



<https://www.kik.com/>

What is it?

Released in 2010 and boasting over 300 million users, this app is for anonymous users to enter a large or private chatroom and interact in ways they deem appropriate with little to no oversight.

Why can it be dangerous?

A central allure with this app is that no one knows who the student is, and they are free to talk and act as they desire, and no one will call them out for the misbehavior. Sanders (2016) reported on a sixteen-year-old girl who used Kik app to connect with a man who attended a respected university. After gaining her trust, he convinced her to meet him, killing her. The report warns users that people on this app are predators and worse. They spend their days seeking their next victim and do so by sending private messages, typically.

Dodson et al. (2020) conducted a study of how to attract young gay black males to understand sexual health better and warn students of STI dangers. The disturbing aspect of this study is how they were most successful (48%) in meeting these men in real life was via social media, including Kik. At a minimum, this statistic reveals that the ease of gaining students' trust via social media is much higher than in-person or other professional research methods. Dodson called social media the "patient-centered recruitment option."

Defenses

Sanders (2016) states that Kik will help parents concerned if they will take a screenshot of the person bothering their child. They will investigate the complaint and possibly remove the user or call the authorities. The problem remains because users know how to make fake accounts and are never permanently removed. Connect Safely addressed this incident, and their advice remains on their website (Connect Safely, 2022).

Their opinion is that students cannot be on any social media platform and believe they are one hundred percent safe. Their lists of recommendations are what a police officer would tell anyone walking the streets. Use common sense. Trust no one. Read between the lines of what people chat to you. And never meet someone in person, especially by yourself.