

The influence of modern technologies on the emergence of unacceptable forms of child behavior

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Abstract

The variety of Internet content allows children to open different, often inappropriate, content from which they cannot learn much, and the abundance of violence that is shown greatly affects their psyche. It is an indisputable fact that the media are present in all aspects of people's lives, from business and economy to the private sphere of life. Along with the spread of Internet content, there are discussions about their importance and potential impact on users. Young people, searching for their identity, imitate idols. Annually, on average, they spend more time surfing the Internet than they spend studying, playing, socializing, doing sports, or some other activities. The goal of this research is to point out the potentially dangerous aspects of the use of modern technologies. Children and adolescents are considered a particularly sensitive social group that is in the phase of building attitudes, adopting, and constantly adapting to socialization frameworks and behavioral norms. In this research, a questionnaire was used as a research instrument. Based on the results and conversations with students, we can conclude that students mostly visit sites where they can share something, talk with other people, and play predominantly violent games. A large percentage of respondents stated that they had witnessed or themselves were victims of violence on the Internet. The worrisome fact is that children, or respondents, do not trust institutions (school, social service) too much, and they usually talk about problems with friends or parents, and the percentage of children who do not turn to anyone is also not negligible. As a society, it is important that we put our last efforts into reporting cases of online violence. To achieve this, prevention measures must first be used within the family unit, as it is the foundation for encouraging

healthy behavior. Subsequently, educational institutions must work multisectorally with relevant organizations to comprehensively educate individuals about the dangers of social media.

Keywords: *Internet, children, parents, unacceptable behavior, aggression, violence, help*

1. Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a country in transition, is facing dramatic social changes, which are directly related to the use of media and the increase in problems related to it, such as criminal acts, social exclusion, and suicide. The data that can be found are mostly part of project evaluations or smaller research of various social institutions and organizations that directly or indirectly deal with this problem. The variety of Internet content allows children to open different, often inappropriate, content from which they cannot learn much, and the abundance of violence that is shown greatly affects their psyche. It is an indisputable fact that the media, in one way or another, are present in all aspects of people's lives, from business and economy to the private sphere of life. Along with the spread of Internet content, there are discussions about their importance and potential impact on users. Young people, searching for their identity, imitate idols. Annually, on average, they spend more time surfing the Internet than they spend studying, playing, socializing, doing sports, or some other activities. The Internet has a particularly strong influence on the attitudes and behavior of young people, especially if they are committed to searching and viewing such content and if the social environment propagates and supports the same values and behavior models that they encounter on the Internet. Websites are full of images, videos, and texts related to alcohol consumption, violence, and similar negative factors. In modern society, the

mass media are very powerful, and with their way of expression, they play a crucial role not only in abandoning some features of traditional culture but also in creating a new one - audiovisual. The quality of mass media is because they are aimed at a large number of consumers. Each of them has its target group and according to the requirements of that group, they create their content. The wealth of information technologies offered to children is not necessarily negative for them. Children using computers acquire different skills and knowledge while using their senses and their bodies. Also, the correct and controlled use of computer games has a positive effect on fine motor skills and coordination. However, any excessive and uncontrolled consumption of modern information devices by children can cause numerous consequences (Hasanović and Kudumović, 2023).

Computer literacy is extremely important in the field of education because for effective use of technology and proper care of students, teachers, and parents must have a range of developed computer knowledge and skills, as well as information about the Internet and media in general. Today, the education sector is one of the most intensive users of all types of information technology and the Internet.

Information and communication technologies and the Internet as a new segment of organizing educational systems provide large, diverse, and almost unlimited opportunities for work in this area at all levels, as well as transparent, personalized access to educational data and information of students and teachers. (Kudumović and Aleksić, 2021).

Given that children are also exposed to media influence and given that school age is also a time of learning and acquiring skills important for life, it is important to form a critical attitude towards the media content offered at this age. The media can affect our reality either by destroying it or by enriching it. It all depends on how well we know them and how much we strive to create a relationship of mutual action instead of passively receiving their messages. For that, we need media literacy that will help us understand how the media shapes our ideas about the world and ourselves (Košir et al., 1999).

“Media literacy” first means acquiring the ability to critically read the media, regardless of its form (press, radio, television), to reduce the distance from the media, understand their func-

tioning, and get to know their contents. With the growth of internet usage, access to information is more important than ever.

