Children’s Information Disclosure Tendencies On Social Networks

# Keywords

* Social Networks
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* Internet Safety
* Online Risks

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* Online safety and policy regulation
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## Sample

Data for this study were collected from Istanbul (n=325), Ankara (n=118), and Izmir (n=81), the three largest cities in Turkey, in January of 2011 from 524 randomly selected children who were members of at least one social network (Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, etc.). The participants were selected from children aged 9 to 16, and the survey was administered via face-to-face interviews. 18 interviewers, who were a team from a professional research and consulting company, done the fieldwork of this study. The sampling began with interviewers asking parents whether they have a child between the ages of 9 and 16, then whether the child uses a social network.

## Implications For Parents About

Parenting guidance / support

## Implications For Educators About

Digital citizenship

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Creating a safe environment for children online

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Industry

# Abstract

This descriptive study aims to identify children’s information disclosure tendency in social network environments, their social network use habits and potential risky behaviors. The study was conducted in Turkey’s three largest cities (Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir), and data were gathered with a survey through face-to-face meetings with randomly selected 524 children between 9 and 16 years old who used social networks, and their parents. The survey consisted total of 38 Likert-type questions that 25 of them were asked to children in order to learn about their social network memberships and habits, and 13 of them were asked to parents in order to collect data about their demographics. Data were analyzed to make descriptive and comparative analysis to see tendencies of children while using SNs and some factors influencing information disclosure. Results show that as children’s age increases, the amount of Internet usage also increases. The most frequently used social network site is Facebook. Although the minimum age to create a profile on most social network sites is 13, results show that nearly half of the children who reported having a profile were younger than that. Most of the children share personal information such as mobile telephone numbers, home addresses and names of family members with anyone who accessed the networking site. The researchers suggest that parent’s and children’s awareness should be raised about the use of social networks to prevent the potential negative consequences of sharing private information. Moreover, social network developers must take necessary actions to protect children’s online privacy.

# Outcome

Results showed that 38.4% of children used the Internet once a day, 30.0% used the Internet more than once a day, and 22.9% used the Internet more than once a week. Facebook was the most popular
social network among participants with a ratio of 99%. Furthermore, 9% of participants use Twitter, 8.6% use MSN Livespace, 4.6% use Netlog, and 1.7% use Eksenim as well. When their reasons for joining a social network were asked, 83.6% of children stated that they wanted to contact current friends, 32.3% wanted to see what was happening in the greater social network, 30.7% wanted to find old friends, and 28.2% stated to learn what their friends and other people were doing. In this study, 70% of children shared their Wall Posts with everyone, 50.2% for profile photo, 42.6% for status, 41% for birth day, and 35.2% for photo album; 38.7% allowed anyone to comment on their postings. Another 3.5% share their home address with everyone; 4% share mobile or home phone numbers, 10% share the names of their family members. While most children did not share contact information with everyone, they did share some of their private information such as photos and status updates. Compared to girls, boys share more personal information with everybody. A quarter (25%) of the boys shared their e-mail address versus 15.5% of girls.
About 44.3% of children expressed that they felt it secure to publish personal information on social networks; however, 39.7% of them felt it unsecure. On the other hand, 15.8% stated that they did not know whether sharing personal information was secure or unsecure. The ratio of boys who found sharing personal information on social networks secure (47.4%) was higher than for girls (30.9%).
Half (50.2%) of the participant children in the study
stated that they only accept friendship requests from people who they know in real life. While 33.2% of them indicated that they accept requests from people who are at the friend list of their friends and their friends, 15.1% accepted all requests. Considering three groups, children who accept all friendship requests share significantly more information than other groups.
Children who expressed that time spent on social networks had negatively effects specified problems allocating enough time for their courses (60.3%), friends (24.3%), family (21.2%), and social activities (10.1%). In addition, 16.9% stated exposure to inappropriate information and content as a negative effect of social networks