Internet Uses and Threats for Students: Investigating Parents' Awareness

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Abstract:
Internet has entered our personal, social, professional and educational environments; facilitating and improving the quality of our lives However, this technological "miracle" is accompanied with serious threats such as child sexual harassment, child pornography and exposure to inappropriate content and contact. Parents' role is extremely important since children are extensively using the Internet. Parents' awareness on Internet use and threats, can positively or negatively affect their children Internet experience. Consequently, this research explores parent's level of awareness in relation to their children internet usage and threats and whether they are interested to be further informed. Furthermore, it explores children's motives in using internet, parents motives to provide internet to them and their interest on establishing a safe child web site to their household environment in order to control and monitor their children's' Internet usage.

Introduction

Internet has become a part of our daily routine. It affects every aspect of our lives and in an extend it became a necessity. It has entered dynamically peoples' working environments, entertainment fields, means of communication, education systems and it has facilitated, eased and improved the quality of our lives. Students are born and raised having technology as an integral part of their daily activities using the Internet at home and in school. As in any other technological advancement there are the benefits that we can take advantage of and at the same time there are risks that we need to identify and be careful from. Internet use provides numerous valuable benefits, and serious risks such as child sexual harassment, child pornography and exposure that most people when the Internet first appeared, knew nothing about. The lack of awareness can lead to undesired negative impact on children. If no precautions are taken children and young people might come across with serious dangers and be the victims of internet crimes.

Internet use has grown considerably over the last decade. The rapid progress and improvement of technology became a core part of the sociological and the formal educational system in many countries. Each new generation of internet users is more skilled, capable and advanced than the last one (Davidson & Martellozzo, 2008). Parents tend to believe that the Internet positively influence their children learning and helps them to improve their performance at school. At the same time parents afraid that their children might become victims of electronic crime or being addicted and isolated (Livingstone & Haddon, 2006). Parents' awareness regarding the Internet threats and safety should be raised and ultimately become part of their "family

values". The creation of such culture in the family environment would enable children to protect themselves. Moreover, Internet providers should offer along with Internet access, a variety of technological facilities, means and tools in order to enable and assist children to surf in a safe environment (Stuksrub, & Lobe, 2010).

The value of this research reflects on the importance of the safety in cyberspace. The level of awareness of Cypriot parents relating to their children internet usage and online dangers, their interest to be more informed and their interest to establish a protective tool for internet safety has been researched on a limited degree as of now. Given the above, as well as the continuous reference in the Media regarding online threats, incidents with pedophiles, electronic crimes, the media warnings of online hazards, the rapidly increased number of users, mostly children, in Cyprus develops the foundation to explore parents' awareness on Internet usage and threats. Parents' awareness is an extremely important aspect of children safety when using the Internet.

Main Aim and Research Objectives

The purpose of the study is to explore parents' level of awareness in relation to the threats that children and young people are be exposed to when using the Internet. Additionally, it explores the parental interest to raise their awareness on Internet use and threats, as well as it investigates their interest in establishing to their household environment safety measures and a secure Internet system in order to protect their children. Specifically, the research objectives of the study are the following:

- To measure the level of awareness and perception of Cypriot parents in regards to their children's internet usage and it's variation among the population according to their age, the age of their children, their level of education, the years of Internet experience and the point of their children's internet access.
- To analyze parent's level of awareness in relation to Internet dangers and its demographic variation such as age and the level of education.
- To explore the reasons that motivate parents to allow internet access to their children as well as children's' views and motives.
- To investigate parent's level of interest to raise their awareness on Internet usage and threats in relation to their age, their level of education and the years of Internet experience.
- To examine parents' and chidlren's interest and willingness to develop house rules on Internet use and the development of a safe website that will provide an extra protection to their children internet usage.

Literature Review

It can be supported that the Internet is the network of the networks. Internet's role to knowledge accessibility and dissemination, revealed to be as extremely important. The radio needed 38 years, the television 13 years and the Internet only 4 years to reach 50 million people!! In 1990, 20 countries were connected to the Internet, and in 2004 all countries were connected to the Internet! The Internet is a milestone in the way we communicate, work, collaborate, socialize and share information. Once connected to the Internet, there are several features you can do such as: send and receive emails, visit chat rooms, use instant messaging, join social networks, join newsgroups, view videos and/ or listen to radio stations and use search engines to find any kind of information. Internet has been proven revolutionary in today's world and affected many aspects of life such as telecommunications, science, knowledge, media, culture, entertainment, life style, etc. It has transformed the core way that businesses run and government's regulates (Children and the Media, 2008). Overall, it has greatly influence our lives on various levels: personal, professional and educational.

