SOCIAL EFFECTS OF NEW MEDIA THROUGH
THE PERCEPTION OF CHILDREN, PARENTS AND TEACHERS:
CASE OF SHKODER

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Abstract:
The media are playing an important role in children's daily lives, whether measured in terms of family income, use of time and space, or importance within the conduct of social relations. Curiously, there is a notable discrepancy between the high levels of public concern over children and young people's use of new media and the minimum of empirical research conducted thus far. Although, children are often left out of 'population' surveys, in Europe (Kelly, 1998). Also in Albania, the use of new media from children and young has conduct to undertake some studies related to this domain. Referring to this study we aim to understand the perception of children, parents and teacher about the effects that new media create the children life. The methodology used is a qualitative one based in 20 semi structured interviews with parents and teacher and in a focus group of children age 12-15 years old. Through this study we aim to know more about the new media; the way of use, activities and their negative or positive social effects on children. The conclusions of this paper are: the social media are constantly present in children life of now days; the most use are: Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat. They use new media and social media for entertainments, home works, conversations and socialization. Also, parents and teacher try to controlling in distance the way that the children use media. They try to protect them from different derange. Most of parent and teacher think that the only one positive effect of new media in their children life is the possibility to take information that can help children with home works.

Keywords: new media, perception of social effects, children, parents, teachers

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1.   Introduction

Now days, more and more, the topic of new media and children is part of our daily and professional discussions. It has always confusion about the term of new media and also many question and interest about new media effects on children.

What we understand with the term "new media"?

So, referring to some social scientists new media can be describing with <u>*four specific categories*</u> that share common qualities and likenesses: interpersonal communication media, interactive play media, information search media, and collective participatory media.

Interpersonal communication media encompasses the telephone (cell phones included) and email. These types of communication technologies are thought of as private and temporary. The relationships reinforced and established by use of such interpersonal communication are more important than the information communicated.

Interactive play media include computer and video games.

Information search media encompass a broad spectrum such as the Internet and all the search engines and search tools. Cell phones are becoming capable of similar functions and can be listed under this category.

Finally, *collective participatory media* refer to how one can use the Internet for purposes such as swapping information, ideas and thoughts, and creating computer-mediated relationships (Mc Quail, 2005).

Why is interesting to know more about the topic of children and new media?

The media are extending their influence throughout children's lives so that children's leisure can no longer be clearly separated from their education, their employment prospects, their participation in public activities, or their participation within the private realm of the family. (S. Livingstone, 2006).

Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr (2010) found that 93% of teenagers, ranging in age from 12 to 17, are going online. This number has remained consistent since 2006. Among teens, the average person owns 3.5 gadgets out the five queried in a survey: cell phones, mp3 players, computers, game consoles and portable gaming devices. Cell phone and computer are the most frequently used media for adolescents to connect online (p. 9). Education about how to utilize and to get the most from new media is imperative for adolescents growing up in this technological era (McMillan & Morrison, 2006). In this situation is very necessary to know more about the activities and the effects of new media in children life.

Parents and teachers are the more interested to know about this topic. Some of parents are worried about their role confront of their children. The privacy is a new

topic to discuss between children and parents, because new media such as cell phone and computer have change family interaction and has create individual worlds for all members of the family. As Livingstone (2006) noted, hence the Internet, like many other increasingly personalized and/or mobile media, may be contributing to the individualized family —living together separately and to what has been called the democratic family—in which parental authority is less hierarchical, more based on the psychological intimacy of the —pure relationship. (pp. 223–224)

