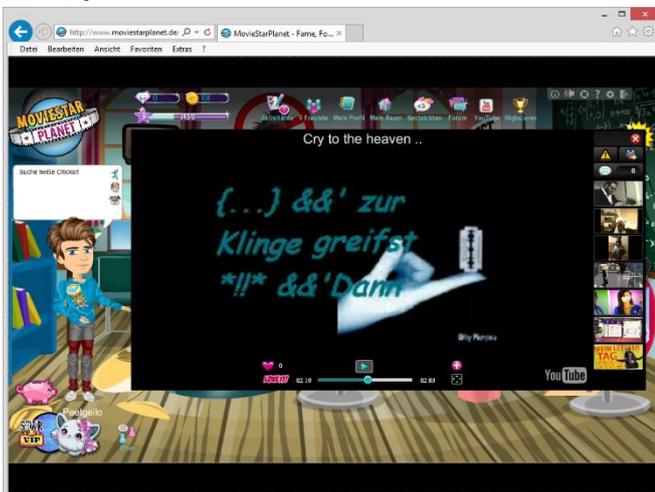
Promotion of self-harm behavior in the social web

Platform operators must better protect children and young persons

Proanaskinnygirl uploads images of her emaciated body as 'thinspiration' to her blog. *German.cut.girl* posts self-harm 'selfies' – photos of her bleeding cuts and scars. 10-year-old Emma reports about trying to kill herself seven times titled 'Life or death??? I can't go on any longer'. In the social web, this content trivializing or idealizing eating disorders, self-harm behavior and suicide is very common.

One out of three cases recorded was endangering to young persons

jugendschutz.net's research revealed 448 profiles, videos and photos with harmful content. Mainly girls (90%) at an average age of 15 years posted the content, the youngest were 9 years old.

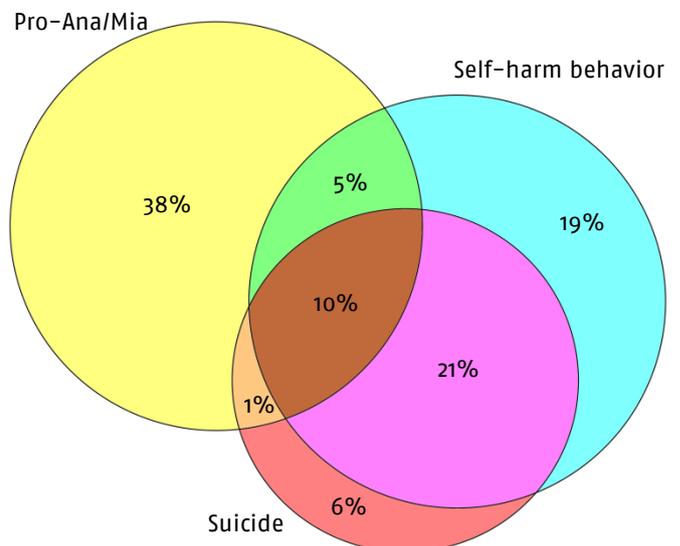


Posts trivializing self-harm behavior could even be found in communities designed for kids.

The photos, videos and texts are often extensively worked on and aesthetically staged which makes them particularly attractive to young persons. What is new is that children in communities specifically designed for them also come across the glorification of self-harm behavior.

Often combination of different risk areas

More than half of the content supported self-harm behavior (55%) or eating disorders (54%). The amount of posts promoting suicide was surprisingly high (38%).



Many websites promoting self-harm behavior also contained information about suicide.

37 % of all cases concerned content of two or three of the risk areas researched. The big overlap in terms of suicide and self-harm behavior (31%) was remarkable.

Downplaying, whitewashing and idealizing

Puberty is very often a risk period for children and young people when they suffer from an increased body dissatisfaction and decreased self-esteem. Trivialized, euphemistic or idealized depictions of eating disorders then break down the barriers to engage in a dangerous behavior. The risk of stumbling across such content is particularly high on platforms popular amongst youngsters such as Instagram and Tumblr.

With a lot of the social media platforms being interconnected it is very easy for children and young people to find even more self-harm content. Users try to raise their status in their social group and thus ensure further dissemination

added to the list. Additionally, providers have to refine their links to online counseling services and take different topics and country-specific issues into account.

There is a need for unified standards in terms of evaluating and dealing with self-harm content. Platform operators must exchange experience and best practice and collaborate with counseling services; in Germany this is the case e.g. with 'Nur einen Klick entfernt – NEKE' i.e. 'Just a click away', a joint initiative of voluntary self-regulatory bodies, associations for suicide prevention and platform operators.

jugendschutz.net carried out this research on the dimension and the circulation of self-harm content in **social web services** specifically attractive to young people (Ask.fm, Blogspot, Facebook, Gutefrage.net, Instagram, Tumblr, YouTube) and in popular **communities for kids** (Moviestarplanet, Topmodel.biz).