At the same time, it is not enough for young people to have access to the global network, but to be able to assess the value and validity of internet sites in all areas. Today, when almost anyone can create their site, great freedom is given to people who choose to take advantage of that opportunity. However, with the freedom of the Internet, there is also a new demand to educate young people on how to use the Internet and all other media critically and sensibly. The analysis includes the ability to detect propaganda, to understand that people are always involved in the creation of media messages and that almost all media messages have a purpose – to inform, entertain, or persuade.

For many years, Michael Kunczik and Astrid Zipfel (2006) have studied the influence of media-presented violence on the behavior of users of media content. They oppose theories that recipients of media messages, among whom an important group is children, can always acquire a desire to imitate violent behavior in real life.

They note that a part of the population, seeing violence, creates resistance to it. Some get used to the existence of violence, which is more often represented in the media as a way of resolving disputes than in real life, but do not resort to violent actions. At the same time, a small part of the population wants to imitate what they have seen and thus make life exciting and what they want available.

They came to similar conclusions when it comes to imitation suicides, which were shown in detail in the media. It has been proven that a very small part of the population can be encouraged to imitate the media portrayal of suicide.

Buljan Flander (2010) cites several studies and highlights short-term and long-term consequences for children, which are reflected in different ways depending on age, family environment, social relations, and social environment. In some children, it is noticed that they become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others. The feeling of empathy is lost, and the desire for aggression increases. Nowadays, the amount of violence in all media is increasing significantly.

Games on the Internet, which are easily accessible to children, are a big problem for par-

ents. They are mostly related to war themes, they are full of inappropriate content such as killing, weapons, and abusive words. Through such content, children imitate their heroes, thus exploring their identity. They discover and create their micro world where they become the bait of other people's desires, ideas, and lives. That world allows them freedom and space, and they are away from adults and the control they have. Very often through such games, children use chat rooms which are again full of anonymous bullies who use such space to express their frustrations, using inappropriate words and insults. Such a world becomes normal for young people, and violence and explicit scenes, and therefore insults, become quite normal for them. Very often they identify with the people they meet there, but they also become victims of such people. What is a big problem and a frequent occurrence is that they become so engrossed in such roles that they do not distinguish reality from fiction, and in those moments they commit the worst criminal acts. Videos of teenagers beating themselves up over weaker peers are increasingly circulating on the Internet. Most of them film their victims. Such recordings can be found on the Internet every day. In this way, the Internet becomes a medium without any considerations or censorship. The most important thing is to adapt the content to the child's age and sensibility, make sure that the media and computers do not occupy the child for too many hours during the day, and that they are not the only forms of play, learning, and entertainment. Even if he watches the most benign content, a child who is left to television and the Internet will show similar symptoms of neglect and frustration as one who is exposed to violence.

The goal of this research is to point out the potentially dangerous aspects of the use of modern technologies. Children and adolescents are considered a particularly sensitive social group that is in the phase of building attitudes, adopting, and constantly adapting to socialization frameworks and behavioral norms. The Internet plays a crucial role in mediating socially desirable lifestyle models that shape young people's knowledge of the world and social environment. That is why we look at media research in the context of the ambivalence of the theory of direct effects, which studies the relationship between Internet content and the behavior of

recipients and is focused on the prevailing negative effects; and the theory of limited effects (limited effects), which criticizes the previous theory based on how the effects of the Internet are mediated by different social relations that influence the control, filtering and interpretation of the Internet experience and also focuses on possible positive indicators.

2. Methodology

This research is theoretical-empirical, theoretical because it relies on theoretical knowledge about the Internet, media, and education, and empirical because it deals with social reality, i.e. one of the phenomena of the modern age. Any contribution in the explanation of this very important aspect of today is useful, especially when we talk about children, their development, and the expected consequences of the intensive use of modern technologies, whether they are predominantly positive or negative. The research was carried out in 3 elementary schools in the Sarajevo Canton, and the survey included 320 students of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. The spatial determination of the research subject primarily refers to the area of the Sarajevo Canton, but it should be emphasized that this problem is very common throughout the world, and the influence of the Internet is ubiquitous.

The Internet plays a key role in mediating socially desirable life patterns that shape young people's knowledge of the world and their social environment. That is why we observe media studies in the ambivalence of the theory of direct effects, that is, the study of the relationship between Internet content and the behavior of recipients, with a focus on pervasive negative effects.

