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AWARENESS OF eSAFETY AND POTENTIAL ONLINE DANGERS AMONG CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS [ABSTRACT]

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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 eSafety among children and teenagers from their own perspectives, through evaluations of their awareness level of eSafety; potential online dangers; level of privacy online; the degree to which using the Internet facilitates their day-to-day life; exposure to positive, useful, enriching and productive content online; exposure to violent content; the degree to which they communicate or refrain from communicating with strangers online; the degree to which participants feel they require tools to cope with online dangers; the degree to which they define themselves as cautious and prudent Internet users; how they feel online dangers may be avoided – all while accounting for differences in gender, age, and socio-demographic background.
Findings	Our findings show that the children and teenagers who participated in the study reported a high level of awareness. After computing a general variable expressing participants' eSafety awareness level by averaging their responses to various statements, the study found that participants' awareness level is medium-high. 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 teach safe practices for Internet use and ways of coping with cyberbullying in order to maximize the potential inherent in the use of the Internet, and to avoid exposure to online dangers.
Recommendation	The study examined eSafety awareness by assessing and questioning children

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for Researchers	and teenage participants regarding their eSafety awareness level, as well as which aspects of Internet use they regard as either positive or negative. 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 of Internet use within the context of eSafety, as seen through the eyes of children and teenagers.
Future Research	Future studies should analyze differences between children, teenagers, and young adults (up to the age of 24), for the purpose of characterizing eSafety awareness and the effects of abiding by eSafety practices over the years, even after the age of 18, when participants have been using the Internet for relatively many years.
Keywords	Internet, children, teenagers, eSafety, cyberbullying

BIOGRAPHY



Gila Cohen Zilka, Ph.D., Director of the Department for Teaching Social Studies and Communication at Bar-Ilan University; Head of the program for training mentors to work with children at risk, Achva Academic College, Israel.

Zilka's research focuses mainly on ICT, children in the digital environment, and communication in the diversified media. Zilka published two books that offer ways to empower children, parents, and educators in our age. For parents, "Empowering Parents in the Social Media Age – The Three-Element Way," and for educators and mentors, "Empowering Educators and Mentors in the Social Media Age – The Three-Element Way."