PRIMARY SCHOOL STAFF’S PERCEPTIONS REGARDING RISKY INTERNET USE IN SCHOOL AGE: THE ROLE OF TRAINING AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

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Integration of ICTs and the internet in primary education

Benefits at learning & socio-interpersonal level

(Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008; Lee & Winzenried, 2009)
Online Risk Behaviors at School Age

- Excessive/addictive internet use
- Cyberbullying
- Unintentional contact with harmful websites

Preventive Actions From Primary Education

School staff with a key role in prevention

School Principals
- They are responsible for supervising all the school prevention programs and securing students’ safety generally.

Classroom Teachers
- They frequently spend qualitative time of interaction with students.

ICT teachers
- Their specialty is to promote ethics on the internet and a safe online culture in the school community.

(Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Beale & Hall, 2007; Cholevas & Loucaides, 2011; Cuffy, 2015; Evans-Andris, 1995; Kwok-Wing, & P. Keryn, 2004; Panselinas et al., 2014)
Effective Preventive Actions Require School Staff’s Appropriate Perceptions

Perceptions: related beliefs, understanding, and views, which can predict school staff’s potential management of students’ behavioral problem

(Cholevas & Loucaides, 2011; Philippou & Christou, 2001)
Interpretive Framework of Investigating Perceptions
(Theory of Planned Behavior, Ajzen, 1991)

Perceptions on a student’s behavioral problem
(e.g., perceived awareness / confidence to manage)

Management of student’s behavioral problem
International Literature Gaps

- Based on the fact that adolescents, compared to children, usually have easier access to the internet, most studies unfortunately focus on the investigation of high/secondary school classroom teachers’ perceptions mainly on cyberbullying.

High/secondary school classroom teachers, whose expertise is not ICTs, declare aware of and sensitized about this phenomenon, supporting the necessity for applying a holistic approach in the prevention/intervention of it. However, most high/secondary teachers don’t believe that they can manage it effectively.

(Beringer, 2011; Eden et al., 2013; Stauffer et al., 2012; Tolulope, 2012; Young, Tully, & Ramirez, 2017)
International Literature Gaps

Although there are few research indications that school staff with different duties and specialty inside school (e.g., principals, teachers) tend to perceive and approach cyberbullying in a different way, there are even fewer studies shedding light on these different perspectives regarding students’ online risk behaviors.

Principals usually declare less aware of the forms and the tools of cyberbullying, as well as they are less likely to perceive cyberbullying as a problem in their schools, compared to school staff with teaching duties.

(Huang & Chou, 2013; Mattioni, 2013)
Even fewer and contradicting findings from ICT teachers

On the one hand, they confess awareness of and concern about students’ online risk activities (e.g., extent of anonymous online friendships). On the other hand, they admit that they are not fully informed about the extent of risks students are exposed to through online friendship, feeling at the same time unable to manage this issue.

(Cassidy & Brown, 2012; Chou & Peng, 2007)
The limited available international findings mentioned before lead to a contradictory picture concerning the way students’ online risk behaviors are perceived and approached by different members of school staff. Furthermore, it has not been identified a study that investigates and compares at the same time the related perspective of primary school principals, classroom teachers, and ICT teachers, given the fact that each group of them can contribute in a different way to the prevention and/or intervention of students’ online risk behaviors.
The international research gaps remain at a greater extend in the Greek literature context, as the minimal available studies reveal that…

…primary school classroom teachers, on the one hand, declare aware of the internet risks, while on the other hand they are not fully informed about the appropriate online security actions inside schools. As far as primary school principals’ and ICT teachers’ perceptions on the issue under study, almost no related Greek study has been identified.

(Anastasiades & Vitalaki, 2011; Liovas et al., 2011; Touloupis, 2012).
Teachers who declare that they have been trained (after university studies) on how to secure students’ cyber-navigation they also declare more aware of and sensitized about students’ online victimization, compared to teachers who have not been trained.

(Byers et al., 2011; Craig et al., 2011; Sing, 2009)
Female teachers, younger teachers and teachers with few years of working experience declare more aware of and sensitized about students’ online victimization, compared to male teachers/older teachers/teachers with many years of working experience.