Also the school and teachers in the classes are facing with new attitudes of children (pupils) created by the use of new media. In a study about writing and adolescents, Lenhart (2008) found that adolescents do not think technology influences their writing in a negative way or in quality: —They do acknowledge that the informal styles of writing that mark the use of these text-based technologies for many teens do occasionally filter into their school work (p. 3). Although new media are not to blame for poor writing, the slang or shorthand used with some text-based technologies may affect the language used in essays and other written work. Bucy (2005) stated that, —unabashed enthusiasm for the computer sends the wrong message—that the mediated world is more significant than the real world (p. 185). Children and adolescents who are connected to online activities may not notice what is going on in their respective offline worlds. Giving students the best tools for excelling in a high-tech world, while staying in touch with the offline one is a hard balance to strike. In some cases, schools might have to rethink the way they have institutionalized teaching of ICTs. Lenhart (2008) noted that: And even with the promise that many believe technology holds for revolutionizing instruction and youth engagement with learning, teens still recognize the value of teachers and classroom instruction. Many teens feel that while technology can help them compose, edit and present their ideas, it cannot improve the quality of the ideas themselves. (p. 22).

2.   Methodology

In this study, the qualitative perspective is used to understand more about the topic of new media and their social effects in children life. In this study, we aim to analyse the social effects of new media in the children age 12-15 years old. The reason why the study is focus in this age is simple because for this population it has lack of study; most of studies are focus in ages (16-18 years old) high school.

2.1   Instruments, study population and administration of the study

The instrument used for this study, are: semi structured interview (10 with parents and 10 with teachers) and also a focus group with children age 12-15 years old.

Parts of the semi structured _interview with parents were 10 parents (eight women and one man_) that have children age 12-15 years old. The announcement and the developing of interviews were held in the bibliotheca of university of Shkoder. The only selection criteria it was to have children of 12-15 years old.

The _semi structured interview with 10 teachers_ was held in the school "_Deshmoret e Prishtines_". The participation was voluntary and the only selection criterion was: to teach children of 12-15 years old. Participants in these interviews were eight women and two men.

Also in this study is used the _technique of focus group_, composed from 6 children age (12-15 years old).

Gender	M	F
12 years old	1	0
13 years old	1	1
14 years old	1	1
15 years old	0	1

The focus group was held in the Oratori Dom Bosko, Shkoder; social and cultural centre for children. The participation was voluntary and the only one criteria was the age; 12 till 15 years old.

2.2   Research questions

The research question of this study:

What are the most frequent types of new media utilize by children of 12-15 years old?

What kinds of activities usually do children of 12-15 years old during the use of new media?

What are the positive effects of new media in the life of 12-15 years old?

What are the negative effects of new media in the life of 12-15 years old?

2.3   Limits of the study

This is a qualitative study, based only in a small group of people, so we can't do generalization. The qualitative studies are appropriate in the situation where it have lack of preview study in this domain. So this study only we aim to take information related to the use of new media from children and some precipitation effects made on

evidence from children, parents and teachers. This study is good point of start to realize in the future a quantitative study.

3.   Theories that explain why new media is used from children

3.1   Dependency theory

Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) explored the effects media have on society in their dependency model which focused on the high level of dependence that audiences have on mass media in urban societies. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) wrote that; *the degree of audience dependence on media information* is a key variable in understanding when and why media messages alter audience beliefs, feelings, or behaviour (p. 5). Individuals seek out the information that they need to feel connected to their larger social world (Ball- Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). The need to fit in is inherently a part of an adolescent's world. Fitting in requires an adolescent to mirror the activities of his or her peers and what is acceptable within their society. It is quite possible that adolescents will seek out the information they need through new media to fit in and stay connected. The media do not have the power to determine uniformly the exact content of the interpretations or definitions of the situation that every person constructs. But, *by controlling what information is and is not delivered and how that information is presented, the media can play a large role in limiting the range of interpretations that audiences are able to make.* (p. 10) *Adolescents may not have the ability to distinguish what information is pertinent and what is not.*

Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) outlined several ways people are dependent on media to fulfil their information needs: For example, one form of dependency is based *on the need to understand one's social world*; another type of dependency arises from *the need to act meaningfully and effectively in that world*; still a third type of dependency is based *on the need for fantasy-escape* from daily problems and tensions. When media messages are not linked to audience dependencies *and individuals are fully content with their social worlds, media messages have very little or no effect*. In contrast, individuals who have unstable social worlds may be more influenced by media messages. The satisfactoriness of one's social world determines the amount of dependency on media information (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). Adolescence is a formative time and full of uncertainties. An adolescent's social world may not be fully developed as they search for acceptance and a way to complete parts of their world that may feel incomplete. Thus, adolescents as a group may be more prone to dependency as they are searching for a way to stay informed and fit in with society and peers.

