

YUNMUN XXX

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

Topic 1: Protecting Children from the Dangers of the Internet

The use of technology in our daily lives is rapidly increasing, especially for young people. A recent report from Cambridge International that surveyed over 20,000 students and teachers from 100 countries showed that not only does the use of technology in the classroom continue to increase, but that a staggering 64 percent of students use a smartphone to do their homework, and 65 percent on a notebook computer.¹ According to a 2013 UN report, globally, youth are nearly twice as networked as the global population as a whole, and in most of the world's least developed countries, young people are almost three times more likely than the general population to be using the Internet.²

Along with the advancement of technology comes the advancement of the dangers associated with it. One of the most prominent issues is the rampant trend of cyberbullying. According to a 2019 UNICEF poll, "One in three young people in 30 countries said they have been a victim of online bullying, with one in five reporting having skipped school due to cyberbullying and violence."³ Other outlets estimate that this number reported by UNICEF is low, and that in reality closer to *half* of young people have experienced some form of cyberbullying, and that about 20% experience it regularly. Cyberbullying has proven to be very damaging to children, leading to anxiety, depression, and in extreme cases, suicide.⁴ The most common forms of cyberbullying are harassment, impersonation, flaming (public online fights), denigration (attempting to ruin the victim's reputation), exclusion, outing (releasing unwanted information), trickery, and cyberstalking.⁵ Several countries and states have implemented laws to protect children from the dangers of cyberbullying, but many are falling behind on the times, and often the laws in place are ineffective.⁶

Some other common dangers that arise for children on the internet are cyber predators, identity theft, falling for scams, and accidentally encountering inappropriate websites. Something as small as opening an email from an unknown address, clicking on a link with a misleading web address or title, or accessing an online chatroom with strangers, can be incredibly harmful. Children can easily be persuaded to give out their personal information online, whether it be being prompted to insert their credit card information into a gaming site, or simply to provide their name and address which can later be used in identity theft. According to a report by CNBC, over 1 million children were victims of identity theft or fraud in 2017, and two-thirds of those victims were age 7 or younger.⁷

However, perhaps the most concerning of these issues, is the danger of online sexual predators, who use the Internet to identify and lure young victims by using chat rooms, instant messaging, and social

¹ <https://edtechmagazine.com/k12/article/2019/02/new-global-survey-offers-snapshot-technology-classroom-2019>

² <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/information-communication-technology/>

³ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-poll-more-third-young-people-30-countries-report-being-victim-online-bullying>

⁴ <https://ceoworld.biz/2018/10/29/countries-where-cyber-bullying-was-reported-the-most-in-2018/>

⁵ <https://www.help123.sg/cyber-bullying/common-forms-of-cyber-bullying>

⁶ <https://www.hecalawyers.com.au/blog/bullying-laws-around-the-world/>,

<https://resources.uknowkids.com/blog/cyberbullying-laws-around-the-globe-where-is-legislation-strongest>

⁷ <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/24/child-identity-theft-is-a-growing-and-expensive-problem.html>

networking sites such as Instagram or Facebook.⁸ Children are vulnerable, innocent, and unfamiliar with the dangers associated with internet use. As technology evolves, so do the advances of cyber predators and cybercriminals.

Some Questions to Consider:

- Should there be separate digital policies for children?
- At what age do we identify the change from “child” to “adult?”
- Is it our responsibility to regulate what children can access on the internet? Is it a governmental issue or a parental one?
- If so, how do we choose what should be regulated? How can we do this without impacting adult usage?
- How should a country respond to issues such as cyberbullying? The aggressors are typically fellow children and young adults - How can they be held accountable?
- Does your country have any policies in place? Are they effective?
- How do we get children to understand the dangers of the internet in a time where it is constantly advancing and becoming a larger part of our daily lives?
- Each country and culture has a different perspective on what aspects of the internet are “positive” and “negative,” not only for children, but in general. How do we decide how much access is beneficial, and how much should be limited, if any?
- How can we protect children’s identities online?
- How should developing countries protect children as they develop their internet infrastructure?

I wish you luck researching this topic, and I hope you find it as interesting and relevant as I do. I look forward to reading your position papers and seeing the potential solutions you come up with.

Feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns at hlevitin@mail.yu.edu.

All the best,

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⁸ <https://www.justice.gov/criminal-ceos/children-internet-safety>