Awareness of eSafety and Potential Online Dangers among Children and Teenagers

# Details

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## Sample

The sample included 345 Israeli children and adolescents. The age range was 8-18, with a median of 15 (M = 14.41, SD = 2.86), and there were slightly more girls (52.4%) than boys. Ninety children and teenagers were interviewed, with an equal distribution between the age and gender groups

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Stepping up awareness and empowerment

# Abstract

Aim/Purpose: Awareness of eSafety and potential online dangers for children and teenagers.
Background The study examined eSafety among children and teenagers from their own perspectives, through evaluations of their awareness level of eSafety and of potential online dangers.

Methodology: This is a mixed-method study with both quantitative and qualitative elements. The study includes questionnaires and interviews. A total of 345 participants from Israel completed questionnaires; 90 children and teenagers were interviewed from among the participants.

Contribution: The study examined the awareness of children and youths of safe online surfing. It also examined the degree of exposure of children and youths to positive and negative aspects of the Internet.
This study illustrates the dual potential of Internet use within the context of eSafety, as seen through the eyes of children and teenagers. Characteristics of use of the Internet are liable to increase the danger to and the bullying of youths and by youths in the digital domain. It also demonstrates the promises of using the Internet for productive learning and leisure activities.

Findings: Findings show that the children and teenagers who participated in the study reported a medium-high level of awareness. Issues that participants were concerned about included avoiding contact with strangers and cyberbullying, not necessarily by strangers, but also by friends.

Recommendations for Practitioners : It is important to examine how children perceive online events for the purpose of examining their statements regarding eSafety and the way they view problematic or dangerous online events, as well as how they believe they can cope with them.

Recommendation for Researchers: The study recommends incorporating in future studies individual case studies and allowing participants to express how they perceive complex online situations.

Impact on Society: This study illustrates the dual potential, positive and negative aspects, of Internet use within the context of eSafety, as seen through the eyes of children and teenagers.

Future Research: Future studies should track changing eSafety awareness and behavior longitudinally to identify the impact of maturation and experience on their behavior and attitudes.

# Outcome

Findings showed that children and teenagers reported a high level of awareness (Cohen-Zilka, 2017). Participants were asked to answer three open questions with respect to eSafety. The most common aspect reported by respondents concerned the danger arising from disclosure of personal data and the potential use of such information to cause personal harm to the user. Close to 26% of respondents reported that online dangers consisted of bullying and violence, mainly by exposure to “harassment and attack.” Sixteen per cent of respondents reported violence that is not necessarily sexual as an online danger. Respondents also distinguished between dangers associated with exposure to individuals or organizations that could attack them sexually and dangers associated with unintentional exposure to content inappropriate to their age or beliefs, such as pornography or extreme violence. Thirty per cent of respondents reported these as online dangers. In the interviews, 68% of the children said that whenever they are about to log into a social network, they “miss a beat;” they are afraid to find out that something embarrassing has been written about them, or that a close friend posted an embarrassing picture of them. The results show that in general there is a high level of exposure to positive content among children and youths, with older girls reporting higher exposure to positive online content than young girls and young boys. Regarding exposure to negative aspects, it was found that among boys, as they grow older, such exposure increases. The key to success is finding a solution in cooperation with the children, defining the needs and the difficulties, and providing an adequate response. The interviews revealed that children and youths would rather not involve their parents for fear of the parents’ reaction. Another issue that was revealed in the interview concerns the children’s fear of parental criticism about their conduct.