(Baker, 2010; Craig et al., 2011; Eden et al., 2013)
School Staff’s Training / Demographic Characteristics and Their Perceptions on Students’ Online Risk Behaviors

The minimal findings conducted mainly on classroom teachers don’t allow us to draw safe conclusions about whether school principals’ and ICT teachers’ related training and their demographic characteristics affect their perceptions on students’ online risk behaviors in the same way.
Taking into consideration the literature gaps mentioned before...
The Present Study
The present study aimed to investigate and compare school principals’, classroom teachers’ and ICT teachers’ perceptions regarding risky internet use among school-aged students. Furthermore, it was examined, separately for each group of participants, if their training on students’ safe cyber-navigation and their demographic characteristics affect their perceptions under study.
**Hypotheses**

*It was expected that…*

- …participants’ position at school (principals, classroom teachers, ICT teachers) affect their perceptions under study. Particularly, it was expected that school principals perceive less positively the issue of students’ online risk behaviors (e.g., lower perceived awareness/confidence in ability to manage), compared to participants with teaching duties (classroom teachers, ICT teachers) (*Hypothesis 1*).

- …positive perceptions regarding the issue under study (e.g., higher perceived awareness/confidence in ability to manage) are expressed mainly by school staff who have received training on students’ safe cyber-navigation (*Hypothesis 2*), by females (*Hypothesis 3*) and younger school staff (*Hypothesis 4*) with few years of working experience (*Hypothesis 5*).
Method

Procedure

- Approval for the survey by the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (March, 2014)
- Online questionnaire was sent via email to selected primary schools
- Enter of school staff’s responses in a logistic sheet of the Google Drive platform
- Secure of the anonymity and confidentiality of the data
Δείγμα

- 900 primary schools were randomly selected of all the Regional Education Directorates of Greece
- 387 primary schools responded (43%) mainly from Central Macedonia and Attica
- 670 participants: 237 School principals, 295 Classroom teachers, 138 ICT teachers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of participants</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age of majority</th>
<th>Years of working experience of majority</th>
<th>Training (after university studies) on students’ safe cyber-navigation</th>
<th>Duration of training</th>
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<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>School principals</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>50 years old or older</td>
<td>20-24 years</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
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<td>12.3%</td>
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<td>87.7%</td>
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<td>Classroom teachers</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>45-49 years old</td>
<td>5-14 years</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT teachers</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>35-39 years old</td>
<td>5-14 years</td>
<td>79.7%</td>
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<td>14.5%</td>
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Measure

Online self-reported questionnaire

1. Questions regarding demographic characteristics & training

2. Scale of perceptions regarding primary school students’ online risk behaviors

*Based on Preservice Teachers’ Perceptions of Cyberbullying (Li, 2008) (5point Likert type)*

The Scale investigates:

- Perceived *awareness*
- Perceived *confidence to manage*
- Perceived *school intervention*
- Perceived *adequacy of university related training*
Measure

Psychometric properties

P.C.A. & C.F.A.

• Perceived awareness
• Perceived confidence to manage
• Perceived school intervention

Cronbach’s $a$: from $a = .626$ to $a = .875$
Results
School Staff’s Perceptions on Students’ Online Risk Behaviors

Perceived adequacy of university training on students’ cyber-navigation

ICT teachers: 51.5% (yes), School principal: 43% (no), Classroom teachers: 54% (no)
Differentiation of School Staff’s Perceptions Based on their Position at School

Perceived confidence to manage

$F(2, 667) = 17.672, \ p < .001, \ \text{partial } \eta^2 = .050$

School principals

Classroom teachers

ICT teachers

Perceived school involvement

$F(2, 667) = 7.357, \ p < .001, \ \text{partial } \eta^2 = .022$
School staff’s training regarding students’ safe cyber-navigation affects school principals’ and classroom teachers’:

- **perceived awareness of students’ online risk behaviors** \((F(1, 235) = 24.472, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .094\) and \(F(1, 293) = 9.346, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .031\), respectively)

- **perceived school involvement in the prevention of this issue** \((F(1, 235) = 10.660, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .043\) and \(F(1, 293) = 11.821, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .039\), respectively)