Each research question has its causal relationships, which are established through scientific explanation. Some children need to be aggressive because they see nothing wrong with such behavior. They just imitate what they see or hear. Some of them do not know a better way to communicate with the environment (i.e. with peers). It happens that they are also encouraged by their friends, and such behavior is presented to them as a trend. Some children go through difficult periods in their lives that manifest through aggressive behavior, so for them, violence is a symptom of a problem. Research shows that aggressive children often come

from homes without care for children, they are left to their own devices, and they are allowed to do and see what they want, so children use physical violence and aggression as a way to solve problems (Hasanović and Kudumović, 2023).

Also, the Ministry of Education of the KS surveyed the psychophysical health of children/students, educators, and parents (August 2023), where the professional associates cited behavioral disorders in children as one of the biggest problems they encountered. caused by violence on the Internet and inappropriate web content.

All the above, in the end, we will try to answer certain research questions that arise if we look at this current issue. All this will help in understanding the impact of the Internet on the appearance of unacceptable forms of behavior in children, but also certainly opens up some new questions because this is a topic that requires the inclusion of many other factors to reduce the negative effects, and the Internet and its good sides optimally used.

As an illustration of the situation in practice, after surveying students and talking with them, we will answer the following questions:

1. Do the children have their computer/laptop/mobile device/tablet with internet access?
2. Are parents familiar with the content of websites and games that students visit and play using the Internet?
3. Do parents limit the time spent on the Internet?

In the second part of the survey, we will answer a series of questions regarding the psychophysical consequences that negative comments leave on children:

1. Have you heard of the term cyberbullying?
2. Have you encountered negative comments and messages on social networks?
3. Did you tell anyone about the disturbing comments and messages you received?
4. Which of the following did you turn to for help or advice after receiving disturbing messages or comments?
 - a) I have not experienced disturbing comments
 - b) parents
 - c) friends
 - d) professional service at the school
 - e) I have not reported harassment on the Internet to anyone

In this research, a questionnaire was used as a research instrument.

3. Research results

After surveying the respondents, the collected data were statistically processed and the following results were obtained:

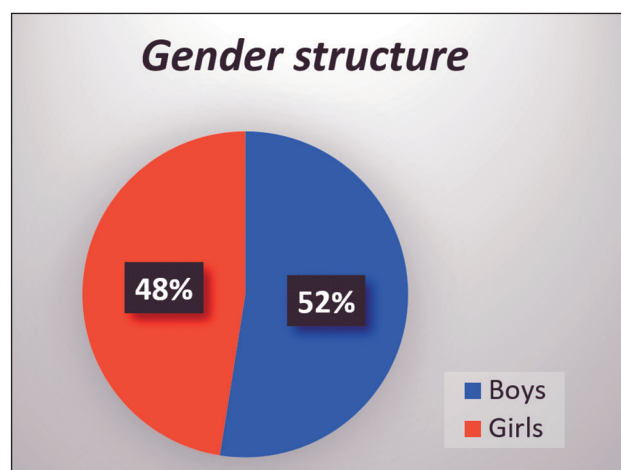


Chart 1. Gender structure

During the research, a total of 320 students were surveyed, of which 168 were boys and 152 were girls.

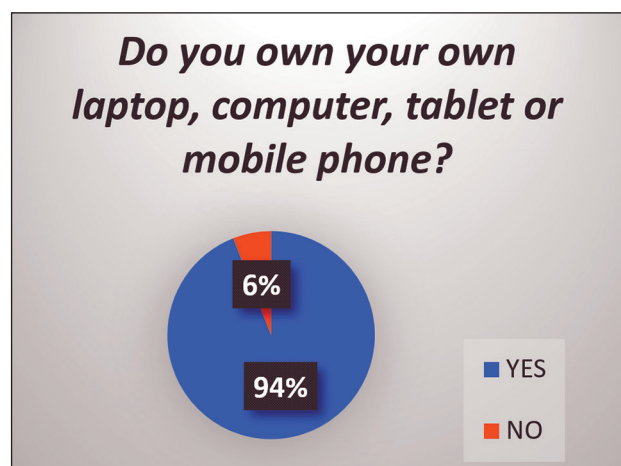


Chart 2. Owning your device

Based on the results obtained by surveying students, we note that 301 respondents, or 94% of them, own their devices with Internet access. 6% of respondents (19 of them) answered that they do not own their device.