3.2   New Media theory

Tosun and Lajunen (2009) used dependency theory to study why adolescents develop a passion for the Internet. The authors maintained that an *individual expresses his or her true self when using the Internet.* This expression of true self has a direct link to passion for the Internet. According to this theory, people actively search for communication media that satisfy their needs (e.g., relaxation, information gathering, and social needs), and they may develop *dependency on a communication medium that satisfies their needs*. In this way, passion for the Internet can be assumed to be linked to Internet dependency. If people feel that certain communication needs are best satisfied through the Internet, we can suppose that they are likely to develop a passion and dependency on the Internet. (p. 402)

3.3   Ecological theory and the techno subsystem

Johnson (2010) expanded Bronfenbrenner's theory and proposed an addition to the ecological systems theory model called the techno subsystem, which is highly relevant for research into young people's use of Internet. The techno subsystem, which comprises an individual's interaction with both human and machine elements of communication, information, and recreational technologies, can be seen as another component of Bronfenbrenner's microsystem. *For example, online communications with friends can influence children's home or school subsystem.* Schools often have a webpage allowing parents to access their children's timetable and homework, making the Internet and the school mesosystemic. The techno-subsystem thus expands upon the two-dimensional representation of environmental influences on development proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as social, emotional, and physical development are conceptualized as the outcome of reciprocal interactions between bio- ecological aspects (individual characteristics), the use of ICT at home, at school, and with friends (the techno-subsystem), and family and community environments (the microsystem).

3.4   Erikson's Psychosocial Theory

Refereeing to Erikson' theory (1959), he proposed that during the stage of Role Confusion, most adolescents establish a sense of identity not only about who they are as people, but also about where they are headed in life. However, this is also a cause of crisis as adolescents are faced with the need to reconcile the person that society expects them to be with the person they actually are. Thus this is a time of fundamental change in a person's life, both physically as they enter puberty and are faced with all the bodily changes, but also mentally as they become acutely aware of societal expectations, the intentions of others, and their own intentions and expectations. *In today's society,*

children use technology like a way to balance their own perception of the world with the reality of the world and so they establish their identity. Depending on their age and phase of development, they use technology in different ways that can assist or impede their development in ways relevant to Erikson's psychosocial development theory (1959).

4. Perception of social effect of new media on children 12-15 years old (case of Shkoder)

Now days we have a picture of technology trends on the one hand, and spotlights on specific youth populations and practices on the other, we need more work that brings these two pieces of the puzzle together. As Large (2005) notes, it is difficult to define categories such as children, adolescents, and young adults in concrete terms. Different studies often define teenagers as between the ages of 12–17 (Lenhart 2010). However, (2009) observe that terms such as children, adolescents, and young adults are socially and culturally constructed labels. In this study our interest in the age 12-15 years old is based also in the theories mentioned before (literature review), because in this age new media has more potential influence in the children life.

4.1 Result from the interviews with parents

The conversation with the parents was very interesting. Most of them really were interesting on these topics and also they made on evidence their anxiety about the negative effects of new media. A big problem was the dilemma of direct or indirect supervision of their children during the use of new media.

The interviews with parents were focused in these types of questions: _What kind of new media they use frequently? The place where the children access to new media? What are the activities their children do, during the using of new media (supervising situation)? What are the positive and negative effects of new media, that their children had face?_

Referring to the interview with parents, most of their children start to use new media, such as computer and internet at 10 years old. Most of their children _use the home computer to access_ on internet only 3 parents approve that their children access in internet via mobile phone.

The frequent activities that their children do are:

Parents 1:   _"They use internet just for listen song in YouTube and for take information for homework"._

Parents 2:   _"My child use internet for class project research, social network like face book and Instagram to communicate with friends and also play games for fun"_

So, refereeing to the activities that children do mostly during the use of new media, the parent's interviews made on evidence or classified 3 types of activities: _school purpose, socialization and fun_.

