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### Determining parents' level of awareness about safe internet use

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#### Abstract

Internet security safety awareness of parents is an important issue that should be addressed to raise the knowledge and awareness level about internet risks, information privacy, personal information, safety concerns and online attacks among parents to be able to teach their children to keep safe use on the internet. This study amid to investigate the awareness of parents towards the safe use of the internet. A questionnaire was created by researchers for this aim. A survey sample was conducted contains items of the characteristics of internet security and safety. A total of 252 participants who their children study at Near East Libyan School were targeted in this study. 116 of the participants are males and 136 are females. The average age of participants is 27. Data were collected and analyzed by using SPSS software. Parametric tests were applied to collected data according to statistical analysis. Results are confirmed that parents' awareness towards the safe use of the internet is medium level. Also, there is no statistically significant difference between relative relationship variables and all dimensions of the questionnaire. Seminars should be organized for information about online privacy information on websites and how to create strong passwords for their children's online accounts.

Keywords: Internet security; parents; safe internet

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#### 1. Introduction

In recent years, the internet technology revolution has brought many advantages of online communication such as transferring information, sharing videos, files, online learning and chatting online between users around the world. Furthermore, data are saved online at cloud computing companies which allow users to access their information where ever they are. However, internet security is a big issue for many people who have concerned about their personal information privacy if it is exposed, attacked or leaked by online cyber-attacks (Yesilyurt, 2020; Kopecky and Szotowski, 2017; Jang-Jaccard and Nepal, 2014; Birinci and Karagozlu, 2016).

According to Lee Hadlington et al. (2019), there are two kinds of critical components of information security awareness represented in understanding organizational information security policy of users, and how users are able to implement the essentials of information security that has organized. Regarding Bada et al. (2014), internet information technologies have a large-scale use over the world and people's daily lives. For that, information security is of extreme significance. To obtain it, they post practical security measures and improve security policies that calm down the right behavior of internet users and people. Unluckily, people do not care and react with specified policies and behaviors; maybe the reason for that is that individuals are not conscious or do not understand the dangers or maybe they are not aware or do not have perfect knowledge of the correct behavior. The essential aim of online security awareness campaigns is to affect the adoption of online behaviour security in order to be successful in the effective demands to teach people what they should do online to be safe secure on the online. The goal of knowledge and security awareness of online risks is not for training but to concentrate on the attention of information security. Consciousness programs have the intention to let people realize information technology security concerns and react with it, which obviously should focus assurance on awareness and behave as a consequence (Bada et al., 2014). In these modern days, people spend a lot of money to buy security technology to protect their data and computer systems against online attacks; some of the unlicensed computer security software contains malware programs which made to gain sensitive information of victims. Hardware and software security techniques utilized to make strong information systems against attacks. But this kind of security methods still exposed the attacks because of undesirable behaviours of internet users that are related to information security awareness (Öğütçü et al., 2016; Ogachi, Karega and Oteyo, 2018).

According to Schaik et al. (2018) online security in social networks, that Saridakis, Benson, Ezingeard, and Tennakoon (2016) have noted instability in the behavioral study on online social media, with numerous researches on information privacy, but there are a few types of researches on security issues. They studied about using social networks and security perceptions regarding online deception. As the results displayed that users with a high level of realizing dominant over personal information on social media, users who have risen conscious risk tendency on social networks and users of multi-objective social media are low probable to be victims of cybercrime. However, users of knowledge and awareness exchange social media are more probable to be victims.

The awareness of parents about the safe use of the internet has become an important issue for online security and internet risks as well as information security of internet users. The awareness and knowledge about internet safety will help parents to be realized and to avoid undesirable online activates such as cybercrime, malicious software, and hacking which can access unauthorized to the sensitive information of parents and children or their families. Some websites actively promote violence, cruelty, drugs, pornography and some other antisocial activities in the environments of children, youth and young adults (Zerkina, Chusavitina, Kolobova, Nazarova and Chernova, 2016). According to Kopecky et. all, (2020), the number of problems related to online security has risen, so it is an incipient field that requires

investigation. Researchers emphasizes the importance of student-school-parent cooperation to handle negative effects of internet (Kalender, 2018; Kowalski, Limber and Agatston, 2012).

