

Abstract

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The present thesis examines the perceptions of online safety among middle adult respondents (35-60 years old) in the context of the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT). Internet safety is divided into three components: social (personal), technical, and institutional. This division is based on the results of the author's diploma thesis research. The selected constructs of PMT include perceived likelihood of threat research, fear of potential threat, and perceived self-efficacy of respondents. It was also examined whether gender and education of the respondents were related to the perceived severity of online safety.

A CATI questionnaire survey was conducted with a representative sample of (n = 700) respondents. Pearson and Spearman's correlation and chi-square test of independence were used to analyse the data.

The results show that weak correlations can be observed between perceived severity of social (personal) safety on the Internet and perceived fear of threat and perceived likelihood of threat. Furthermore, there is a direct relationship of weak intensity between technical safety on the Internet and perceived self-efficacy. There is a direct weak-intensity relationship between institutional security and both fear of potential threat and perceived likelihood of threat. It was also shown that women perceive the social (personal) component of online safety as more important, while men perceive the technical component as more important. Educational attainment is shown to be non-significant in the perceived severity of Internet safety.

The presented results offer new insights into the division of Internet safety. The results can be used in the design of intervention programs or other research investigations.

Key words: *Internet safety; Protection-motivation theory; Middle adulthood; Correlational study*