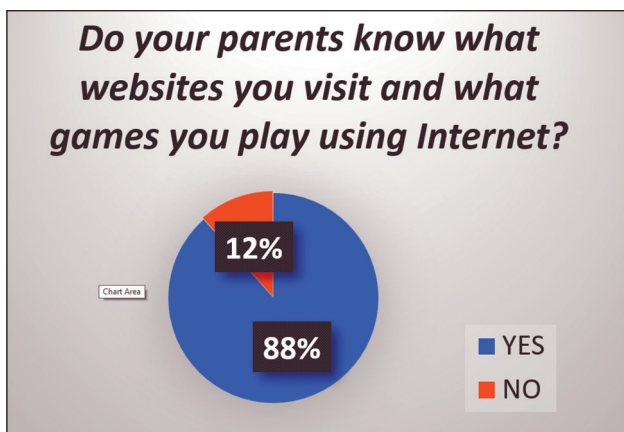


Chart 3. Information of parents about the Internet content that the child visits

Based on the results, we see that the parents of 283 students are familiar with which websites and games their children visit and play, i.e. 88% of them, while 37 respondents answered that their parents are not familiar with them (12%). However, during conversations with students who visit websites and play games, we have found out that students visit websites with different content, often not adapted to their age, and play games that contain elements of aggressive and violent behavior, and this information that 88% of parents know (approve) the contents and games played by their children worryingly.

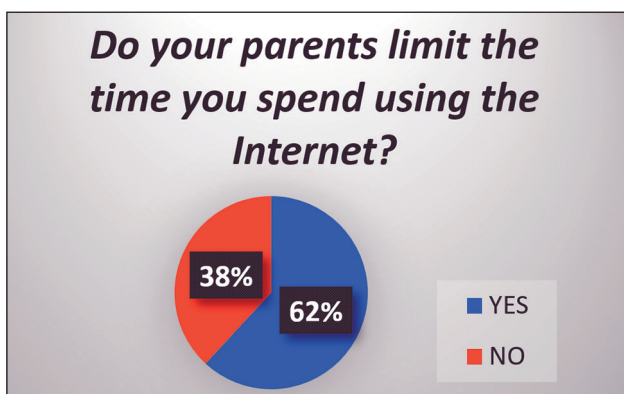


Chart 4. Time limit

62% of respondents, or 198 of them, answered that their parents limit the time they spend using the Internet, while 38% of respondents (122 of them) answered that they have no control or limited time.

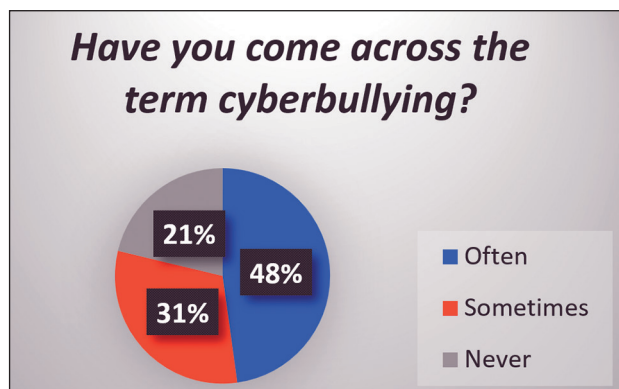


Chart 5. The concept of cyberbullying

48% of respondents, more precisely 153 of them, answered that they often encountered the term cyberbullying. 31% (99 respondents) of respondents answered that they sometimes encountered this term, while 21% of respondents (68 of them) answered that they had never heard of the term cyberbullying.

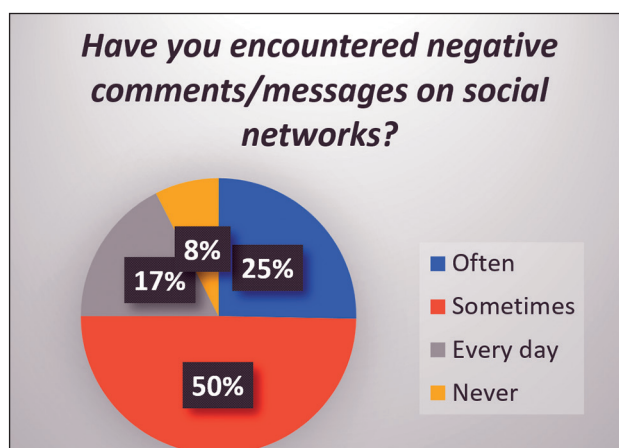


Chart 6. Negative comments/messages

To the question “Have you encountered negative comments/messages on social networks?”, 25% of respondents, or 81 of them, answered that they often encountered negative comments. 50% of respondents (159) answered that they sometimes encountered this phenomenon, 17% (56 of them) encountered it every day, while 8% (24) of respondents never encountered negative comments and messages on social networks.