Parents should learn how to be aware of the differences between legitimate emails and harmful emails. On the other hand, there are a variety of technologies for internet security that people can utilize to protect themselves from illegitimate access to the computer system or internet websites such as firewalls, Antivirus, user authentication, data encryption, virus detection, digital certificates, intrusion detection systems (Grammatikis et al., 2019). Personal privacy information on social media and websites is one of the big issues that threats people's privacy on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter where people can share files, pictures, videos, chats, and other online activities. Facebook social networking presents privacy settings feature for their users to set and control the personal information, and activities online, however, many Facebook users are not conscious of that privacy settings and they frequently leave privacy information remaining unprotected which exposes to online risks to be an essential goal for hackers to attack users' personal information (Gogus and Saygin, 2019). In 2018, Facebook has shared about 87 millions of personal information of their users with Cambridge Analytica Company without Facebook customers' assent (Yun et at., 2019). The essential motivation of this study is the increasing number of victims of online cybercrime and developing many different kinds of attack techniques used to attack the internet users' privacy by hackers. In addition, the awareness level and knowledge of internet security risks among internet users are very weak, especially among small age categories such as school children.

The research focused on the awareness of parents towards the safe use of the internet in order to be able to establish the policies and procedures that are necessary to protect the privacy and confidential data and to cover the deficiency awareness among parents about online security vulnerabilities. In addition, the study will help to fill the gaps in knowledge and awareness about online safety and security risky in order to keep parents and their children in a good security awareness by educating parents to be aware of online safety tips, privacy safety practice, social networking security, and good cyber ethics in order to avoid any unexpected accidents on the internet.

The basic aim of the study is to explore the awareness of parents towards the safe use of the internet among parents, about internet security to raise the level awareness of parents and their children about internet security threats while they are online.

There are some questions around the research that the study will discuss in the results section in order to investigate the aim of this study:

- Do parents have knowledge about their children' internet use?
- How is parents' awareness towards the safety usage online?
- Are there differences between mothers and fathers' awareness towards the safety usage of internet?

#### 2. Method

The study was conducted within the framework of a survey with the questionnaire. The volunteer participants in this research were parents of the children at schools and the research was conducted during the fall 2019-2020 term. The samples of the questionnaire have been distributed to the children at Near East Libyan School. This study consists of a total of 252 samples for parents, and the respondents were

chosen randomly from different related of relationship, age, education level, internet connection methods, and devices use to get online, which are made up of 116 fathers and 136 mothers.

The important characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 3.1.

Characteristic Relationship	Frequency	Percentages		
Father	116	46.0		
Mother	136	54.0		
Age				
20 – 39	177	70.2		
40 – 69	75	29.8		
Education Level				
Bachelor/High Diploma	98	38.9		
Master/PhD	154	61.1		
Internet connectionuse				
Dial_up	4	1.0		
Cable	10	2.5		
ADSL	18	4.6		
3G and 4G	145	36.8		
Wi-Fi	217	55.1		
Devices use to get online				
Desktop Computers	35	7.4		
Laptop Computers	154	32.5		
Mobile Phones	219	46.2		
Tablets	66	13.9		

#### Table 1. Demographic information of survey participants

The education level of Bachelor/High Diploma was 38.9% of the parents, and the education level of Master and PhD degrees were 61.1% of the parents. The majority use of the internet connection methods were used to connect to the internet was 55.1% of parents use Wi-Fi, and 36.8% of parents used 3G and 4G to get online, and 4.6% of respondents used ADSL connection, and 2.5% of parents used Cables, the lowest percent was 1.0% of respondents used Dial-up connection to get online.

