E-Safety in the Use of Social Networking Apps by Children, Adolescents, and Young Adults

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## Sample

The study sample included 551 respondents from Israel, of whom 71.1% were female and 28.9%
were males. For the purpose of the study, the respondents were divided into three research groups:
children (up to age 15; 31%), adolescents (ages 15-18; 34%), and young adults (ages 18-24; 35%),
with a median age of 18.4 (SD = 3.7). and total of 110 children, adolescents, and young adults were interviewed

# Abstract

Aim/Purpose: Following the widespread use of social networking applications (SNAs) by children, adolescents, and young adults, this paper sought to examine the usage habits, sharing, and dangers involved from the perspective of the children, adolescents, and young adults. The research question was: What are the usage habits, sharing, drawbacks, and dangers of using SNAs from the perspective of children, adolescents, and young adults?

Background: Safety has become a major issue and relates to a range of activities including online privacy, cyberbullying, exposure to violent content, exposure to content that foments exclusion and hatred, contact with strangers online, and coarse language. The present study examined the use of social networking applications (SNAs) by children, adolescents, and young adults, from their point of view.

Methodology: This is a mixed-method study; 551participants from Israel completed questionnaires, and 110 respondents were also interviewed.

Contribution: The study sought to examine from their point of view (a) characteristics of SNA usage; (b) the e-safety of SNA; (c) gender differences between age groups; (d) habits of use; (e) hazards and solutions; and (f) sharing with parents and parental control.

Findings: Most respondents stated that cyberbullying (such as shaming) happens mainly between members of the group and it is not carried out by strangers. The study found that children’s awareness of the connection between failures of communication in the SNAs and quarrels and disputes was lower than that of adolescents and young adults. It was found that more children than adolescents and young adults believe that monitoring and external control can prevent the dangers inherent in SNAs, and that the awareness of personal responsibility increases with age. The SNAs have intensified the phenomenon of shaming, but the phenomenon is accurately documented in SNAs, unlike in face-to-face communication. Therefore, today more than ever, it is possible and necessary to deal with shaming, both in face-to-face and in SNA communication.

Recommendations for Practitioners: Efforts should be made to resolve the issue of shaming among members of the group and to explain the importance of preserving human dignity and privacy. The Internet in general and SNAs in particular are an integral part of children’s and adolescents’ life environment, so it can be said that the SNAs are part of the problem because they augment shaming. But they can also be part of the solution, because interactions are accurately documented, unlike in face-to-face communication, where it is more difficult to examine events, to remember exactly what has been said, to point out cause and effect, etc. Therefore, more than ever before, today it is possible and necessary to deal with shaming both in face-to-face and in the SNA communication, because from the point of view of youngsters, this is their natural environment, which includes smart phones, SNAs, etc.

Recommendations for Researchers: The study recommends incorporating in future studies individual case studies and allowing participants to express how they perceive complex e-Safety situa-tions in the use of social networking apps.

Impact on Society: Today more than ever, it is possible and necessary to deal with shaming, both in face-to-face and in SNA communication.

Future Research: The study was unable to find significant differences between age groups. Fur-ther research may shed light on the subject.

# Outcome

Analysis of the correlations between the scope of the various activities shows that there are positive and significant correlations between the use of social networking applications (SNAs), meeting with friends, telephone calls, and independent digital activity on the network (Cohen- Zilka, 2018). These correlations indicate that the activities in question are interrelated and largely augment each other. The findings revealed that, for respondents, the discourse between friends in SNAs and friends in face-to-face interaction is similar, but communication through social networks allows them to connect without restriction of time and place. 41% of respondents believe that the hazards associated with SNAs are related to shaming, bullying, and harming others, including the distribution of offensive content. or exposure to it. Analysis by age group indicates that the percentage of young adults (38%) who believe that bullying and injury to others constitute a hazard in the use of SNAs is lower than that of children (47%) and adolescents (43%). The findings suggest that the two most significant dangers inherent in the use of SNAs pertain to the possibility of harming others and being harmed by them, and to invasion of privacy. Privacy-related issues are manifest in the fear of invasion of private con-tent or installation resulting from visible presence on the network (such as disclosure of name, tele-phone number, location). This fear also reflects the distress resulting from lack of control over vari-ous possibilities of unauthorized spreading of posts (text, images, recordings, and videos) sent through SNAs. The findings revealed that the most significant hazard mentioned by the respondents is shaming originating from fellow members of an SNA group, rather than hazards originating from strangers. More young adults (23%) and adolescents (17%) admitted having problems related to interpersonal communication in the SNAs than did children (6%). At the same time, it was found that the percentage of young adults who cited SNAs as a cause of quarrels and arguments (4%) was lower than that of adolescents (15%) and children (20%). 34% of the respondents believed that the hazards can be avoided through the personal responsibility of the users, who should be aware of the risks and dangers of using the SNAs and must use the applications in a controlled and intelligent manner. Twenty-two percent of respondents believed that it was possible to reduce the hazards by publicizing and raising public awareness of the issue, among others, through educational activities in schools and other frame-works. In addition, 17% believed that external control—for example, through the supervision carried out by other companies or organizations, and the use of censorship and blocking measures—can help prevent hazards. Nine per cent of respondents believed that the hazards can be prevented by means of technological control, i.e., by developing measures that prevent certain users from behaving in certain ways, and at the same time enable the victims to use tools within the application against the dangers to which they are exposed. Thirty percent of the children believed that external enforcement and control can prevent the hazards of SNAs, which are higher than the rate of the adolescents (13%) and of young adults (16%) who believed so. As the age increases, awareness of personal responsibility increases as well, as does the understanding of the Internet environment as one in which restrictions are difficult to enforce. The study found that no parental control is usually exercised. Only 2% of respondents reported that their parents checked their smartphone and computer and monitored them