Asking for help is an important part of the process of preventing cyberbullying. The students were asked the question Which of those offered did you turn to for help after negative messages and comments on the Internet?



Chart 7. Appeal for help

The majority of children talk most often with friends (26%) and parents (20%), and the percentage of children (10%) who have not complained to anyone should not be ignored. One of the problems that should also be highlighted is the fact that most children when it comes to their problems, do not trust institutions. Only 4% of students decided to seek help from professional services and teachers within schools, while 40% of respondents stated that they had never experienced insults via the Internet.

4. Discussion

Based on the obtained results, we conclude that almost every student, in this case, the respondent, has a device through which he can access the Internet.

However, 283 respondents answered that their parents are familiar with the content they visit, and they stated that they visit a lot of websites that are not adapted to their age, as well as that they play games with elements of violence and aggression. Also, most of the respondents mentioned TikTok and YouTube as the most visited internet content. It is interesting that through the obtained results we can conclude that parents approve of children watching such content that can produce very negative effects in children.

Based on these results and conversations with students, we can conclude that students mostly visit sites where they can share something, talk with other people, and play games that are predominantly violent, where fighting, war, and survival prevail. The students said that the forums and blogs they visit are full of curse words, nationalist statements, and hate speech. On these forums, the goal is to explain some games that children are playing, and

such explanations and exchange of information often turn into arguments, insults, and curses.

The games that children play are mostly war games, where they “kill” each other, with lots of blood, weapons, tanks, and the like. Very few of them said that they visit sites adapted to their age. IV grade students overwhelmingly responded that their parents do not control the websites they visit and the games they play. A large percentage of respondents stated that they had witnessed or themselves were victims of violence on the Internet. The worrisome fact is that children, or respondents, do not trust institutions (school, social service) too much, and they usually talk about problems with friends or parents, and the percentage of children who do not turn to anyone is also not negligible.

As a society, we must make consistent efforts to prevent incidents of online violence. To achieve this, prevention measures must first be implemented within the family unit, as it serves as the foundation for encouraging healthy behavior. Subsequently, educational institutions must work multisectorally with relevant organizations to comprehensively educate individuals about the dangers of social media, safe use of the Internet, and legal guidelines regarding inappropriate behavior in virtual spheres. Finally, the media can play a key role in promoting responsible behavior on the Internet and curbing violent tendencies. The Internet is undoubtedly an “open network” that is accessible to everyone. Sites on the Internet are not regulated and anyone can post whatever content they want, without any evaluation or filtering. Although these are well-known facts about the Internet, they emphasize the need for greater involvement of parents, teachers, and other members of the child’s environment. This involvement is necessary to reduce the harmful effects that internet use can have on children.

5. Conclusions

Based on the results of this research, it was determined that children spend most of their time in online activities and playing games. Although a significant number of children stated that their parents are aware of the content they visit on the Internet, they also revealed that they often visit websites that are not appropriate for their age and

play games that contain elements of violence or aggression. Next, research shows that most children visit TikTok and YouTube frequently. Interestingly, the results indicate that parents sanction the viewing of such content which may have harmful consequences for young children. The majority of children often discuss the violence they have experienced on the Internet with their friends and parents, and the percentage of children (10%) who have not complained to anyone should not be ignored. One of the problems that should also be highlighted is the fact that most children when it comes to their problems, do not trust institutions. Only 4% of students decided to seek help from professional services and teachers within schools, while 40% of respondents stated that they had never experienced insults via the Internet.

The school should be the initiator of mutual pedagogical performance. In that sense, it becomes the central environment in which through (Kudumović and Aleksić, 2021).

Analysis of the results shows that the roles of parents, teachers, and social workers are crucial in preventing the emergence of aggressive tendencies in children, but that work must be done to strengthen them. This especially applies to cases when children are exposed to inappropriate and violent content on the Internet or other media. It should be noted that this is not a new phenomenon, as it has also been observed in other countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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