Gender Differences in the Factors Explaining Risky Behavior Online

# Details

## Year

2016

## DOI

10.1007/s10964-016-0465-7

## Issued

2016

## Language

English

## Volume

45

## Issue

5

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Journal of Youth and Adolescence

## Publisher

Springer Science and Business Media LLC

## Topics

Risks and harms

## Sample

A total of 495 participants aged 10–18 (females = 229, males = 266) were included in the analyses
(M = 13.83 years, SD = 1.86). Data was collected from students in grades six through eleven in 13 different schools in a large city in Israel

# Abstract

In searching for the social and cognitive antecedents of risky online behaviors, some studies have relied on the theory of planned behavior. According to the theory, three components serve as predictors of a given behavior— attitudes toward the behavior (beliefs that people hold about a given behavior), subjective norms (perceptions of what significant others think about the behavior) and perceived behavior control (perceptions about the ease or difficulty of engaging in a particular behavior). However, none of these studies considered the possibility that these factors work differently for boys and girls. We constructed models of the possible antecedents (attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavior control) of risky behavior online and tested them using a representative sample of 495 sixth to eleventh grade students (46 % female) in a large city in Israel. We measured risky behavior online with items indicating the frequency of posting personal details, sending an insulting message and meeting face-to-face with a stranger met online. Structural equation modeling revealed that peers’ subjective norms (beliefs that friends approve of engaging in risky online behaviors), parents’ subjective norms (beliefs that parents accept involvement in risky online behaviors) and perceived behavior control were related to boys’ risky behavior online, whereas for girls, only parents’ subjective norms had such an association. Expanding the models to include other factors underscored that family factors were most strongly associated
with girls’ risky behavior online.

# Outcome

findings revealed substantial gender differences in the antecedents to such behavior (Sasson Mesch, 2016). The theory of planned behavior is a better fit with the data explaining boys’ risky online behaviors and intentions than those of girls. boys’ involvement in risky behavior online is associated with perceptions about their peers’ subjective norms about online risky behaviors, perceived behavior control and perceived parental norms about online risk behaviors, whereas girls’ involvement in such behavior is associated only with the last factor. parental mediation through supervision is associated with more risky online behavior, particularly for girls. family cohesion is related to risky online behavior. Young women who report less family cohesion are more likely to be involved with others online