



 Research Article

WHAT TEENAGERS ARE INTERESTED IN ONLINE AND HOW MUCH TIME THEY SPEND THERE: OPINIONS OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND SCHOOLCHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the main results and conclusions of a study conducted in schools in Uzbekistan, the main purpose of which is the presence of schoolchildren in Uzbekistan in the digital environment (Internet, social networks) and their impact on the well-being and health of adolescents. The study showed that children, especially in high school, are more “advanced” in communicating with computer equipment and smartphones, in knowing computer programs and navigating the Internet than parents and teachers.

KEYWORDS

Digital, Internet, cyberbullying, knowledge of computer programs, gaming addiction.

INTRODUCTION

The world is entering the digital age. This means that information technology products and tools penetrate into all spheres of our lives and increasingly determine the face of modern economics, politics, and spiritual production. The information virtual environment has a huge impact on the formation of personality, especially in adolescence. This influence has far-reaching consequences not only at the individual micro level,

but also at the macro level (social community, territory, country) and mega level (international and global levels).

The modern era is frequently referred to as the Internet era, the epoch of the digital and virtual world, and the information society. The Internet and information technologies have permeated all aspects

of life, and they are increasingly defining the face of modern economic, political, and spiritual production. The digital environment has a particularly powerful impact on young people. As a result, the question of which "capital" the teenager enters during the maturation period is extremely important. It will determine the planet's and each country's future. This is especially important in Uzbekistan, where 40% of the population is under the age of 18.

The topic of the influence of the digital environment on a teenager has been discussed in the scientific literature since the second half of the 1990s, and a fairly large body of work on this issue has already accumulated, both in English-language and Russian-language literature. The authors are mainly specialists in the field of developmental psychology, pedagogy, law, and morality. Available works concern the general influence of the Internet on the psyche and behavior of a teenager, cyberbullying, sexual harassment and gender formation, gaming addiction, sacrifice, communication, virtual hang-up, the influence of the Internet on the formation of moral values, and study. There is much less work directly related to the physical and mental health of adolescents as a result of being on the Internet and the development of scientifically based measures.

If we take Uzbekistan, then due attention is also not paid to the influence of the digital environment on the health of students.

On April 7, 2016, by a joint decision of the Ministry for the Development of Information Technologies and Communications, the Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education, a manual on protecting youth in the online environment was developed in Uzbek and Russian. The manual was approved and agreed upon with the Republican Center for the Promotion of Spirituality and

the Kamolot. It describes the risks, threats, and dangers that children may be exposed to on the Internet and recommendations for safe use of the Internet. In particular, the manual divides youth into three age categories (from 7 to 10 years old, from 10 to 13 years old, from 13 to 16 years old), where each category has its own recommendations for protecting children and their personal data from the negative aspects of the World Wide Web. In addition, the manual provides simple but effective recommendations to parents of children and adolescents to ensure that their children use the Internet correctly and safely.

In addition, the topic of the project has not been under the close attention of WHO for a long time. And today the degree of this attention does not correspond to the severity and scale of the problem. Suffice it to say that physical and mental disorders associated with the Internet are not included in the current classification of diseases approved by WHO (ICD 10). Only on January 1, 2022, ICD 11 came into force, in which the list of mental disorders includes disorders caused by a pathological attraction to games, mainly online.

Today, the connection between the Internet and adolescent health is becoming increasingly clear, as is the need for medical intervention. However, as psychologist A. M. Velikotskaya writes: "At the moment, there are no specific recommendations for resolving mental problems of people (in particular, children and adolescents) in the field of computer addiction. Humanity does not yet have sufficient experience in solving this problem." Due to the fact that the problem of Internet addiction is becoming a global problem and is growing like a snowball, its large-scale and intensive research (including from the WHO) and the development of scientifically based measures are becoming a necessity.

In 2021, with the assistance of WHO, a field study on the presence of schoolchildren in the virtual world and its impact on the well-being and health of adolescents was conducted in Uzbekistan. The research was carried out in schools in Tashkent, Kashkadarya, and Fergana provinces. Four schools were chosen on the principle of «regional center - school in the rural area». Tashkent schools are divided into two categories: private and public schools.

In the fieldwork, questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus groups were used. Children aged 14-16 (124 students), parents, school directors, and teachers are the target groups.

The aim of the research was to find out the goals and time spent by schoolchildren on the Internet and social networks (in the future - IASS), the impact of this stay on the physical and mental health of children, and ways to control the parents and schools for students' stay in IASS.

The results of the research showed that the opinions of teachers, parents, and children's perspectives on the purpose and duration of their stay in IASS differ greatly. This difference is very important. How can adults control the stay of children in IASS if they are unaware of what children do in the virtual world and how much time they spend there?

To begin with, many parents believe that their children use the Internet mainly for educational purposes.

Here are the responses of the school's parents from Rishton, Fergana region, to the question of what their children do on the Internet:

- «Movies? No-no. There is nothing like that. Networks? They have a Telegram group of friends, a group of class heads. They communicate about the issues of lesson assignments».