The advancements in communication and technology resulted in the development of various Internet tools and the evolution of Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. Web 1.0 users were reading, receiving and researching (the 3 Rs). On the other hand, Web 2.0 created the appropriate framework for user participation, where users are contributing, collaborating, and creating (the 3C's) The term, Web 2.0 is commonly associated with web applications which facilitate interactive information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design and collaboration on the Web. Examples of Web 2.0 include web-based communities, hosted services, web applications, social-networking sites, and video-sharing sites (Ala-Mutka, et al., 2009; Hargadon, 2009; Murugesan, 2009; Richardson, 2009) Wikis, videos, blogs, forums, chat rooms, and

tagging are excellent examples of how definitions, ideas, photographs, videos and voice can be input and shared over a powerful Web 2.0 Internet (Eteokleous, 2009).

Internet and Children

Google, MSN, Facebook, Search Engines, Blogs, Wikis! We are living in a digital world and for too many of us the above are part of our daily life activities (Eteokleous & Pavlou, 2010). Elementary and secondary students constitute a great part of this digital world and are characterized as digital natives (Prensky, 2001) and digital learners (Murugesan, 2009; Oliver & Carr, 2009; Richardson, 2009) since they were born and grew up in the Information Age. The students are extensively using Web 2.0 tools for various purposes such as: play internet games, visit social networking websites, participate in blogs and discussion forums, become net-writers through wikis, etc (Burnett et al., 2003; Hargadon, 2009; Murugesan, 2009). In many countries Internet technology is an integral part of children's daily life activities and it has also become part of the education systems so it is a fact that the new generations are frequently using the Internet being at the same time more aware of its use and features than older generations (Davidson & Martellozzo, 2008). The findings of a resent research applied to 21 European countries showed that 75 % of European children use the Internet and the rate continues to grow (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009).

As mentioned above, youth, mainly under the age of 18 are characterized as digital natives or digital learners given that they feel extremely comfortable in using the Internet and the Web 2.0 tools, thus extensively using them in order to play internet games, participate in social networking websites (i.e. Face book, MySpace, Twitter, Delicious, Flickr, LinkedIn, Live Journal), use email, search for information, communicate through chat rooms, join in blogs and discussion forums, develop their own websites, become net-writers through wikis, etc (Burnett et al., 2003; Hargadon, 2009; Murugesan, 2009).

Internet Children uses

Children can extremely benefited from the Internet combining education, fun, entertainment, and socializing. Children can develop their knowledge in areas like wording, spelling, grammar and learning new words, or/and improve their arithmetical, numeracy and mathematical skills. (Crocodile Clips Ltd, 2010). Internet also allows children to gather information for school projects. This is done mainly by using the various search engines such as: google, yahoo, ask-jeeves, altavista and others. Children may have access to literature, music and movies through the established virtual and online libraries and obtain various kind of information. Also, in universities and colleges, libraries are equipped with internet technology enabling and providing access to articles from scholarly journals and numerous resources. The Internet provides children the opportunity to communicate with people from all around the world mainly using chat rooms such as the MIRC, Skype, MSN, and various forums in web sites. Using the above, they meet and get in touch with people from different countries and keep in contact with e.g. class mates that have now gone abroad and relatives/friends that are far away from home. In addition, it is supported in the literature that especially teenagers through the Internet discover that they can share same experiences and same range of emotions with other teenagers and this make them feel like they belong somewhere and that internet is a place to "go" and meet others (Perebinossof, 2008). This improves the removal of racial boundaries and enables children to understand each others' differences and attributes. People online tend to communicate more with friends and others via the internet rather than people in the physical environment (Fuchus, 2008). With the use of internet children can share resources and ideas (text, images, music, video, etc) with people that have the same interests. Finally, the main motivation for parents to provide Internet access to their children is for educational purposes (Gattiker, 2001). Along the same lines, parents have a strong belief in the internet as a vehicle for their children's advancement and preparation for their professional life

Internet Threats

Surfing the internet can be a really fun, educating and a relaxing experience but it can also be a harmful experience. It can be described as the modern Pandora Box that has opened a whole new world of dangers. Given the extensive use of technology, youth are daily exposed to numerous Internet threats, such as inappropriate content (i.e. pornography), exposure to sexual predators, credit theft, cyber bullying, grooming, phising, hacking, unsafe downloads, addition. With just few clicks away they can have access to any kind of image, video and article that might exist and get in touch with inappropriate content and contact (i-SAFE Inc, 2009), (The Nemours Foundation, 2009).