#### 2.1 Data Collection Tool

The questionnaire sample was used to collect data of the research from the respondents; the questionnaire was developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was contained 3 sections which are

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demographic data, Yes/No questions tool is indented to understand the knowledge of parents about their children's online activities and Awareness of internet security questionnaire. This questionnaire aims to explore the awareness of parents towards the safe use of the internet. Data collection tool consisted of four parts of the questionnaire were contained of 53 items that comprised of Essential measures of online security, protect information privacy on websites, Internet security vulnerabilities, and reliability of computer security software that the respondents were answered on items based on 5 Likert-type scales from Strongly Agree (5 points), Agree (4 points), Neutral (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 points). The data was analysed to confirm the reliability of the questionnaire scales which was calculated by using Cronbach's Alpha (Table 2) for all 53 items of the questionnaire.

Dimensions	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Essential Measures of Online Security	13	.718
Protect Information Privacy on Websites	15	.709
Internet Security Vulnerabilities	12	.713
The Reliability of Computer Security Software	13	.714
Cronbach's Alpha for Overall Items	53	.843

#### Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha for the questionnaire dimensions

Results of each dimensions and coefficient of the reliability test were more than 0.700 and the overall results of dimensions were 0.843. According to the reliability test for subscales the highest dimension of Alpha test result was .718 on the scale of essential measures of online security and the lowest result was .709 for the dimension of protect information privacy on websites.

#### 2.2 Data Collection Procedure

The purpose of this study is to investigate the awareness of parents towards the safe use of the internet. Samples were prepared and printed out to be distributed to the voluntary Parents through their children at Near East Libyan School, questionnaires were distributed to the participants during one month, after that the data were collected and the number of responded questionnaires was 267. About 252 samples were verified as valid. The returning questionnaires sample of hard copies were examined and checked to eliminate errors of data to ensure the quality of entered data in order to be entered and enrolled in SPSS software version 25.0 the diverse analyses such as frequency, percentage and independent t-test were applied to the accumulated data.

#### 3. Results

For the purpose of understanding the knowledge and awareness of parents towards online safety utilize, as the results described.

#### 3.1 The Knowledge of Parents about Their Children's Internet Use

The answers given to the questions asked to determine whether the parents have information about the safe internet use of their children are presented in the Table 3.

Ouestiens		Yes		No	
Questions	Ν	%	Ν	%	
Do you know your children's online passwords?	138	54.8	114	45.2	
Do you know how many hours a week your child spends chatting online with others?		53.6	117	46.4	
Do you use internet filtering software on all computers your child has access to?		36.1	161	63.9	
Do you have an online rules agreement with your child?		54.8	114	45.2	
Is the computer your child uses kept in a high traffic area in your home?	103	40.9	149	59.1	
Does your child know of the safety tips?	113	44.8	139	55.2	

#### Table 3.The knowledge of parents about their children's internet use

According to the results were explained in Table 3 about parents know their children's online passwords were 54.4% who were answered "Yes", and 45.2% were answered "No" from a total of 252 participants. Parents who were respond "Yes" that know how many hours a week your child spends chatting online with others was 53.6%, and who were replied "No" was 46.6% of 252 respondents who have participated in this research, the Table 3 display the difference answered of numbers and rates for each question between participants.

#### 3.2The Awareness of Parents towards the Secure Use over the Internet

Statistical analysis on all items of the dimensions was conducted in order to examine the awareness of parents towards the safe use of the internet.

Items	Mean	SD
Essential Measures of Online Security		
1. I am conscious of the importance of online internet security software.	2.69	1.07
2. I am aware of the riskiness malicious software attacks.	2.65	1.32
3. I am conscious of purchasing internet security software from trusted	2.64	1.28
online websites.	2.04	1.20
4. I do not concern to share my account password with my friends	3.08	1.52
and family on social media.	5.00	1.52
5. I am aware that some of the Internet Security Software contains	2.62	1.22
malware programs.	2.02	1.22
6. I am not careful to install any internet security software of any resources on the internet.	3.11	1.23