- «My son uses the Internet only for academic purposes».
- «The son is in the 8th grade and uses the Internet to learn a foreign language. To learn and to be interested in some subjects he receives information through social networks. Movies or videos? No. No. No. He's not interested in that».

On the question: «Do your children spend time on the Internet for playing games, watching movies, or visiting video-sharing sites like TikTok, etc.?» Parents, members of the focus group at the school in Dekhkanabad, Kashkadarya region responded in unison: «No»! And one parent from Fergana believes that her daughter does not know about the existence of Internet cafes.

However, surveys among teens show that children use the Internet for a variety of purposes. They do homework, communicate with friends and family, play online games, read e-books, search for information, translate texts, and watch movies, and videos. According to the students themselves, 16.9% of the surveyed children constantly play online games, 48.4% occasionally play, and 34.7% never play. The films are constantly watched by 8.1% of the students and occasionally by 64.5%. They are also interested in cryptocurrency, business, and software development to sell them.

According to the findings, parents had a distorted view of what their children did on the Internet.

What social networks and Internet platforms are our students registered on?

Answers from parents and teachers:

- «Our students are only registered in the school network» (psychologist of the school from Dehkanabad).

- «I did not see that our students are registered in any networks outside of the school. There are no visitors to prohibited sites among our students» (psychologist of the school from Karshi).
- «Instagram, Facebook... my son does not know them» (parent of the student from the school of Rishtan).

The survey showed that they are registered on TikTok, Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Imo, VKontakte, Pinterest, Snapchat, YouTube, Twitter, Classmates, Viber, Discord, Likee, and Chat-Roulette. Again, we see a situation in which the parents' and teachers' opinions about students' use of the virtual world are incorrect.

Teachers and parents should be interested in what networks and websites their children use, what draws them there, and what they do there.

Why are school teachers and parents unaware of what their children do at IASS? The first answer is that many of the adults interviewed do not understand IASS. So, one of the Fergana teachers responded to the question, "Do you see accounts of your students on the Internet?" «Very rarely, because I don't understand so well myself,» he says. When asked what social networks her students are registered on, the capital school's teacher replied, "I don't know, I don't use them, only Telegram.

"How much time do students spend playing games, surfing the Internet, and connecting to networks?

According to a survey of parents of school students from Dekhkanabad, Kashkadarya region, the following is the distribution of their children's Internet time:

- «On kundalik.com, they made lessons only from textbooks in 5-10 minutes».

- «30 minutes of information on hobbies (baking, fashion, design, etc.)»
- «The son spends two hours a day on educational programs (Registon test), receiving information, performing lessons, and visiting kundalik.com.»
- «15 minutes for completing tests on various subjects and taking quizzes».
- «Most of the time, he sees ratings on kundalik.com, and it only takes a few minutes (very little)».
- «30 minutes for online lessons, 15 minutes for translation, and 30 minutes for books».

According to a general survey of students and focus groups with them, their assessment does not coincide with the opinion of parents, demonstrating their "awareness."

Here are the responses of Fergana school students to the question of how much time they spend on the Internet:

- «It takes about ten hours a day».
- «Two to four hours».
- «It takes two to five hours, usually five to ten hours».
- «From three to seven hours».
- «Three to five hours».
- «More than three hours».
- «From two to four hours».

As it turns out, parents measure their children's Internet time in minutes, while children measure it in hours.

When it comes to the time and purpose of Internet browsing, parents are more concerned with the quantitative spending of their child on the Internet than the content of their interest (quality pastime).

Modern children, particularly those in high school, are more "advanced" than their parents and teachers in terms of communication with computers and smartphones, knowledge of computer programs, and Internet navigation. How can people who are "teapots" in electronics, IT, and the Internet wield power over the Internet? It appears to us that, to improve the effectiveness and quality of adult supervision of children's stay in IASS, a state literacy system for teachers and parents is required.

In this regard, the experience of Tashkent's private school "Leader" is instructive, as it combines a saturated IT component associated with the educational process with modern control methods.

For example, instead of boring computer science, the school curriculum included a course called "Children's Entrepreneurship," which is a system program on the LMS platform where each child has their own login and password and where they create projects from "a" to "z." There is a program called "Multimeter." Every student has his or her own login and password. They are asked questions, the student answers on their phone, and their answers are automatically displayed on the board screen; in each classroom, instead of board monitors, each child enters and writes answers using a link and QR code. Engineering, technology and robotics classes are available to help students write code for their computer models.

To prevent and control the negative impact of the Internet, school authorities conduct periodic raids and check the contents of telephones. There is a Google class program that allows the principal to enter any class and control which projects students work on. Every fifth lesson in the course "Information Literacy" is devoted to cyber security and cyber hygiene, i.e. children learn how to use gadgets. There is a server with limited access; not all sites are open, only

informative. The school has an information security manager who monitors which websites students visit. Furthermore, the school offers «Stop, Threaten» training.

Based on the same information technologies, it appears that the system for monitoring the presence of children in IASS and preventing risks in this area should combine preventive measures, restrictions, and filling the student's stay in IASS with positive content.

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