The Context of the Study

It has been apparent that there has been a dramatic and rapid increase of Internet users over the two decades The United Nations Statistic Divisions shows that the number of Internet users has tremendously increased. Specifically, in 1990 no one was using the Internet because apparently this technology was not available at the time in Cyprus. In 1992 when the Internet made its presence in Cyprus only 0.06% of the population had access to it and after 14 years, in 2006 the percentage increased to 42.22%. Consequently, it became a necessity in the field of education as it is considered as a great source of information and knowledge (United Nations Statistics Division, 2010).

The population statistics from barometer surveys in the Final Report of the "The London School of Economics and Political Science's" research that took place within the European countries between 2005 – 2008, has shown that Internet penetration in Cyprus is 41.0%. The Internet usage in Cyprus is relatively very low in comparison to other European countries, specifically since Cyprus ranks in the 3 last European Countries regarding Internet use (Livingstone, & Haddon, 2009). Besides the above, there has been a dramatic increase in children's Internet use.

Laws and legislations were developed the past few years around the globe regarding Internet usage and the children. In the USA and the European Union various efforts were made in order to protect companies, organizations and of course the individuals. Specifically, in the USA the 2000 the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 (COPPA) took effect. All websites that are collecting information from children under the age of thirteen are required to comply with this law. The law states that whoever operates a website that collects information from children must have a privacy policy and obtain permission or consent from the parents / guardians. (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, 1998). The European Union developed and put into practice various actions plans related to a safer Internet implementation starting as early as in 1994. First of all, the Action plan for a Safer Internet 1999-2004, implemented by European Community, aimed to promote the safe use of the Internet and fight illegal content by: 1) establishing a European network of hotlines and encouraging self-regulation and codes of conduct, 2) developing filtering tools and 3) raising awareness . The Decision No 276/1999/EC of the European Parliament and Council on 25 January 1999 adopted the above measures (Europa, 2007). The second action plan named as, Action plan for a Safer Internet 2005-2008 (Safer Internet Plus) was developed in order to continue promoting the safe use of the Internet including this time the new media (e.g. videos) and it was particular designed to defeat racism and also content unwanted by the end user (spam). It was focused more closely on end-users: parents, educators and children (Europa, 2009). The above program was adopted by the Decision No 854/2005/EC of the European Parliament and Council on May 2005, establishing a multiannual Community Program on promoting a safer use of the Internet and new online technologies (Europa, 2009). The Safer Internet Program 2009-2013, is still in progress, continuing and further promoting the goals of its predecessor including this time the eviction grooming and bullying and the establishment of a knowledge base system on the use of new online technologies. The Decision No 1351/2008/EC of the European Parliament and Council adopted the current program (Europe's international society, 2009).

Cyprus, as European Union member is participating in the above action plans. In addition, the Cypriot government among other related regulations has established a National Legislation mostly related to the convection of Cybercrime. The particular law covers illegal access and use of personal electronic data, penalization of intervention and interposition to electronic data and system, penalization of online copywriting, forgery, fraud, child pornography, etc (Cyprus Republic, 2010). The Ministry of Justice has introduced on the 20/09/2007 a new department to the police force that exclusively deals with electronic crimes. This was created due to the increasingly high numbers of users (especially the younger generation) and also the increase of internet crimes over the last years (Simerini, 2010).

Research Methodology

The study employed a mixed method approach were quantitative and qualitative data were collected (Creswell, 2003). Questionnaires were used to collect the quantitative data and focus groups were organized for the qualitative data collection. Study's target population consisted of parents living in non occupied urban areas, specifically in Nicosia and Larnaca. Easy access was the reason for focusing on these two areas of the island.

