THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH

2013 - 2014 Survey

ICDL ARABIA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Influence of Social media on Youth 2013 Report is a product of the efforts and commitments of the partners, sponsors and students who supported and participated in the ICDL Summer Camp 2013. The compilation of the pertinent data was undertaken by ICDL GCC Foundation and facilitated by Universities and training institutes that hosted ICDL Summer Camp 2013 across the UAE. The survey involved collecting responses to vital questions from 883 ICDL Summer Camp male and female participants aged 14-18; and analyzing their answers to get a sense of their general attitude and knowledge about social media and cyber safety.

We are forever indebted to our partners and sponsors in ICDL Summer Camp 2013 for their ongoing monetary and in-kind support. The generous contributions made by visionary leaders, concerned government organisations and responsible corporate citizens were instrumental to enrolling nearly 3,000 young male and female students in a productive summer filled with learning new skills as well as recreational and social networking activities. Acknowledgement also goes to the ICDL GCC Foundation team for gathering such valuable information and for putting this report together which will hopefully inspire qualification and educational regulators in their efforts to improve ICT skills and cyber safety awareness within our educational system.

Partners, supporters and sponsors of ICDL Summer Camp 2013 included, Abu Dhabi Systems & Information Centre (ADSIC), Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), UAE Ministry of Interior - Child Protection Committee, Sharjah Ruler's Court, RAK Red Crescent, Fujairah Welfare Association, The National Institute for Vocational Education (NIVE), Centre of Excellence for Applied Research and Training, Abu Dhabi University, UAE University, Ajman University, Fujairah College, ITP Publishing Group, HSBC Bank, Mashreq Bank, Emirates NBD Bank, Coca Cola, Canon, Brother International, Nokia, Sharaf DG, Atlantis Water Park, Dreamland, Aqua Park, Dolphin Show in Dubai Dolphinarium, Yas Island Water Park and last but not least Seawings.

thank you!

ICDL Arabia team

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A PERSPECTIVE ON THE ATTITUDES OF YOUTH TOWARDS SOCIAL MEDIA AND CYBER SAFETY IN UAE

1. ABOUT ICDL Arabia

ICDL Arabia is the newly formed regional body solely responsible for the delivery of the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) program in the GCC States, Egypt and Iraq. ICDL GCC Foundation, operating under the umbrella of ICDL Arabia, is the awarding body solely responsible for the delivery of the ICDL program in the GCC States.

The ICDL program, the world's largest digital literacy program, is administered by the ECDL-Foundation, a not-for-profit body, charged with promoting the program globally through its regional and national awarding bodies.

UNESCO pioneered the introduction of the ICDL program to the Arab region from early 2001. The rapid growth and uptake of the program resulted in the creation of ICDL GCC Foundation and the establishment of a regional office in Dubai, UAE, in 2004.

Today the ICDL program is widely recognized by governments throughout the region as being a key enabler of digital literacy skills. As a result the ICDL certification is approved by qualification and educational regulators across the region making it the de facto standard for educational , employee and workforce development programs.

With the increasing national attention given to cyber safety and the protection of children online, ICDL GCC Foundation has spearheaded initiatives that focus on providing digital and cyber safety skills to the UAE public, particularly to students, teachers and parents alike and has formed partnerships with a wide variety of government organisations, educational institutions and corporate bodies in support of these initiatives.

2. INTRODUCTION

The ever increasing adoption and usage of social media in the Arab region has transformed the way we interact and communicate and has unleashed a whole new wave of societal trends. The entire region is experiencing an unprecedented surge in technology adoption with GCC countries boasting the highest Internet growth rate amongst Arab States. Latest figures show that more than 125 million individuals use the Internet in the Arab region, and more than 53 million actively use social networking technologies[1].

The rapid uptake of new technologies brings many opportunities but also many challenges. Social media now impacts on every facet of our day to day life, from family and personal relationships, to education, consumption and shopping habits as well as our working lives.

Censorship or prohibition have rarely proved to be effective mechanisms to control human behaviour over prolonged periods of time. Education and awareness have always been more effective in changing behavioural patterns and in enabling individuals to become more responsible citizens. Similarly, in order to derive the maximum benefits from the responsible and safe use of social media technologies among our youth there is a need for educators and parents to be directly involved in safeguarding our children when engaged in online activity. However, in order to do so both parents and teachers also need to educate themselves and become more digitally aware.

In keeping with its mission to improve digital literacy skills and raise awareness across the region ICDL GCC Foundation undertook a study to analyse the attitudes of young people towards social media and cyber safety in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study involved conducting a survey of 883 students in the 14 to 18 years old age group from the public schools sector across five of the Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah, and Ajman.

The Influence of Social Media on Youth 2013 Report aims to provide a better understanding of how and why our youth use social media technologies as well as their awareness of the risks associated with their online activities, providing us with a better understanding of the problems and threats they have experienced online there by enabling us to develop robust and effective education programs for students, teachers and parents alike.

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3. OVERVIEW: A PERSPECTIVE ON THE ATTITUDES OF YOUTH TOWARDS SOCIAL MEDIA AND CYBER SAFETY IN THE UAE

This study focuses primarily on the role that social media is playing in the lives of young people in the UAE today. The survey measures social media platform usage and the reasons for the same. Respondents were asked about their social media usage, where they accessed their social media accounts, awareness of their online activities among their parents, their teachers' and schools role in their social media usage as well as the types of problems they encountered online and how they dealt with them.

Fieldwork was conducted over the period July 2013 to September 2013 and 883 interviews were completed with male and female students aged 14 to 18 who participated in the ICDL Summer Camp, an annual camp that is intended to improve the ICT skills of school-level students and spread awareness on cyber safety and social media. Interviewers for the survey were trained on how to administer the questionnaire. Instructions were given to the participants to ensure procedures were followed correctly throughout the interview period and to allow for the prompt resolution of queries. Responses were then validated by the Research Team and Quality Assurance Officers to confirm the validity and accuracy of the results.

Overall our findings show that young people are very active on social media with almost 95% of respondents using social media platforms, which is higher than that for some western countries. While most students use social media platforms for keeping in touch with friends, studying was, perhaps surprisingly, the third most popular reason for using social media. In general, there seemed to be a good level of awareness among parents as to their children's social media usage, with little awareness among schools, which would appear to be as a result of access restrictions as well as a lack of knowledge of social media among educators. Alarmingly, one in two students stated that they had encountered problems online through the likes of cyberbullying, harassment and identity theft and while many turn to parents and friends for support in such situations only 7% turn to teachers while 14% do not know who to turn to. The widespread usage of smartphones and the accessibility of social media platforms and other online sites via the mobile network means that educators cannot remain detached from their students' online activity no matter what restrictions may apply in schools.

Twenty years ago many schools resisted the push to the Internet, nowadays it is almost impossible to envisage a school operating without Internet access. Similar developments are now occurring with regard to social media usage and educators need to embrace the opportunities and challenges presented by these socio-technological transformations and work with parents and students to ensure the safe and responsible usage of these new online technologies.

