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INTRODUCTION

Information Communication Technology (ICT) has become an integral part of our daily lives. We use ICT devices for education, information gathering and work-related activities. ICT devices are becoming more accessible for all users due to increased availability and decrease in cost. Most of these devices have online connectivity, allowing the user to access the internet.

The use of ICT devices and online connectivity has a particularly interesting role in the lives of school learners, as technology becomes more prominent within the education system. More affluent schools are introducing ICT devices as learning tools - which can be hugely advantageous for school learners when applied properly. This has been proven in previous research, where results have indicated that learners can improve/enhance their education by incorporating ICT tools within their schoolwork tasks. Naturally, the opportunities for socialising and entertainment available to school learners through various ICT devices can also be beneficial. Recent research has shown that the mobile penetration rate in South Africa is increasing, and the majority of urban and peri-urban South African learners have access to cellphones - which they are using at school.

Despite the benefits, ICT devices and online access can also lead to a number of online risks. These risks can be harmful to school learners if the learners are not educated on how to protect themselves and their information. It is therefore vital to ensure that learners are educated accordingly on the matter.

Educating school learners regarding cyber risks within the school environment is dependent on a number of factors; some of these factors include preparedness of:

- The school towards ICT devices and relating ICT policies and procedures
- The teachers and their knowledge regarding ICT devices and online activities
- The available educational material regarding online safety
- The handling of ICT incidents within the school

BACKGROUND

A recent study conducted by UNISA in conjunction with HDI Youth Marketeers (2013), investigated cyber-security awareness and incidents amongst school learners by interviewing the learners themselves. From this research, it emerged that 90% of learners felt that there needed to be more education around cyber-safety by teachers, with 93% of the sample acknowledging that they are aware of various online risks and threats. Furthermore, learners who fell victim to cyber-safety incidents reported feelings of depression, digital avoidance, embarrassment and other related issues. It is therefore vital that teachers and principals are properly equipped to handle cyber-safety incidents if, and when they may occur.

The research in the current study focuses on the opinions...
The research was conducted in June 2014 with 169 schools across 7 provinces, where 250 teachers and 29 principals were interviewed. 17 of these schools (across Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Western Cape regions) were visited for face-to-face interviews, while the teachers and principals from the remaining regions were interviewed telephonically. The questions were administered by trained researchers and research assistants using a pre-developed, structured and largely closed-ended interview guide. Open-ended questions were included where deeper description was necessary. The questionnaire focused on several broad areas including: brief respondent demographics and information; perceptions of online risks and threats; understanding and responding to cyber-safety related incidents; school policy and education around cyber-safety issues.

The final sample included 279 respondents representing all races in LSM 6-10 schools (both primary and high schools were included). In this report, LSM 6-7 schools are classified as ‘lower’ LSM schools compared to LSM 8-10 schools that are classified as ‘higher’ LSM. In South Africa, LSM levels represent a segmentation tool that is used to understand the market based on access to services and durables, as well as geographic indicators as determinants of standards of living. The ‘lower LSM’ schools in this sample represent the emerging market while the ‘higher’ LSM schools represent the established market. The respondents included in this research differed drastically in their teaching/management experience (with an average of 13 years’ experience across the sample).
There are high levels of awareness around cyber-safety issues amongst both teachers and principals. Although 88.4% of respondents agree that learners are exposed to various possible dangers when using the internet, awareness is higher in higher LSM schools, where 95.4% of teachers and principals are concerned about cyber-safety issues.

Exposure to and viewing of "inappropriate" content is considered to be the most serious online risk to learners, as pornographic material is becoming increasingly accessible and available through various online mediums. Interestingly, cyber-bullying (a fairly recent phenomenon becoming more and more prevalent as technological consumption skyrockets), is rated as the second most concerning online risk to learners by teachers and principals. Issues such as the compromise of personal information and exposure to online predators are also flagged as potential issues that pose real dangers to learners within the digital space (refer to table 1).

88.4% of respondents agree that learners are exposed to real threats when using the internet

81.3% of respondents are worried about the impact online threats may have on learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of serious (%)</th>
<th>Very serious (%)</th>
<th>Not serious at all (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They may see inappropriate content</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber-bullying</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They may be exposed to online predators</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone can access my personal information</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate communication with other learners</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online scams</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet addiction</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viruses</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheating in exams</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It disrupts class</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate communication with teachers</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
28.6% of respondents report that they are aware of incidents relating to cyber-safety that have occurred with their learners

Nearly 30% of this sample reported that they were aware of incidents relating to cyber-safety that have occurred with their learners (this was only slightly higher amongst higher LSM schools). In the majority of these cases (67.2%), the teacher/principal was made aware of the incident through rumours going around the school. It is, however, reported that 54.7% of the victims actually reported the case to the school. Most incidents included the accessing, viewing and/or sharing of inappropriate pornographic content, followed by instances relating to insulting social media messages and posts.

Other less frequent issues reported by respondents included cheating in exams using an online source, dangerous meetings resulting from social media experiences, the recording and sharing of ‘fight’ clips, threatening social media exchanges and the degrading of schools and teachers in the digital space. Some of these cases resulted in very serious consequences, where one instance of cyber-bullying lead to self-mutilation and eventual suicide, and another to the rape of a learner.