Non probability sampling was used to distribute 400 questionnaires to parents lived at the two areas. The response rate was 55% since 220 completed questionnaires were returned. The questionnaire was consisted of two parts. In both parts closed questions were mainly used. The first part included demographic related questions, i.e. age, gender, education level, economical status (based on salary), marital status, number of children and children's age. The questions of the second part were related to Internet usage, and included questions such as parents' Internet usage, years of parents' Internet usage, children's usage, place in the house where the Internet is used, frequency (hours and days) of children's Internet use, reasons to provide Internet access to children, parents' awareness of the Internet threats, interest to be further informed, and interest of a safe website. Quantitative data analysis includes descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages and cross tabulation tables).

The focus groups were organized as soon as the results of the questionnaires were analyzed. Specifically, the focus groups took place in May, 2010. A total of 8 parents and 8 children of various ages participated at the focus groups. On average the duration of each group-interview was 1 hour.The focus groups mainly included open-ended questions in an attempt to provide parents and children with the opportunity to freely and openly express themselves on the subject under investigation. Specifically, focus groups were conducted in order to get insights and to in-depth analyze the concepts under investigation from both parents and students points of view (Kvale, 1996). The qualitative data collected from the questionnaires and the group interviews groups were analyzed with the method of continuous comparison of data (Morehouse & Maykut, 1994). For the purposes of this study the results of the qualitative analysis (focus groups) are not presented.

Findings

As mentioned above, this paper focuses on the quantitative analysis. Most of the participants were Females (69.5%), their age was 31-40 (43.2%) and 41-50 (36%) and they were either college or university graduates (61.3%). The first parameter examined and related to other parameters of the questionnaire was parents' awareness. The majority of the parents (85%) appeared to be Mostly Aware about Internet threats. In relation to their children age, the parents that their children were between 11-14 years old appeared to be mostly aware (31%) and the parents that their children were between the ages of 7-10 years old appeared to be Completely aware (36%). The majority of the parents started using the Internet between the years of 1999-2004, that means relatively recently. Also, most of the parents (48%) that appeared to be completely aware of how their children used the Internet were those that started using it in the ages of 1999-2004. Besides the fact that 71% of the households have wireless access, the Internet is mostly used (27%) from a common house area specifically for the children under 14 years old. The variable "Location of children's internet access" was then correlated to the variable "Disruption mentioned". Sixty-one percent of the parents reported that their children did not refer to any kind of disruption when using the Internet. More specifically, 43% of the parents reported that their children did not mention any disruption when used the internet in a non common area of the house (i.e. their bedrooms or the living room). The next variable examined was the time the children use the Internet, where the majority (54 %) appeared to use the Internet 1-2 hours per day. The results also showed that as the age of the children increases, the time of spending on the Internet increases as well. The days using the Internet per week were examined, revealing that the 76% of the children use the Internet 6-7 days per week. Similarly as above, as the children age increases the days using the Internet increases as well, revealing that 63% of the children that use the Internet 6-7 days a week are children above 14 years old. The vast majority of the parents, 80%, reported that educational purposes were the main reason for providing Internet access to their children. Also, the analysis revealed that parents' education is not related to the reason that the parents provided Internet access to their children.

Parents appeared to be aware of the various threats that exist when using the Internet. It was revealed that "Cyberbulling" was the less known danger with a 74% of the participants to declare that they are aware of it. The most known danger was "Chatting with pedophiles", where 96% of the parents reported their awareness of such danger. Additionally, it seems that all of the dangers, except "Cyber bulling", were highly known dangers since above of the 85% of the participants answered that they knew about them (See Table 1).

The parents were also asked to report their interest to be further informed on Internet threats, where the vast majority, 91%, expressed their positive interest. In relation to parents' age, 43 % of the parents that expressed their interest to be further informed were 31-40 years old, and 33% were 41-50 years old. Finally, in

relation to parents' level of education, it was revealed that 63% of the parents that expressed their interest to be further informed were College or University graduates.