During the interview the parents had question about; if they know what are web sites most preferred from their child?

Parents 4:   *"I don't supervise directly my child during the use of internet; but I ask him (13 years boy) always what he has do"*

Parents 3:   *"usually he (15 years old) uses the internet without my assistance, because he surf through mobile phone".*

To sum up, most of the parents practice indirect supervision of their children activities in new media domain.

About the negatives and the positives effects the parents made on evidence _the negative effects of social media_ the life of their children. They are very afraid about the use of such social media as face book and Instagram because they children can meet dangerous people (with negative influence), someone can theft their photos and can use it for negative purpose.

Parents 7:   *"I prefer that my son (13 years old) use Instagram than face book, because is more safer. The messages are short than in face book and also is impossible to theft your photos".*

Parents 10:   *"I think that social media have positive effects in our children life, because they can use to communicate with friends".*

Parents 4:   *"I'm afraid about what kinds of films watch through the computer and internet my son. I find him to watch horror films. I always try to control him, but is impossible".*

Parents 5:   *"Some of negatives effects of using internet is: cause of stress, healthy problem (eyes), imitation of social models (sometimes wrong model), waste of time".*

Most of parents know the negatives effects of new media use, but they still think that the use of new media is necessary, because we live in technological era.

Refereeing to _positive effects_ all parents made on evidence the possibility _to get more information,_ in a quickly way and different forms (video, reading), necessary for class projects.

Parents 4:   *"I think, that internet help my child to take information for homework, class projects".*

Parents 7:   *"They can be more informed than us, in the same age"*

Parents 8:   *"Through internet our children can take information for class project and also can develop their relationship with friends".*

Refereeing to Livingstone (2010) study, it has a positive correlation between risk and opportunity of new media use. So if we want to get the positive effects of new media for our children, we also will face with the risk; and if we try to avoid risks, caused from the use of new media, we also lose opportunities that this new media offer. So we the solution is not to avoid the use of new media, but to find the right strategy of use.

4.2   Result from the interviews with teachers

During the interviews with teachers the question were grouped in 3 categories like: Type of new media use in school environments, positive and negative effects in the domain of school (learning process).

The teachers approve that most of children 12-15 years old _have a mobile phone_ with internet access, but is not eligible to use it during the lessons time.

Now days is necessary for a child to now the use of computer and to surf in internet, because a lot of home works as class project are in group and need information, that via internet are easy to get.

Teacher 2:   _"In literature we do a lot of class projects and so we can't avoid the use of internet, but I don't think that new media (computer, internet) have a positive effect in children knowledge"._

Teacher 4:   _"The internet has limited the capacity of pupils to create. They find all ready"._

Teacher 8:   _"Most of pupils use social media, just for fun; not for class project communication"._

Teacher 6:   _"I think that cause of internet and social media our pupils develop a poor vocabulary. The generation of now days avoid reading books"._

Teacher 10:   _"Some of pupils like 14-15 years old start to be addicted from the use of mobile phone. They try to use it during class lesson"._

Most of teachers _don't find positive effects_ related to the use of _new media and the school purpose_. They are also sceptics about positive effects of new media in _the relationships between pupils and teachers in class._ All teachers interview approve that the pupils have an account in a social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Viber, What's up.

Teacher 9:   _"Sometimes in school we affront conflicts, between pupils that have start from communication in social media"._

Teacher 5:   _"No one of pupils has come to me to communicate or take information related to a problem face during internet surfing, I think that they discuss more with each other"._

Teacher 9:   _"I have a lot of pupils' friends in my face book account. It's a way to know them better"._

Teacher 7: *"I have friends in face book some of pupils, but they never communicate with me about homework or something else".*

Teacher 3: *"Social media as face book and others made more friendly and easy the relationships between girls and boys. I think this is good for their socialization"*

Teacher 6: *"I think that some of our pupils try to imitate a VIP".*

During the interviews with teachers we understand that most of pupils have a mobile phone and so easy access in new media. Also they highlight most negative effects of new media in school domain, than positive effects. During analyse of the interviews we take information about the effects of new media in lesson domain and in relationship domain. In both of this, the negative effects are more present.