4. KEY FINDINGS

The Internet shapes many aspects of young people's lives. Parents, teachers, guardians, technology providers, policy-makers and young people themselves should engage in a dialogue about the risks and opportunities that young Internet users experience online. This survey attempts to understand the attitudes of young Internet users in the UAE and highlights some key findings in comparison to the perspectives of young Internet users in other countries.

4.1 Use of Social Media

The research surveyed the use of social media among participants in the 14 to 18 year old age group. More than 95% of students surveyed said that they use social media . The Northern Emirates and Abu Dhabi have the highest percentage of social media users, while Sharjah has a slightly smaller percentage. **See Figure 1**
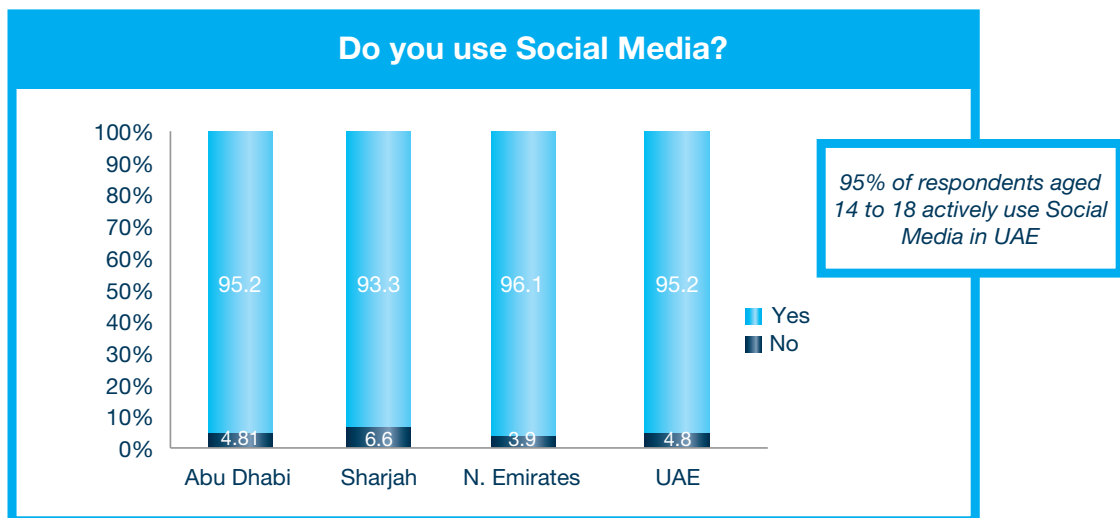

FIGURE 1: DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

This percentage is higher than that among teens in the United States and many European countries as reported by Pew Research Center at Harvard University. According to the Pew Research Centre, 95 % of teens aged 12 – 17 use the Internet, and 81 % of them use social media sites[2].
Internet driven behavior among the current youth generation would appear to be broadly similar regardless of geographic location, with the higher UAE rates likely driven by the higher penetration of smartphone usage in the region. As social media engagement increases among this generation they will have unprecedented access to increasing levels of information, which will shape their thoughts, behaviours and expectations for the future.

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[2] Pew Research Center Internet & American Life Project, "Teens, Social Media, and Privacy", May 21, 2013

4.2 Social Media Platform Usage

Respondents were asked to identify the type of social media platforms they were using. Twitter stood out as the most widely used platform, with one in every three participants using it, followed by Facebook with just under 30%. **See Figure 2**

Twitter and Facebook are the two most used Social Media platforms by students in the age group of 14 to 18 in UAE

■ Twitter
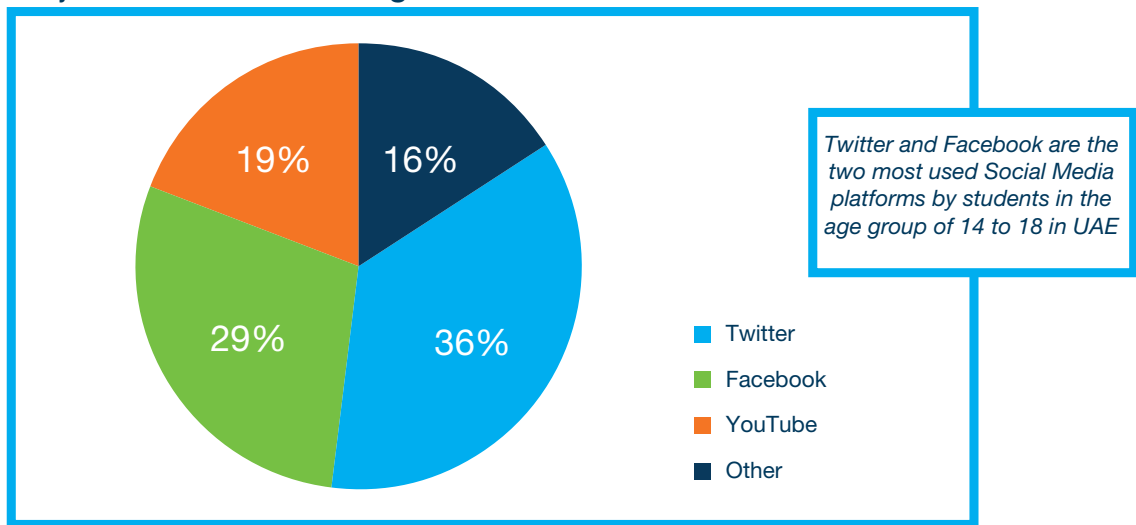■ Facebook
■ YouTube
■ Other

FIGURE 2: TYPE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED IN UAE

One in every five respondents said they used YouTube and a further 16% responded with others. The highest percentage of Twitter users was seen in Abu Dhabi at 38.9% and the lowest in the Northern Emirates at 28.9%. The percentage of Facebook users in Abu Dhabi was surprisingly low at 23% and highest in the Northern Emirates at 32.4%. **See Figure 3**

What Type of Social Media Platform Do You Use?

Nearly 50% of the respondents use Social Media for 'staying in touch with their friends'

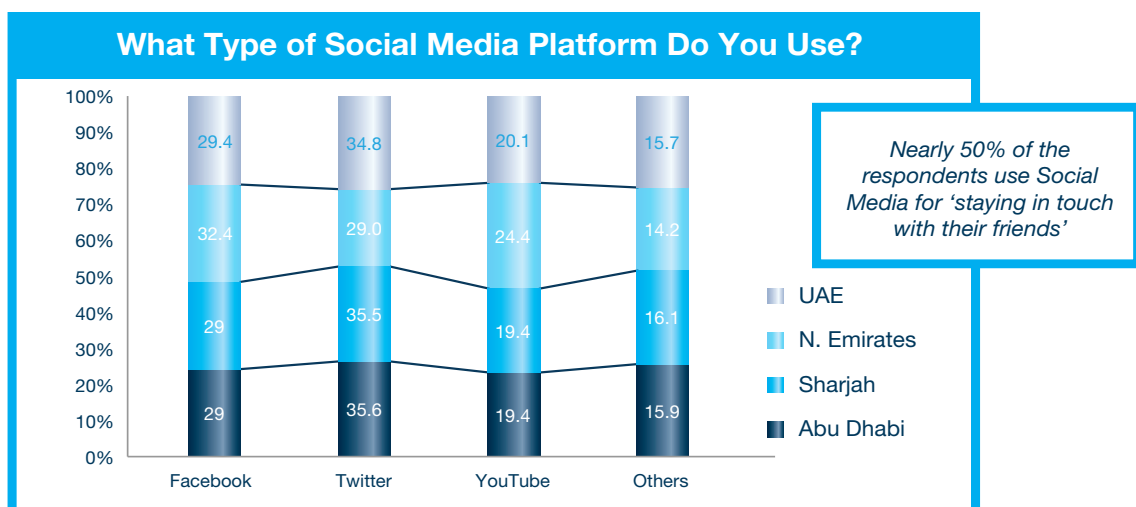■ UAE
■ N. Emirates
■ Sharjah
■ Abu Dhabi

