

Internet Health: A Cross-Sectional Survey Exploring Identified Risks and Online Safety Measures in Parent and Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders

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Abstract : Rationale: Internet usage has been very much integrated into our daily lives. Internet usage within a neurodevelopmental disorder population is also on the increase. Nevertheless, there is very little empirical research on how this population virtually protect themselves; along with how their parents can keep them safe online. This topic was an ever-growing concern to the parents within our services and in many cases would add to the stresses and mental health of parents. This ignited an idea within our team to conduct research to explore the perceived online risks within this population and how they keep themselves safe. In conjunction, we also explored how parents and caregivers monitor and safeguard their young people to the potential threats online. Our hypothesis was that the perceived risks will heavily outnumber the safeguarding measures implemented by this population. Method: Within the Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Partnership Trust Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), we distributed qualitative questionnaires to all the clinical bases (N=80). Questions explored topics such as daily internet usage, safeguarding measures, and perceived threats. The researchers requested for all CAMHS clinicians to identify participants. Participants in this study were accessing CAMHS for neurodevelopmental specific interventions. Results: The data were analysed using both Excel and SPSS. Within SPSS, a MANOVA was conducted and found a significant difference between safeguarding measures and perceived online risks within responses ($p \leq 0.5$). This supports our hypothesis that participants in this population are well versed in the safeguarding issues of the internet; however, struggle to implement appropriate preventative measures. Data were also screened using Excel and found that all parents and carers stated they 'monitored their child's internet use'. Conclusion: Data suggest that parents/carers may require more specific intervention to equip them with preventative measures due to the clear discrepancy between perceived risks and safeguarding measures. More research may also need to be conducted around this area to determine appropriate methodology to explore this topic further.

Keywords : Internet, health , how safe are we , internet health check

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