Table 1	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Chatting with Pedophiles	211	96%
Exposure of personal materials	202	92%
Phishing/Fake online sellers	191	87%
Access to pornographic material	207	94%
Cyberbulling	162	74%
Hackers/Viruses	187	85%

Almost all of the parents, 94%, expressed their interest in the development of a safe website for their children. Specifically, only 13 parents reported that they were not interested for the development of a safe child website. This group of parents explained that the reason for not being interested for the development of a safe website is due to the fact that their children were adults (older than 18 years old) and they do not feel that there is a need to take any safety measures. The parents were also asked to report on the components they considered to be useful to be included in a safe Internet website. The encyclopedia and the dictionary were the ones that appeared to be rated as Very useful, 51%, and 79%, respectively. It can be also supported that the majority of the parents mentioned a variety of elements to be included in a safe Internet website. Information on internet safety, educational games, music and information on different social, artistic and cultural events were considered to be between very and somewhat useful features. Funny video clips and electronic cards were rated as less useful than the others but still there was an interest for those features too (See Table 2).

Table 2	Very Useful		Somewhat Useful		Not Very Useful		Not Useful		Not Sure	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Encyclopedia	166	80%	35	17%	2	0.48%	1	0.48%	3	1.4%
Dictionary	163	79%	33	16%	5	2.4%	2	0.96%	4	2%
Educational Games	90	43%	71	34%	33	16%	8	4%	5	2.4%
Music	86	41%	77	37%	36	17%	4	2%	4	2%
Info on new events	87	42%	87	42%	27	13%	3	1.4%	3	1.4%
E-Cards	51	25%	75	36%	64	31%	14	6.8%	3	1.4%
Info on Internet Safety	40	19%	118	57%	34	16.5%	6	3%	9	4%
Funny stuff	49	24%	62	30%	67	32%	23	11%	6	3%

Discussion

An overall conclusion is that the majority of the parents appeared to be aware of the Internet threats. Parents' awareness seemed to be influenced by various parameters. For example, the parents' years of Internet use experience revealed to affect Internet awareness. It was also revealed that the age of the children affected parents' awareness in relation to their children internet use. As younger as the parents were, they appeared to be more involved and aware of the Internet use. Consequently, as the children get older, the less aware the parents were. This was somehow expected. However, the above consists of a great danger given that it does not necessarily mean that the children (especially those between the ages of 11- 14 and 15-18) are capable and in position to protect themselves from online dangers, if they do not use the Internet guided by a number of rules and if they were not educated appropriately.

Besides the fact that the vast majority of the households appeared to have wireless Internet access, the computer place changes in relation to children's age. A common house area was the most popular place for the computer for very young children to use. As children got older (i.e. teenagers), the computer was moved from a common house area to their bedrooms. Consequently, older children had wireless Internet access from their own bedrooms rather than from a common area within the house. Given the results, children who had access only

from a common house area mentioned to their parents an Internet disruption in relation to children who had access from their own bedrooms or from wireless Internet access from a non-common area. The results show that children who had Internet access from a non-common house area were more likely to come across with something that may disturb them. Indirectly, it can be implied that the place where children have Internet access is influencing parent's awareness on how their children use the Internet, how much time they use it, and if they are disrupted.

Children age was also related to the frequency of Internet use. As children age increased, the hours per day and days per week increased regarding Internet use. Given the above, it can be also suggested that children Internet use frequency also affects parent's awareness. The more days and hours the children use the Internet, the more difficult was for the parents to check and monitor their online activities, and the threat of addiction became even more viable. As Widyanto and McMuran (2004) support 6-7 days per week and more than 4 hours per day spending on the Internet can result to addiction. The more the children use the Internet the more the possibilities are to be addicted and be exposed to various internet threats. Consequently, the students are indirectly forcing their parents to become Internet literate and raise awareness regarding Internet threats. As also reported in the literature (Gattiker, 2001) the main reason/ motive that the parents provide Internet to their children is mainly for educational purposes. Parents' level of education did not really affect the main reason/ motive that the parents provide Internet access, rather that it affected how they monitor their children, for example the rules established by the parents and how comfortable they felt about it.

Overall, the parents appeared to be aware of the various Internet threats, i.e. chatting with pedophiles, exposure of personal materials, phishing/fake online sellers, access to pornographic material, hackers, viruses and cyber bulling. Surprisingly interesting is the fact that besides the parents' level of awareness regarding the Internet threats they were interested in being further informed and become more knowledgeable and skilled about the threats. Based on the above, it can be supported that the parents might have an acceptable level of knowledge regarding Internet use and threats, however they might not feeling comfortable with the level of their knowledge and they want to be further educated. Additionally, some of them might realize that the Internet is rapidly evolving and they need to be kept informed all the time and some others might know about the threats but do not really understand what each of these threats are and they want to be more informed. Age did not seem to influence parents for wanting to get more educated on the topic. Furthermore, the level of parents' education slightly affected parents' interest to be further informed on Internet use and threats. Parents with higher level of education were slightly more interested to learn more on the subject. The above was kind of expected, since the educational level of these parents helped them better realize the degree of danger if Internet is not properly used and also to understand that the Internet is rapidly evolving and they need to keep themselves continuously informed. Parents with a lower level of education might not realize how dangerous the Internet is. They feel that they know the threats and that is all they need. It can be said that the above was expected however surprising at the same time since the parents with lower education might have wanted to know more on the Internet. We might imply that they did not have an in-depth awareness of the threats that exist at the Internet.