FIGURE 3: TYPE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED BY EMIRATE

By comparison, the Pew Research Centre 'Teens, Social Media, and Privacy' Report 2013 stated that 81% of American teens use a social media site, with 94% of them having a Facebook profile; 81% say that Facebook is the profile they use most often. These findings were based on a survey of 802 teens in the United States that examined teens' privacy management on social media sites. The report highlighted that only 3% of American teens online have a Twitter account with American teens considering this platform outside the definition of social networking sites, in general[3].

4.3 Reason for Using Social Media

Teens are increasingly sharing more and more information about themselves, their networks and their behaviours on social media sites than they did in the past. Increased online information sharing brings with it increased online risks, such as, those associated with privacy protection, identity theft, cybercrime and cyberbullying, which highlights the importance of appropriate education and awareness programs to ensure the safe and responsible use of social media technologies.

UAE respondents ranked "staying in touch with my friends" as their key reason for the use of social media. Almost one in every two participants agreed with this statement. Chatting is the second key use of social media with 21% nominating this activity. Interestingly a significant amount of students claim to use social media for studying, with 18% opting for studying as the third most common reason for social media usage in the UAE.

The Northern Emirates has the highest percentage of participants stating that they use social media for studying at 33.7%. This is much higher than the second Emirate Abu Dhabi, where 19.1% voted for studying.

More than half of participants in Sharjah said staying in touch with friends was their main reason for using social media, which is fifteen percentage points higher than the Northern Emirates where participants were less likely to stay in touch with friends using social media. Participants in the Northern Emirates ranked chatting at 12.6%, as their least likely reason for using Social Media platforms. In brief, teens in Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah more actively use social media for social engagement, whereas teens in the Northern Emirates are more keen to use social media for studying. **See Figure 4**

[3] Pew Research Center Internet & American Life Project, "Teens, Social Media, and Privacy", May 21, 2013
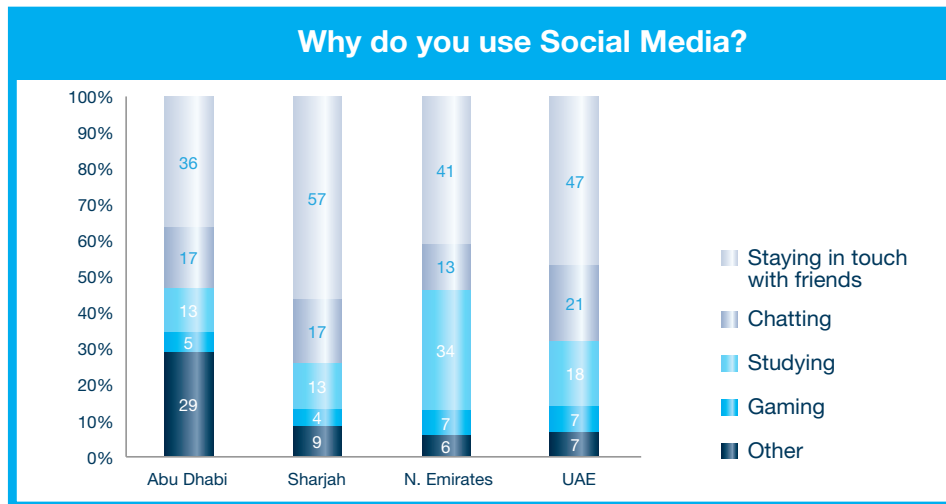
Why do you use Social Media?

FIGURE 4:KEY REASON BEHIND USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN UAE

Some critics argue that use of social media by today's youth might affect their socializing abilities by isolating themselves from face - to - face contact. In the Pew Internet Survey, nearly 70% of the respondents say chatting or staying in touch with friends is the main reason they use social media. These social networking sites are fostering a new virtual way of building social ties and getting support. The UAE survey found that Internet users get more support from their social ties with Facebook users getting the most support. The survey found that the average UAE user of a social networking site has more personal relationships and is half as likely to be socially isolated as the average American teen.

4.4 Social Media at Home

Social media phobia and limited awareness typically determines the extent to which parents allow their children to use social media platforms at home. Surprisingly only 5% of the surveyed respondents in the UAE said they are not allowed to use social media at home. All the respondents in Sharjah said they were allowed to access social media at home, higher than the national average of 95%. **See Figure 5**

Are you allowed to use Social Media at home?

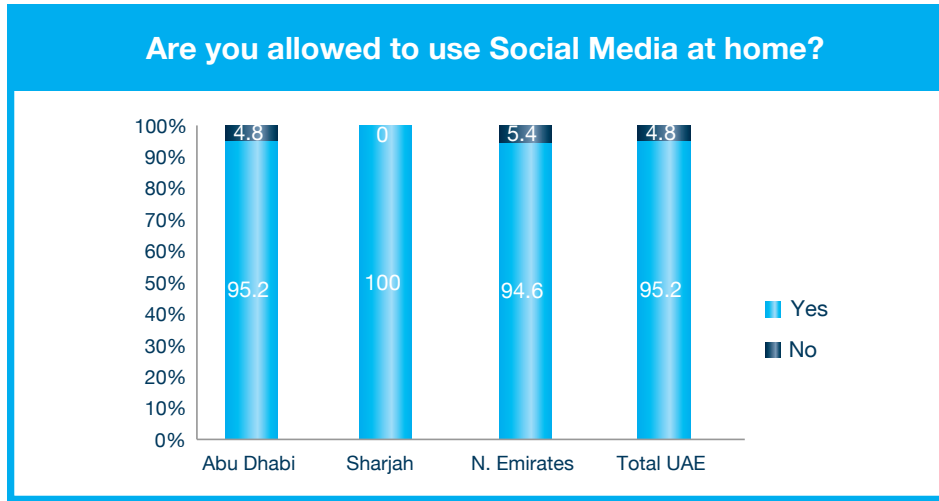FIGURE 5: USING SOCIAL MEDIA AT HOME IN UAE

4.5 Social Media at School

Almost 60% of respondents to the survey said they were not allowed to use social media at school. Three out of every five participants in Sharjah said they were allowed to make use of social media in school, which is higher than the the national average. **See Figure 6**. Schools that prohibit the use of social media in schools are also likely to restrict the use of mobile or smart phones as these activities are regarded as inhibiting the learning process.