School principals and classroom teachers who declare that they have received this training after university studies tend to consider that they are more aware of students’ online risk behaviors (school principals: \(\text{Mean} = 3.84, \text{S.D.} = .64\), classroom teachers: \(\text{Mean} = 4.46, \text{S.D.} = .43\)) and believe that school community should involve in the prevention/intervention of this issue to a greater extent (school principals: \(\text{Mean} = 4.57, \text{S.D.} = .43\), classroom teachers: \(\text{Mean} = 3.57, \text{S.D.} = .70\)), compared to their colleagues who declare that they have not received this training (school principals: \(\text{Mean} = 3.23, \text{S.D.} = .91\) and \(\text{Mean} = 4.30, \text{S.D.} = .63\) respectively, classroom teachers: \(\text{Mean} = 4.28, \text{S.D.} = .50\) and \(\text{Mean} = 3.27, \text{S.D.} = .64\) respectively).

- ICT teachers’ training on students’ safe cyber-navigation didn’t seem to affect their perceptions on students’ online risk behaviors.
Effect of the Duration of the School Staff’s Training regarding Students’ Safe Cyber-navigation on their Perceptions under study

Duration of the training regarding students’ safe cyber-navigation affects school principals’ and classroom teachers’:

• perceived confidence in their ability to manage this issue \((F(4, 232) = 7.492, p < .001,\) partial \(\eta^2 = .114\) and \(F(4, 290) = 4.043, p < .01,\) partial \(\eta^2 = .053\), respectively)

School principals and classroom teachers who declare that they have received a long-term (duration of more than one day) training after university studies on students’ safe cyber-navigation tend to feel more confident in their ability to manage students’ online risk behaviors (school principals: \(Mean = 4.00, S.D. = .52\), classroom teachers: \(Mean = 3.65, S.D. = .66\), compared to their colleagues who declare that they have received a short-term training (duration of one day) (school principals: Mean = 3.53, S.D. = .69, classroom teachers Mean = 3.00, S.D. = .720).

• Duration of training on students’ safe cyber-navigation didn’t seem to affect ICT teachers’ perceptions on students’ online risk behaviors
Effect of School Staff’s Demographic Characteristics on their Perceptions under study

Sex, age and working experience did not seem to statistically significantly affect school principals’ ($p > .05$), classroom teachers’ ($p > .05$), and ICT teachers’ ($p > .05$) perceptions regarding primary school students’ online risk behaviors.
Discussion

- Primary school staff seem to be aware of students’ online risk behaviors and support the involvement of the school community in the prevention of it. However, school staff don’t feel confident to manage this issue effectively and, consequently, ask for (further) related training during their university studies.

- **School principals:** support at a greater extent the involvement of the school community in the prevention of this issue

- **Classroom teachers:** feel less able to manage this issue

- **ICT teachers:** want further (after university studies) training on students’ safe cyber-navigation to a lesser extent
Discussion

- **Training** on the issue of students’ safe cyber-navigation *enhances* principals’ and classroom teachers’ sense of awareness of and responsibility for online risk behaviors in school age. However, their self-confidence to manage this issue is enhanced **only if the training is a long-term one (duration of more than a day)**.

- ICT teachers’ lack in psycho-educational background during university studies may hinder a more sensitized perspective on this issue, on behalf of them, despite any extra related training they have received.

- The widespread use of portable electronic devices and the systematic reporting of incidents of online bullying among adolescents and children during the last years have obviously concerned, sensitized and motivated school staff, **regardless of their sex, age and years of working experience.**
Limitations of the Study

- Different size samples of the three groups of participants (may affect the internal validity of the data)
- Possibility of socially acceptable responses (may affect the internal validity of the data)
- Restriction of the quantitative method (do not allow an in-depth qualitative investigation of the school staff’s related perceptions)
- School staff’s participation in the related training based on a self-report
Contribution of the Study

- A first attempt to depict and compare the related perspective of different under-researched groups of primary school staff
- Importance of related training during university studies
- Feedback for modifying related training actions (after university studies) for school staff:
  - Long-term training actions in order to enhance school staff’s self-confidence in addressing this issue, while depending on their target group (e.g., teachers), actions should focus on different dimensions/aspects of this issue (e.g., perceived confidence/school involvement).
- “Fertile” ground for new similar studies (e.g., combining quantitative and qualitative data)
Thank you...