4.3 Result from the focus group with children 12-15 years old

In the focus group with children the discussion was based in these directions: type of new media use, activities, positive and negative effects.

Most of children use internet and also social media as Facebook, Instagram, What's up, Viber, Snapchat. They have a lot of virtually _friends_ minimum was 200 and maximum 850 friends; most in Instagram.

Children 2: *"Most of friends I meet for first time virtually"- boy*

Children 4: *"I have friends in my face book account that I know in real life, but I'm not close friend with them".-girl*

Children 5: *"I have communicate with an American girl, that I meet in face book"- boy*

Children 3: *"I have communicate in chat with new friends"-boy*

About problems that the children affront during the use of social media are _cyber bulling situation._

Children 1: *"One time someone theft me my face book account"- girl*

Children 6: *"Someone send to me an insulting message".-boy*

Children 4: *"In my school a group of pupils had open a face book account when we show school activities, but someone theft it and use for bed purpose. For this we have discuss with teacher and parents".-girl*

Related to the parents supervised situation, children think…

Children 3: *"My parents always supervised me during the use of internet"-boy*

Children 4: *"My parents have face book account and we are friends".-girl*

Children 5: *"No, my parents do not supervised my indirectly, during the use of social media "- boy*

About the negative and positive effect of new media children are able to know both of them.

Children 1:   *"I think that positive effects are: communication with others and to know what the others are doing. Negative effects I this is theft of photos"- girl*

Children 5:   *"Positive effects are: I watch videos in you tube, entertainment"- boy*

Children 3:   *"Positive is that i use for entertainment, but negative is that others person can use it for negative purpose, like use my identity, take information where I live"- boy*

Children 4:   *"Positive is that I can communicate with a lot of people and negative is that others theft my account".-girl*

When children face difficulties/problem during the use of internet or social network they always talk with their friends or parents.

Children 1:   *"If I have a problem I discuss with my parents."- girl*

Children 6:   *"If I need help, I talk with my friends, because sometime parents do not understand me".-boy*

To sum up, the focus group with children made on evidence that so much children use social media. The concept of friend in now days have another meaning than before. Now, children can divide friends in to categories: real and virtual. Some of them communicate with unknown people. Children don't believe that their parents supervised them during the use of internet. Everybody of them has experienced a cyber-bulling situation. Most of them discuss with friends about the solution of some problem they face during the use of internet.

5.   Conclusions

- New media is part of daily life of children age 12-15 years old. Most of them use the computer in house to access on internet, but during the age 14-15 years old children start to access internet through mobile phone.

- All of children age 12-15 years old have an account in one of social media and activities that they generally do are: research information for school purpose, virtual conversations with friends (socialization) and fun (play video game, watch YouTube etc...).

- Negatives effects are more remarkable from parents and teachers. They have a long list of them like: poor vocabulary, lack of concentration during lesson time, lack of creativity, healthy problems, loses of time, meeting with dangerous people etc. Also children conscious about the negatives effects of new media as: cyber bulling problems.

- Parents and teacher are not so enthusiastic about the positive effects of new media in their children life. Communication with friends and information are the

only 2 positive effects of new media. Some of parents tend to limit the time of access on internet for their children, some others try to talk more with the about their activities. Some teacher made friends in social network their pupils to supervise them. Meanwhile children can't imagine themselves without the use of new media. They know negatives effects and also some of them discuss with their parents or peers for support.

6.   Recommendations

Nowadays is impossible to avoid the use of new media and every body of us can face with their negatives effects. The solution to protect children from these negative effects is not to limit, or control their access on internet, but to discuss their problems. Teacher, parents and children need to construct a strategy of collaboration together that can help them to profit more from the positive effects of new media. Some strategies are: doing more activities together (children, parents) on internet, raise collaboration between teachers and parents about problems related with new media etc.

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