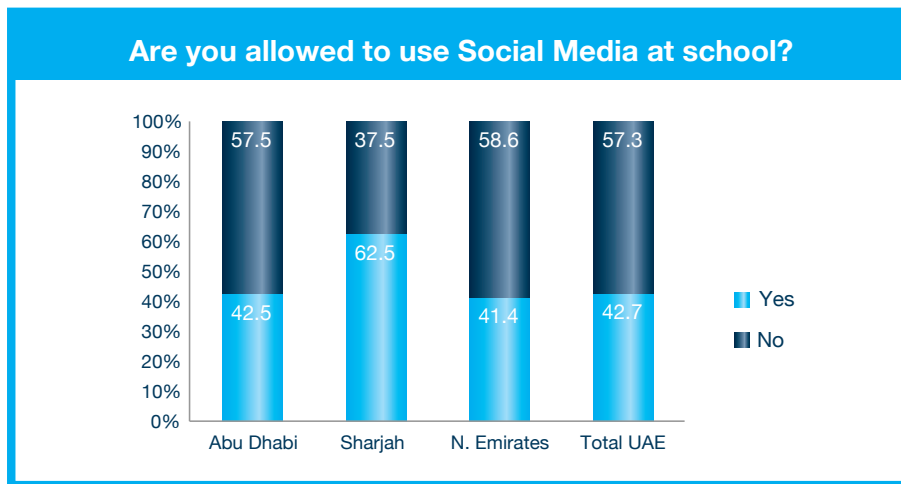**Are you allowed to use Social Media at school?**

FIGURE 6: USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AT SCHOOL IN UAE

4.6 Computer Usage

Respondents were asked to identify the importance placed on computer usage. The respondents ranked school work as the most important reason followed by gaming, downloading music and videos. School work was rated highest by the respondents in Sharjah at 36%, and lowest in Abu Dhabi at 29.2%. Almost one in four participants across the Emirates mentioned gaming as the second reason mainly in Sharjah and the Northern Emirates. **See Figure 7**. In comparison , in the United States, information gathering is the most popular activity among teens ages twelve to fifteen as opposed to social networking, online communication, or content creation.

Rank the importance according to your computer usage

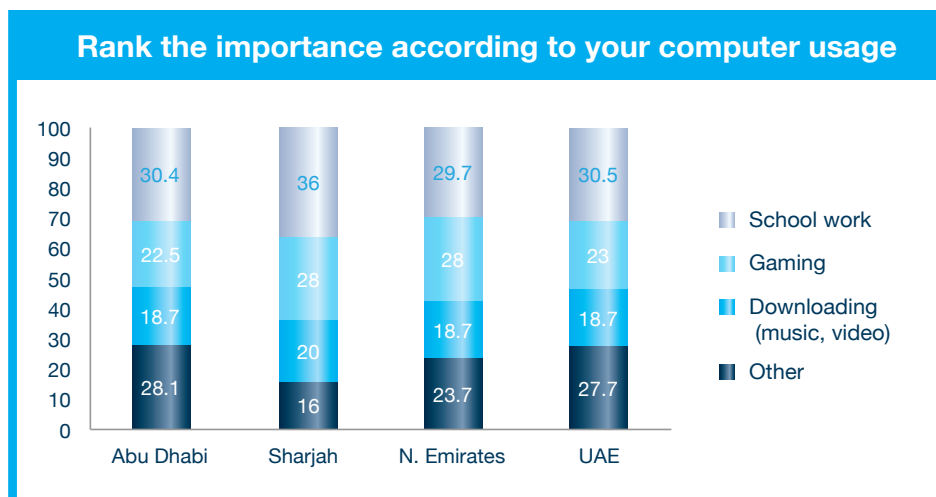|	Abu Dhabi	Sharjah	N. Emirates	UAE
School work	30.4	36	29.7	30.5
Gaming	22.5	28	28	23
Downloading (music, video)	18.7	20	18.7	18.7
Other	28.1	16	23.7	27.7

FIGURE 7: IMPORTANCE OF COMPUTER USAGE BY EMIRATE

4.7 Accessing Social Media Platforms

Smartphone usage is on the rise among the younger generation, driven by greater flexibility and affordable prices. Smartphones are now almost as powerful as a desktop or laptop PC, and with the availability of apps at no cost, practically everything you do on your laptop today is now equally achievable on your smartphone. The growing trend of smartphone usage was apparent in this survey, as Sharjah reportedly has the highest penetration of smartphones and tablets at 55% and 25% respectively, with four in every five youths accessing their social networking accounts through them. **See Figure 8**

How do you check your Social Media accounts?

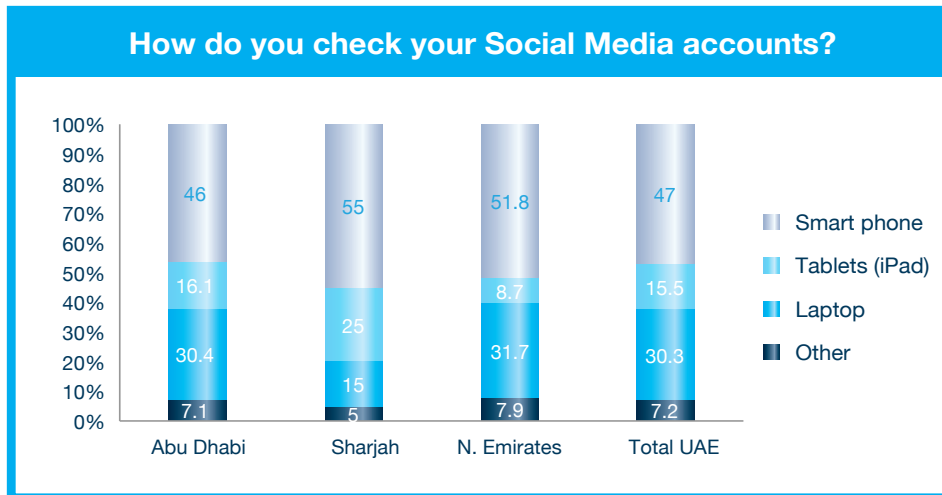|	Abu Dhabi	Sharjah	N. Emirates	Total UAE
Smart phone	46	55	51.8	47
Tablets (iPad)	16.1	25	8.7	15.5
Laptop	30.4	15	31.7	30.3
Other	7.1	5	7.9	7.2

FIGURE 8: ACCESSING SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS IN UAE

The Pew Internet Social Networking Report found that 40% of all adult mobile phone owners in the United States used smart phones for social networking. Among the youth, the percentage rose sharply to 67%[4]. The intensity of technology penetration among the current teen generation can be felt from the findings, which claim 78% of among American teens have a mobile phone and 23% have a tablet; 82% own at least one of these mobile devices[5].

Whether using a PC, laptop, tablet or a smartphone in their bedroom or when 'out and about', today's youth can increasingly operate freely online and without supervision.