Finally, the vast majority of the participants were interested for such a safe internet environment to be developed (i.e. the establishment and age did not really affect parents' interest in the development of a child safe website. Parents reported that that access to encyclopedia and dictionary would be very useful features to be part of a child safe website. Information on Internet safety, educational games, music and information on different social, artistic and cultural events were considered to be between very and somewhat useful features. Funny video clips and electronic cards were considered less useful than the others but still there was an interest for those features too.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Internet provides us lots of benefits and at a great point changed our lives, however we need to take advantage of it and not let the Internet and its threats take advantage of us. The results of this study have practical and research implications on developing a "safe internet culture". First of all, it is very important to raise awareness on internet existing dangers to parents and children and help them fight illegal and harmful online content and contact. Parents should get more informed on Internet tools and its numerous uses, the threats that might appear while using it, as well as how they can protect themselves and their children. Parents should be in a position to understand and at the same time explain to their children the Internet threats. Additionally, it is extremely important to set Internet-use-home rules (i.e. have the computer on a common house area until the

children are in position to protect themselves), however without excluding and restricting their children the opportunity to explore and benefited from the online world and the great opportunities provided. Also, parents need to establish communication channels with their children in an attempt to help them feel comfortable reporting to them any bad experience or disruption while using the Internet. In order for the above to be achieved, parents and children should be informed. Informative lectures and seminars can be offered by schools, youth and community centers in collaboration with academicians, educators, researchers and the police. The lectures and workshops should focus on Internet use and threat awareness and of course on how to protect themselves and their children. For some parents, it might be the case that they need first to learn how to use the Internet in order to better realize internet threats and to what extent these threats might be harmful to their children. Consequently, besides the informative lectures, seminars and/or workshops, lessons should be provided to the parents on Internet use.

The results of the study indicate the need for policies on governmental and national level to be developed regarding Internet use and reveal the important role of the school. Specifically, the Ministry of Education and Culture in collaboration with the Pedagogical Institute (institute responsible for in-service teachers' professional development training) have a significant role to play regarding Internet safety. First of all, there is a need for an educational policy to be developed that will govern the use of the Internet within schools, since teachers are already using it for preparation purposes and for in-classroom activities. The policy should highlight the need of educating students in all educational levels (primary, secondary and higher education) on the Internet threats and the measures they need to take in order to protect themselves while using the Internet for personal (i.e. socializing, friending, searching) and educational purposes (i.e. in-classroom and school activities, homework). Additionally, the policy needs to take care of the in-service and pre-service teachers' professional development and education from the Pedagogical Institute and the Universities, accordingly, on safe Internet use. Their preparation should focus on two parameters: on how to use the Internet and on how to safely use the Internet as a tool for numerous purposes (personal, educational and professional). Besides officially integrating the Internet as an educational tool within the curriculum and classroom activities, the students need to practice in real classroom situations the online behavior taught as aforementioned. It is important to experience through in-classroom activities the rules and the process of protecting themselves from Internet threats. Given the above, the students will have the opportunity to experience its educational value and protect themselves. Study's results also suggest that students need to develop critical thinking skills, and that is another important role that the school should fulfill. Through its curriculum and activities it is important for students to develop critical thinking skills, not only to identify and avoid getting in touch with harmful content and contacts but also to be able to successfully survive in the demanding Information Society we live in. Students should be in a position to protect themselves, and properly use the Internet for educational and personal purposes and later on for professional purposes. Last but not least, the study highlights the importance of parents-children, teachers-children, and parents-teacher communication. Collaboration between school and home is important to be established in order for the Internet safety culture to be in alignment. Systemic efforts should be taken in order to have successful and effective results.

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