#### Table 4.Awareness of parents towards the safe use of the internet

7. I am aware of the cybercrime attacks that threats people's data on	3.12	1.17
the internet.	5.12	1.17
8. I have not been learned of keeping personal information secret	3.15	1.26
over the internet.	5.15	1.20
9. I am aware to be able to share legal information with trust people	2.67	1.12
on the internet.	2.07	1.12
<ol> <li>I use a unique username and password for all my accounts on social networking.</li> </ol>	3.03	1.40
11. I am aware of Microsoft recommendations for creating a strong password.	2.64	1.17
12. I do not respond to any mysterious requests from a stranger friend	2.22	1.13
on social media.	2.22	1.15
13. I know it is difficult, to be honest with anyone on online chatting.	2.15	1.14
Essential Measures of Online Security General	2.75	.593
Protect Information Privacy on Websites		
<ol> <li>I am aware of applying information privacy policies on social networking against phishing sites.</li> </ol>	3.10	1.29
<ol> <li>I know I should not fill out sensitive data of my profile account on social networking.</li> </ol>	3.11	1.35
16. I Make a complex, unique password and change it every 90 days.	3.13	1.15
17. I am careful about what I share on social media with others.	3.24	1.30
18. I am careful to avoid posting controversial information on social media.	3.29	1.20
19. I am aware that unknown emails addresses may include malware links.	3.07	1.36
20. I am not conscious of phishing emails used to convince the victims to send sensitive information.	3.28	1.12
<ol> <li>I do not care about leaving my confidential information exposed to be shared on social sites.</li> </ol>	4.01	1.02
22. I used to enable and strict privacy settings on social media and websites.	3.02	1.18
<ol> <li>I run the firewall on and update antivirus software while I am surfing online.</li> </ol>	3.11	1.19
24. I have never click on malicious links that are able to infect my social account.	3.02	1.26
25. I am aware of the responsibility for online communication and activities through posting and sharing on chat rooms and emails.	3.00	1.24
26. I make online shopping and purchase from secure sites.	3.07	1.30
27. I am not able to teach my children how to use the filtering, privacy and safety settings on websites.	3.35	1.16

28. I will not share and comment on any person or website spread pornographic materials on social sites.	3.24	1.32
Protect Information Privacy on Websites General	3.20	.549
Internet Security Vulnerabilities		
<ol> <li>I have replied to a link that I received on an email and I sent my user account credentials.</li> </ol>	3.12	1.41
30. My computer system has stopped working by a denial-of-service attack	3.15	1.22
31. I use a username and strong password to login on my computer system	2.38	1.16
32. Using security software tools and services for transferring large data over the internet.	2.62	1.24
<ol> <li>I use internet security programs against architectural weakness of the computer system.</li> </ol>	2.64	1.08
34. I am unaware of using the firewall to control inbound and outbound of internet traffic.	2.68	1.10
Internet Security Vulnerabilities General	2.84	.575
35. I lost sensitive data without my early knowledge.	3.50	1.16
36. My files have been encrypted by malicious ransomware programs.	3.56	1.22
37. Implementing anti-spyware software against Internet threats.	2.81	1.18
38. I have clicked on a download link and I realized it installed a malware.	3.04	1.18
39. I use anti-malware software, ad-blockers and apply safety settings filters to deny access to undesirable content on websites.	2.36	0.98
40. I am concerned when I click by mistake on a questionable advertisement on a website page.	2.18	1.04
Reliability of Computer Security Software		
41. Use the latest version of the Anti-virus software and ensure it up to date	3.01	1.34
42. Implementing anti-spyware software against internet security threats on the computer system.	2.62	1.18
43. Computer system shows a message attack of malware software "Your machine is not affected".	2.61	1.22
44. I make Regularly backup data to be protected from viruses, worms, ransomware, spyware, and Trojan.	2.32	1.14
45. I make a backup of sensitive information to be saved in a safe place	2.65	1.26
46. I am not aware of using the reliability and quality of security software on computer.	3.05	1.30
47. My files and documents were damaged because of some programs contain Computer viruses and worms.	3.01	1.30

48. My computer programs are illegal as it downloaded from untrusted	3.05	1.29
websites.		
49. My computer files were exposed to ransomware software attacks.	2.75	1.25
50. I make back up data for an emergency case of malware attacks.	2.06	.96
<ol> <li>I am aware to use highly efficient and reliability of internet security software.</li> </ol>	2.20	.94
52. I am unaware that some of the security software I installed on my computer contains malware and spyware.	3.04	1.19
53. I use software to prevent my child to access unsuitable websites.	3.09	1.28
The Reliability of Computer Security Software General	2.73	.576