4.8 Use of Social Media by Parents

Respondents were asked to assess their parents usage of social media. 86% of respondents surveyed stated that their parents use social networking sites. Some of these parents were early technology adapters, while others joined networking sites to keep an eye on the online activity of their teens. **See Figure 9**

Pew Research reports that 50% of parents of online American teens have used parental controls or other means of blocking, filtering, or monitoring their child's online activities. A further 42% of parents of online teens have searched for their child's name online to see what information is available about him or her[6]. Also 87% of American teens' parents use the Internet[7].

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[4] Pew Internet: Social Networking, Aug 5, 2013, http://pewinternet.org/Commentary/2012/March/Pew-Internet-Social-Networking-full-detail.aspx
[5] Pew Research Center, "Teens and Mobile Apps Privacy", August 22,
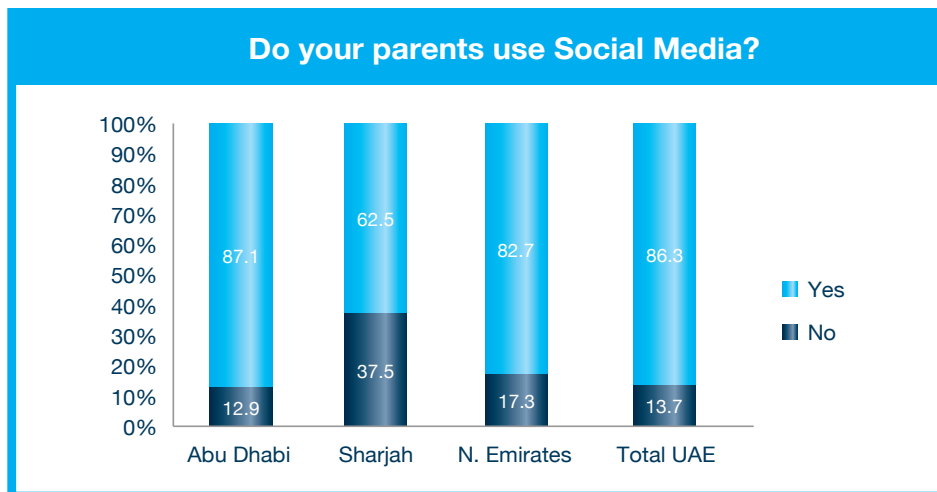
Do your parents use Social Media?

FIGURE 9: PARENTAL USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN UAE

4.9 Parental Supervision

The social media community now accounts for 25% of the world's population and continues to grow rapidly making it a potentially dangerous place for young users. American and European teenagers like to have more freedom and less parental supervision while using social media platforms. This is in contrast to the surveyed respondents in the UAE where seven out of ten respondents said their parents supervise them when using social media. Respondents in the Northern Emirates have the highest percentage of parental supervision. **See Figure 10**
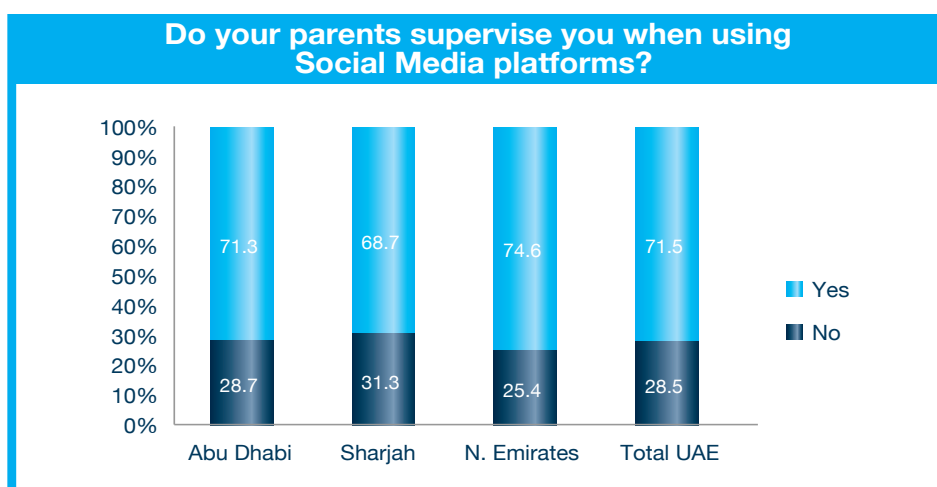

Do your parents supervise you when using Social Media platforms?

FIGURE 10: EXTENT OF PARENTAL SUPERVISION ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN UAE

[6] Pew Research, "Parents, Teens, and Online Privacy", November 14, 2012
[7] Pew Internet Research, Nov 9, 2011, "Part 4: The role of parents in digital safekeeping and advice-giving", http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Teens-and-social-media/Part-4/Parental-monitoring.aspx

The Norton Online Family Report found that parental attitudes about social media vary from country to country. 60% of Canadian and American parents believe they should have full control over their children's online activities, while Italian and Chinese parents feel that children should be empowered to make their own decisions[8].

According to a Pew Internet Research report, 72% of parents of online American teens are concerned about how their child interacts online with people they do not know, with some 53% of parents being very concerned. Also 69% of parents of online teens are concerned about how their child's online activity might affect their future academic or employment opportunities, with some 44% being very concerned. **See Figure 11**. Given that the levels of online and social media engagement are similar as between the UAE and the USA there is no reason to doubt that similar numbers of UAE parents would share the same concerns as their US counterparts.
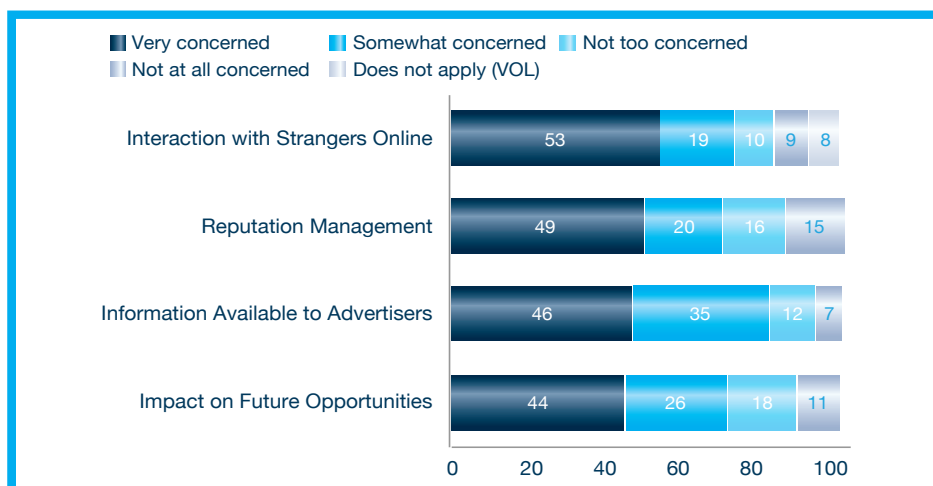

FIGURE 11 : PARENTAL CONCERN OVER CHILD'S ONLINE PRESENCE

4.10 Parents Knowledge about Accounts

Based on the survey results , the respondents in the Northern Emirates are less likely to share their social accounts with parents. Nationally about 30% of the youth in the UAE do not share information about their social accounts with their parents. **See Figure 12**

