

Identifying Patterns of Seeking and Providing Help Online among Adolescents in Israel

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Abstract : The present study introduces four different patterns of seeking and providing help online among adolescents: (I) 'Transceivers' - adolescents who both seek as well as provide help online; (II) 'Receivers' - adolescents who seek help online, yet don't provide it; (III) 'Transmitters' - adolescents who provide help online, yet don't seek it; and (IV) 'Idles' - adolescents who refrain from seeking and providing help online. The study examined differences in seeking and providing help online between possible combinations of the four patterns, as well as gender differences within each pattern. Data was collected from 528 adolescents in Israel (59% were girls). Findings revealed that Transceivers are the largest group (45%) in this study, with higher representation of girls (65%). These adolescents seek help mainly around social difficulties, and they turn to peers who are both known and unknown to them. In addition, their preferred way to seek and provide help is through social network sites. Moreover, they often accept and give others emotional support. Receivers are the smallest group (5%) in this study. They turn to both known and unknown professionals more often than to friends and family. In addition, they seek help mostly around health and nutrition issues, and they usually receive instrumental support. For Receivers, the most important factor for seeking help online is anonymity, and the least important factor is familiarity with the help giver. Transmitters represent 16% of the adolescents in this study, with a greater representation of boys (52%). Their main reason to refrain from seeking help online is self-reliance. Nevertheless, these adolescents provide help to others online, mainly to those known to them through posting or responding to posts on social network sites. Idles represent 34% of the adolescents in this study. They refrain from seeking help online mainly due to their preference to seek help face to face, and due to their lack of trust in the internet or those using it. Idles and Transmitters are willing to seek help online mostly from friends and family. In addition, they are willing seek help online mainly regarding questions concerning military or civil service. They consider the most important facilitators for seeking help online as confidentiality and reliability. The present study's main contribution is exploring the role of providing online help in understanding the adolescent behavior of seeking help online. In addition, the results of the present study have practical implications for the work of mental health providers, such as counseling psychologists and online mental health support.

Keywords : adolescents, counseling, online help-seeking, online help-providing

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