According to the results above in Table 4 explains the highest mean of the respondents on the items of the questionnaire that was enrolled in item 21 "I do not care about leaving my confidential information exposed to be shared on social sites" (M=4.01, SD=1.02). This is result is an indicator that parents have good knowledge and awareness of keeping their private information confidentially on social networking sites. The second highest mean on the items was recorded for item 36 "My files have been encrypted by malicious ransom ware programs" (M=3.56, SD= 1.22). And the third highest mean of the items was recorded for item 35 "I lost sensitive data without my early knowledge" (M=3.50, SD= 1.16). The lowest mean response on the questionnaire items was recorded on item 50 "I make back up data for an emergency case of malware attacks" (M=2.06, SD=.96). That response could be reflecting the low awareness among parents about making backup data for important information and maybe they are not aware of malware attacks and other types of viruses. The second lowest mean on the items was recorded for item 40 "I am concerned when I click by mistake on a questionable advertisement on a website page" (M=2.18, SD=1.04). And the third lowest mean of the items was recorded for item 13 "I know it is difficult, to be honest with anyone on online chatting" (M=2.15, SD=1.14).

# 3.3 The Difference between Parents' Awareness towards the Safe Use of the Internet Based on Relative Relationship Difference

According to statistical analysis, results illustrate an indication of the parents' awareness and perceptions towards the safe use of the internet based on relative relationship variable differences and all dimension of the questionnaire, the independent-samples t-test was conducted to analyze the result which is interpreted in Table 5 provides an overview of parents' awareness and perceptions towards the safe use of the internet.

				•			
Dimensions	relationship Variable	Ν	Mean	SD	Mean difference	t	Ρ
Measures of Online	Father	116	2.70	.62759	10516	-1.404	.162
Security	Mother	136	2.80	.56137	10510	-1.404	.102
Protect Information	Father	116	3.23	.53192	.04509	.652	<b>F1F</b>
Privacy	Mother	136	3.18	.56563	.04509	.052	.515

Table 5. The difference between parents' awareness and perceptions towards the safe use of the internet based on relative relationship difference

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Internet Security	Father	116	2.86	.58376	04500	C10	527
Vulnerabilities	Mother	136	2.81	.57020	.04509	.619	.537
Reliability of	Father	116	2.72	.60434	02077	.284	.776
Computer Software	Mother	136	2.74	.55420	02077	.204	.770

The statistical analysis shows that Fathers parental were recorded the highest Mean value of (M = 3.23; SD = .53192), and Mothers parental were shown the lowest value of (M = 3.18; SD = .56563), the results confirmed that there are no statistically significant differences between parents on all dimensions (p>0.05). The results in this study were compared with the study of (Cavus and Mohammed, 2017) reported that there were a statistically significant differences between genders in the study, it shows that there is a different statistically significant with this study in related to online safe use.

#### 4. Conclusion

To conclude that, the study was investigated the knowledge and awareness of parents towards the safe use of the internet in the Near East Libyan School, which were investigated that parents were much more aware of keeping their information privacy confidential on websites than others scales of the questionnaire. Moreover, they indicate that need to be raised the awareness and knowledge level on the reliability of computer security software and how they learn to apply the measures of online security while they are surfing the internet in order to be able to teach their children to be safe use online. Yildiz (2020) mentioned that in order to provide awareness in digital literacy seminars that can be managed by experts should be organized. It was discovered that there are no statistically significant differences between relative relation of parents on dimensions of the Essential Measures of Online Security, Protect Information Privacy on Websites, Internet Security Vulnerabilities, and the Reliability of Computer Security Software. Parents should learn and conscious of online privacy information on websites, and how to make strong passwords for their online accounts. Parents should discuss their children problems when they are online. Also, they can install parent control software to computers.

This study will help the institutional educations and governments organizations to see the differences among parents about the safe use of the internet as well it will allow chance to other future studies for applying the research in widely area such as North Republic of Cyprus or other country of the world in order to include so many children schools to let many parents to contribute the study to see big differences about the awareness of parents towards the safe use of the internet to keep their kids safe use online.

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