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[8] Alive, "Teenagers and Social Media", http://www.alive.com/articles/view/23615/teenagers_and_social_media

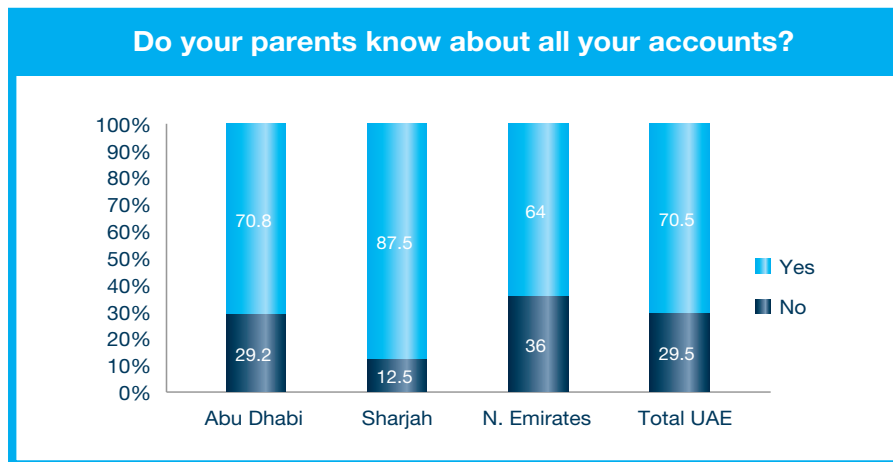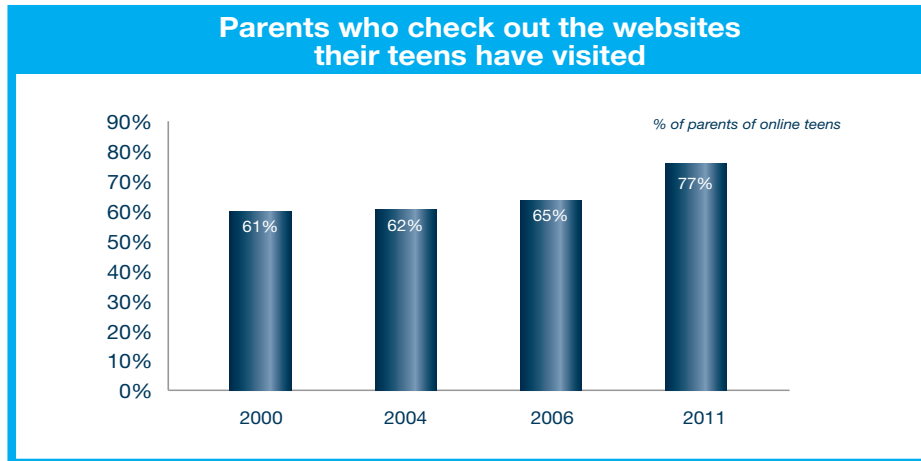**Do your parents know about all your accounts?**

FIGURE 12: PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF ONLINE ACCOUNTS

It is common for teens globally to disguise their information in order to gain access to websites and online accounts. Teens believe disclosing the accounts of various social media networking sites to parents might put them under their parents' scanner. However, they fail to acknowledge the risks associated with accessing platforms that have age restrictions[9]. These risks include exposure to inappropriate approaches from online strangers, being exposed to inappropriate online content and possible online grooming risks . These are the sorts of risks that parents, and policy makers are most concerned about yet, little has been known until now in the UAE about how often teens encounter inappropriate online approaches or online content that they feel are intended for more mature audiences. In the Pew Internet Research survey, close to one in three online American teens, 30%, say they have received online advertising that is clearly inappropriate for their age[10].

The Internet and online accessible handheld devices have removed all geographic boundaries and by giving our children unrestricted access to the online world, they are being exposed to the world's lures and dangers. Hence, protecting them from exploitation is an individual and institutional responsibility that can only be tackled by raising awareness among them on the responsible and safe use of technology.

**Parents who check out the websites
their teens have visited**

% of parents of online teens

Year	Value
2000	61%
2004	62%
2006	65%
2011	77%

Source: Pew Internet Research (Nov 9, 2011)[11]

4.11 Friendship with Parents on Social Media

More than 70% of respondents stated that they are friends with their parents on social media networking sites . The highest acceptance rate is seen in Sharjah, where 87% of the respondents have parents in their friends lists. Respondents in the Northern Emirates have lower levels of engagement with their parents on social media sites. **See Figure 13**

**Are your parents friends with you
on a Social Media?**

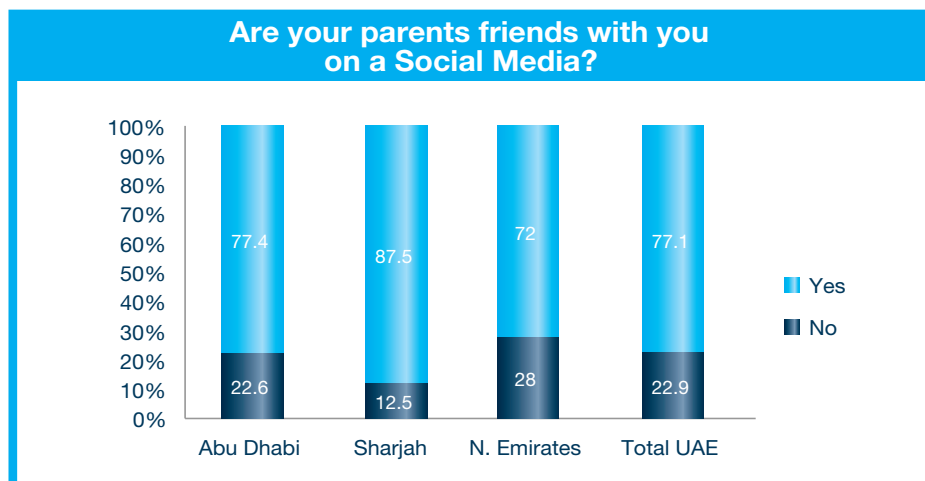|	Abu Dhabi	Sharjah	N. Emirates	Total UAE
Yes	77.4	87.5	72	77.1
No	22.6	12.5	28	22.9

FIGURE 13: FRIENDING PARENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

9 Pew Internet Research, "Teens, Social media and Privacy", May 21,2013
10 Ibid
11 Pew Internet Research (Nov 9, 2011), "Part 4: The role of parents in digital safekeeping and advice-giving", http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Teens-and-social-media/Part-4/Parental-monitoring.aspx

4.12 Types of Problems Online

One in every two of the respondents stated that they had experienced problems online, including cyber bullying, identity theft and harassment. Respondents in the Northern Emirates faced the highest percentage of cyberbullying.

It must be noted that respondents in the Northern Emirates were the least likely to disclose their online accounts and activities to parents (section 4.10) and be online friends with them (section 411). Despite being an Emirate where parents supervised the teens most (section 4.9), youth in the Northern Emirates are more exposed to threats posed by cyberbullying and identity theft than those of other Emirates. One of the reasons might be the lack of awareness on the parents part and also the limited awareness and help from schools as the Northern Emirates has the lowest percentage of teens using social media in schools.