Teachers have reported high levels of distress amongst learners specifically involved in cyber-bullying incidents. Interestingly, 71.2% of the sample reported that they believe incidents relating to cyber-safety have occurred amongst learners that have not been reported.

To what extent do you think cyber-safety is a problem in your school?

![Bar chart showing responses to the question about the extent of cyber-safety as a problem in schools, broken down by LSM levels]

- 15.5% of respondents believe it is a big problem for all schools:
  - 9.4% for Lower LSM
  - 21.5% for Higher LSM

- 32.8% believe it is a sort of a problem:
  - 27.1% for Lower LSM
  - 38.5% for Higher LSM

- 51.8% do not consider it a problem:
  - 63.5% for Lower LSM
  - 40.0% for Higher LSM
Handling cyber-safety incidents

Results from the research show that teachers are in fact more likely to address issues resulting from cyber-safety incidents than parents or school principals.

72.8% of the cases were handled by teachers, while less than half (40%) of the incidents were handed over to the school principal. Evidently, it is important for teachers to know how to respond to such problems; however only 34.5% of teachers and principals felt that they were well equipped to do so.

The incident was addressed by...

The school policy on cyber-safety

While 55.6% of all schools in this sample have some sort of formal policy around cyber-safety, this is more prevalent amongst higher LSM schools. 34.1% of lower LSM schools do not have a formal policy, and there has been no discussion around steps towards the introduction of one. The policies that do exist primarily consist of restrictions on cellphone and internet use when at school. Learners are not allowed to use their phones, tablets or any other devices with internet connection - or these devices will get confiscated (according to school policy). Previous research conducted with learners has however shown that despite these regulations, learners are still using their phones and accessing the internet during school hours and in class. Other policies and procedures include security settings for controlled internet access where various sites such as Facebook, YouTube and pornographic content are blocked. A small minority of schools do, however, also include guidelines on cyber-bullying within their school rules and regulations related to bullying in general. There does not appear to be any formal, clear policy relating to the handling of cyber-safety incidents that may occur amongst learners.

Our school...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All (%)</th>
<th>Lower LSM (%)</th>
<th>Higher LSM (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not have a formal policy and it has never been discussed</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not have a formal policy but it has been discussed</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does have a formal policy but it is not being implemented</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does have a formal policy and it is implemented</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The online environment is a very dangerous area for which kids are not equipped. Educating learners on cyber-safety

While 27% of respondents reported that they do not educate their learners at all on issues relating to cyber-safety, 45% reported that they give their learners some information - but not much. These results contrast those that emphasize the concern teachers and principals have around the topic. Teachers are not feeling well equipped in understanding and handling such issues. Furthermore, only 15.4% of respondents felt that learners themselves were well equipped for dealing with the dangers of the digital space. There appears to be a need for education for which the necessary skills and materials are lacking.

The Department of Education only provides training or supporting material around cyber-safety to 21.5% of the schools in this sample (higher LSM schools - 18%; lower LSM schools - 25%). 93.7% of schools would, however, like to receive such materials. Still, 34% of higher LSM schools do receive training and support internally (from the school itself), compared to only 5% of lower LSM schools. The type of training/other support received from the schools includes pamphlets, posters, and documents with guidelines on internet and cellphone use, as well as materials used in LO classes and in the computer lab. Some schools also hold workshops to educate their staff on issues relating to cyber-safety. Schools that receive support from the Department of Education in this space also report participating in training workshops, as well as receiving pamphlets, emails, newsletters and posters. Despite these contributions, 98.1% of respondents feel that cyber-safety should be included in the curriculum. Furthermore, 92.1% of teachers/principals would like to receive training in this space so that they can competently assist learners, and 95.5% would welcome a brand initiative or campaign focusing on such issues in their schools.

Schools want...
- More training/materials from their schools and the Department of Education
- To receive training on cyber-safety so that teachers can assist learners
- An initiative/campaign that focuses on cyber-safety to get involved with their school

92.1% of respondents would like to receive training on cyber-safety

The online environment is a very dangerous area for which kids are not equipped

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I receive support/material on cyber-safety from...</th>
<th>Higher LSM Schools (%)</th>
<th>Lower LSM Schools (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Department of Education</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My School</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would like to receive support/material on cyber-safety from...</th>
<th>Higher LSM Schools (%)</th>
<th>Lower LSM Schools (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Department of Education</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My School</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you/your teachers educate your learners about cyber-safety issues?

- Yes, a lot
- Yes, but not much
- Not at all

"Cyber-safety is a real issue in society today because of the advancements in technology; therefore it needs to be addressed."

**CONCLUSION**

This research highlights the disparity between the awareness and concern that teachers/principals have for learners in the cyber space, and the knowledge and skills that they have on the topic. The majority of teachers and principals do not feel adequately prepared to handle cyber-safety incidents, yet teachers find themselves to be the primary addressors of such issues.

The incidents that occur and that learners are aware of are not minor - they have resulted in both physical and emotional consequences detrimental to the person and to those around them. Despite this, the majority of lower LSM schools and nearly 40% of higher LSM schools do not have a formal cyber-safety policy that is being implemented. Neither the Department of Education nor the schools themselves are sufficiently providing the necessary information to the teachers, and consequently, only 28% of learners are receiving enough information on the topic. These findings reiterate research which has suggested that further education on cyber-safety is necessary to control incident rates and the effects that these incidents may cause. There is both a need and desire for such intervention.