

## **ABSTRACT**

The global penetration of the internet and related information and communication technologies (ICS) is intensifying. Increasingly, both adults and children are using the internet to meet some of their educational and entertainment needs. However, the internet contains information that may have adverse impacts on the psychosocial and sexual development of children. Furthermore, children may not be sufficiently equipped to navigate cyber-related risks. And yet some explanations of children's internet use posit that children are not entirely unaware of the many risks connected with internet use. Consequently, the goal of this article was to examine the idea that children have agency – a concept used in the article to describe children's capacity to act independently to pursue their own goals, preferences and choices online – and can meaningfully manage the risks associated with internet use. To do this, the article analyses the narratives of ten (10) purposively selected learners at a secondary (post-primary) school in Chiredzi, aged between 14 and 17 years old, who were learners. The article finds that the children included in the study enjoy a strong online presence with parents facilitating it. Children had access to inappropriate content, although parents were less likely to find out. Interestingly, children were very much aware of both the potential dangers associated with internet use and the mitigation measures. In order to make children's online presence safer, the article recommends active and informed involvement of parents as well as deliberate state-supported, stakeholder-driven programmes that recognize the agency of children even as they educate children on cyber ethics and relevant legal protections.