Online harassment in Abu Dhabi, at 14.3%, stood much higher than the national average . Similar to their Northern Emirates peers, the youth of Abu Dhabi disclose less about their accounts to parents (section 4.10) and are less likely to be friends with them on social media sites. **See Figure 14**

What kind of problems do you face online?

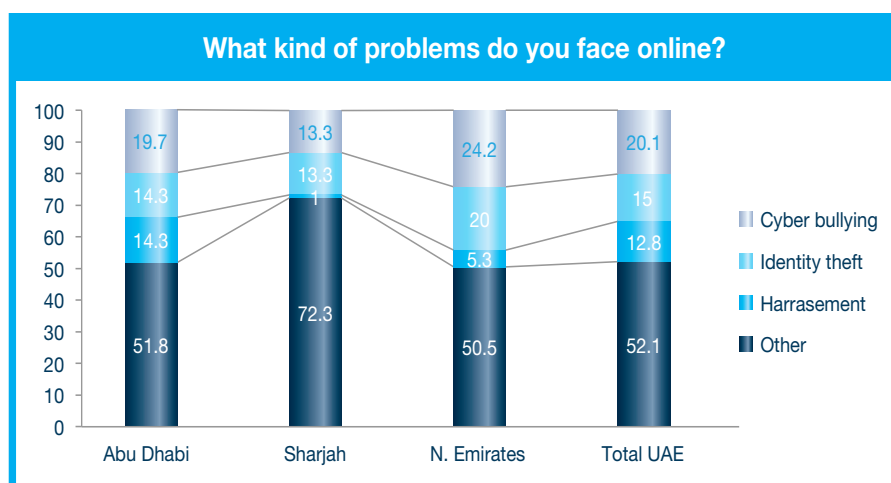|	Abu Dhabi	Sharjah	N. Emirates	Total UAE
Cyber bullying	19.7	13.3	24.2	20.1
Identity theft	14.3	13.3	20	15
Harrasement	14.3	1	5.3	12.8
Other	51.8	72.3	50.5	52.1

FIGURE 14: FACING PROBLEMS ONLINE

There is currently no singular global definition as to what constitutes cyberbullying, but psychologists and child safety advocates worldwide agree that the act is a form of psychological warfare that thrives on the use of technology that allows for anonymity. Because of its nature, cyberbullying is most common among students, though few realize that it is considered a crime punishable by law in many countries worldwide.

It is clear that as young people rapidly adopt new communication technologies, the need for online vigilance must also increase. In particular, there is a need to educate students on the dangers and consequences of cyberbullying.

4.13 Dealing with Problems Online

This survey clearly identifies that parents in the UAE are the primary point of contact that teenagers resort to when facing online problems. **See Figure 15**
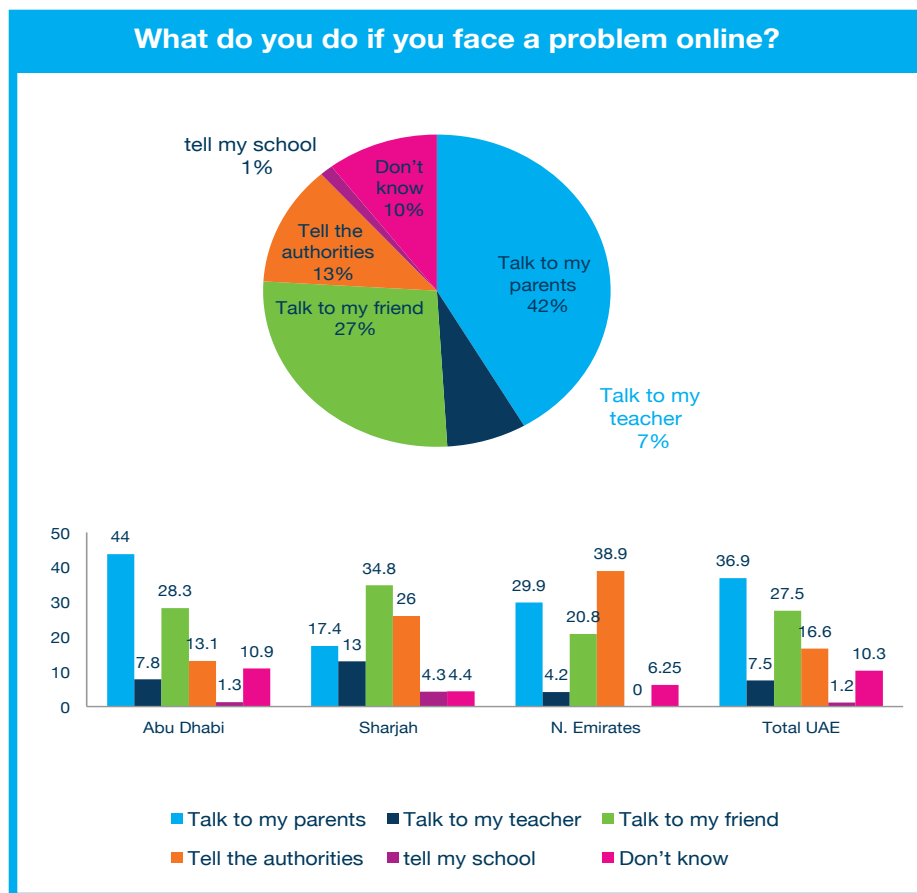

FIGURE 15: SOURCES OF SUPPORT WHEN FACING ONLINE PROBLEMS

Respondents claimed that when faced with online problems, they approach either parents (42%) or friends (27%) for help and advice. It is not surprising to find that teachers and schools are the least preferred choice for support and advice at 7.5% and 1.2% respectively. More worryingly, nearly one in every ten youths is not sure of whom to approach, fearing the consequences or the issue being shared with others. This highlights a lack of awareness about such issues in public schools in the UAE and demonstrates the need for appropriate social media awareness and cyber safety campaigns.

It is well known that children are often either too shy or too scared to speak out when they are being bullied. Children need to be encouraged to sound the alarm bell at the first sign of online harassment by reporting the incident to their parents or teachers.

4.14 Seeking Help

14% of respondents have no idea of who to turn to when they face online problems like cyber bullying, identity theft, and cyber harassment (section 4.12). The respondents in Sharjah seem to be confident on whom to approach, whereas respondents in the Northern Emirates are the least certain across the UAE. **See Figure 16**

Do you know who to talk to if you faced any problem online?

