

280577 - Ruling on selling programs to monitor what children do on the computer

the question

1.. We sell programs that enable parents to monitor what children watch and do on the computer and protect them until they reach puberty. This is for the purpose of protecting their children from watching content that may harm them and that is contrary to the commands of Allah. When installing this software on the child's computer or mobile phone, do we have to inform him or is it permissible to do that in secret? If the program is installed with the child's knowledge, there is an easy way to disable the program when they sit at the computer; it is a readily available service that the child can use to disable the program, and thus the program is of no benefit. If the program is installed secretly, does that come under the heading of spying on one's children?

2.. As sellers of such programs, are we responsible for the way in which it is used, whether that is secretly or openly? Please note that all the conditions of use are written with the program, but it may be bought by a disbeliever who does not pay any attention to the conditions of use, and he may use it against anyone in secret. Are we – as sellers of the program and Muslims – responsible for that? What does Islam tell us to do in this situation, and how can we avoid what is haraam?

Detailed answer

Firstly:

It is not permissible to install a program to monitor what children, adults or wives do without their knowledge, because that comes under the heading of spying, which is prohibited.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful} [al-Hujuraat 49:12].

Al-Bukhaari (5144) and Muslim (2563) narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the falsest of speech. Do not seek out one another’s faults; do not spy on one another; do not envy one another; do not turn away from one another; do not hate one another. Be, O slaves of Allah, brothers.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (5144) and Muslim (2563).

And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “O you who have paid lip service to Islam but faith has not entered your hearts, do not harm Muslims or shame them or seek out their faults, for whoever seeks out the faults of his fellow Muslim, Allah will seek out his faults, and if Allah seeks out a person’s faults, He will expose him even in the innermost part of his house.” Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (2032) and Abu Dawood (4880).

The way to do that is for the father to inform his children that he has installed a program to monitor what they do on the computer, but he does not have to show them the program; rather he may hide it, or choose a program that the children cannot disable.

It is permissible to use a program to hide bad websites and the like, and that does not come under the heading of spying; rather it comes under the heading of preventing and blocking that which is feared could cause corruption and harm. This comes under the responsibilities of parents.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe; they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded} [at-Tahreem 66:6].

It was narrated from Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Each of you is in a position of trust and is responsible for what he is entrusted with. The ruler of the people is in a position of trust and is responsible for them. A man is in a position of trust over the members of his household and is responsible for them. A woman is in a position of trust over her husband's house and children and is responsible for them. The slave is in a position of trust over his master's wealth and is responsible for it. Each of you is in a position of trust and each of you is responsible for what he is entrusted with." Narrated by al-Bukhaari (7138) and Muslim (1829).

And al-Bukhaari (7151) and Muslim (142) narrated that Ma'qil ibn Yasaar al-Muzani (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: "There is no person whom Allah puts in charge of others, and when he dies he is insincere to those under his authority, but Allah will forbid Paradise to him."

Secondly:

With regard to selling this program and others which may be used in permissible or prohibited ways, the basic principle is that it is permissible to sell these things and trade in them, unless it is known or thought most likely that the purchaser is going to use it for haram purposes, in which case it is not permissible to sell it.

But if it is not known what is the case, or there is uncertainty as to whether he is going to use it for haram purposes or not, then there is nothing wrong with selling it, and if he does use it for haram purposes, the sin of that will be on him alone.

It says in *Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa'imah* (13/109): Everything that is used for haraam purposes, or it is thought most likely that that is the case, it is haraam to manufacture it, import it, sell it and distribute it among the Muslims. End quote.

Please see also the answers to questions no. [101071](#) , and [39744](#) .

And Allah knows best