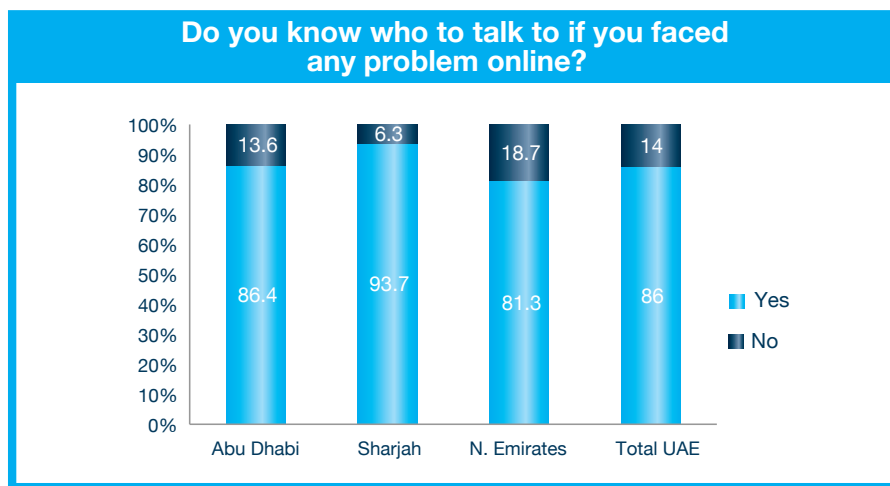|	Abu Dhabi	Sharjah	N. Emirates	Total UAE
No	13.6	6.3	18.7	14
Yes	86.4	93.7	81.3	86

FIGURE 16: SEEKING HELP WHEN FACED WITH PROBLEMS ONLINE

While the Gulf states lack official statistics to evaluate the prevalence or extent of online abuses, the fact that the region has one of the world's highest Internet and mobile penetration levels raises the potential risks. Cyberbullying is a very serious social problem globally that can cause irreparable psychological damage, especially to young people in their formative years. In the GCC, the younger generation is readily exposed to mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, and with social networking becoming an extension of their 'offline' lives, they are increasingly exposed to online threats.

Bullies on the internet can now hide behind their computer screens and false identities; something that traditional playground bullies never could do. Now, victims of bullying through technology may not even know their attacker and many times, a victim of cyberbullying may have many attackers all using a similar technology resulting in a new gang-bullying that can grow to astronomical size very quickly. Parents and teachers need to continuously revisit the danger of using technology, allowing children to have their own mobile phones or plans, and the need to monitor their activity much more closely because of the possibility that cyberbullying may be affecting their child, or even coming from their child to someone else.

4.15 Teachers or School Administrators Role in Social Media

Across the UAE, one in every two youth surveyed said their teachers or school administrators do not help them with using social media. The greatest support is seen from teachers or school administrators in Sharjah at 81.3%, followed by the Northern Emirates at 69.3% respectively. **See Figure 17**

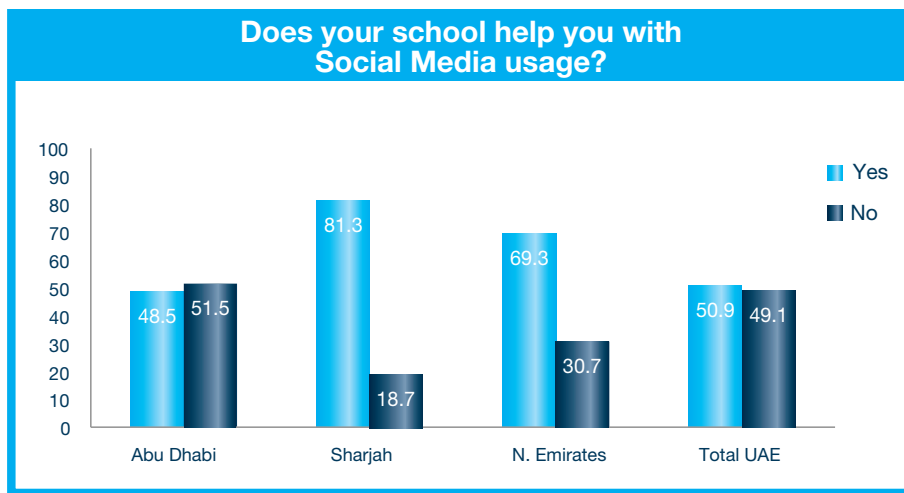**Does your school help you with Social Media usage?**

FIGURE 17: DOES YOUR SCHOOL HELP YOU WITH SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE?

Adults' proactive involvement in monitoring and reaching out to children is very important, as it could also prevent cyberbullying and other forms of online abuses. There is an urgent need for regional schools to take a more integrated approach to preventing Cyberbuyllying attacks by adopting Internet safety policies and programs. Such initiatives could go a long way in protecting children from the dangers lurking on the web.

5. CONCLUSION

The Internet shapes many aspects of young people's lives. In less than a decade, social media has revolutionized the way people interact with each other. ICDL GCC Foundation, believes that while technology is here to stay, people must continue to exercise caution in sharing personal information online so as to avert cyber threats. The results of this study illustrate the urgent need for significant improvement in Internet safety education among students and parents as well as in school systems.

Ultimately, this report should leave one question lingering in the mind of any responsible adult, 'If advances in technology are equipping youth with all the tools to get connected, who should bear the responsibility of teaching them how to use those tools responsibly?

6. SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ALL PROGRAM (SM4A)

Social Media for All (SM4A) is an internationally recognized certification designed to serve the education sector as a priority. SM4A is endorsed by ICDL GCC Foundation and developed by the DM3 Institute with the support of international subject-matter experts. SM4A offers an interactive, hands-on learning experience that provides the necessary knowledge and skills to leverage the various social media platforms to effectively connect, communicate and collaborate in your daily life.

The Social Media for All program (SM4A) certification is independent from ICDL and was designed in consultation with ICDL GCC Foundation to ensure attunement to the region's requirements. The SM4A program has been adopted in accordance with the standards of the UK Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) regulated by OfQual, the regulatory body for awarding organizations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The learning resources of the SM4A programme lead towards Proqual Level-2 qualification in Understanding the Safe Use of Online and Social Media Platforms.

This certification is divided into three main modules: Social Media, Cyber Safety and Search Online. The Social Media module concentrates on providing candidates with new skills on using social networking websites and blog sites to enrich professional and personal knowledge, creating new employment and commercial opportunities and gaining knowledge and skills related to safe and effective use of Social media. The Cyber Safety module focuses on boosting candidates skills and knowledge of safe and responsible usage of social networking websites. The third module, Search Online, assists in establishing clear search values queries enabling the candidates to effectively search for the information they need.

The SM4A program is provided through selected entities from the network of centres approved by the ICDL GCC Foundation including schools, universities, private training centres and government organizations. The program is accredited and endorsed by the ICDL GCC Foundation to ensure the application of relevant international standards.

Regional Headquarters
(UAE, Bahrain, Iraq, Qatar)

P. O. Box 500396
Grosvenor Business Tower, Office 1814
Tecom, Dubai, UAE
Phone: +971 4 4540420
Fax: +971 4 4540430

Oman

KOM2 Tower, West Wing
Office 02043
Knowledge Oasis - Al Raseil
Muscat, Oman
Phone: +968 2 4152380

Saudi Arabia

P. O. Box 52715
Tatweer Towers – Tower No.4
Al-Mohammadiyah Area, 11573
Riyadh, KSA
Phone: +966 11 2008228
Fax: +966 1 2008338

Kuwait

Salem Al Mubarak Street
Mazoon Center, Office 12
Salmiya, Kuwait
Phone: +965 2 5756272
Fax: +965 2 5756282