

SOCIAL NETWORKS USED BY TEENS AND PARENTAL CONTROL OF THEIR ONLINE COMMUNICATION

Marsela SHEHU, Ylli ZHURDA

University of Tirana, ALBANIA

Abstract. The Internet plays important functions in identity formation, personal autonomy, and relationships outside the family. It allows teens to develop their own interests, to identify with others. The aim of the study is to present concrete evidence regarding the communication through social networks and parental care in the management of online communication. Referring questionnaire “Student Needs Assessment Survey” by N. E. Willard (2007), but the author has selected questions to the scope of its study. The sample of the study includes 255 pupils aged 15 – 19 (110 Male and 145 Female). The statistical data processing was performed by SPSS statistical program, version 20. Cronbach’s Alpha 0.764 were used to assess the reliability of the instrument. The most favorite activity on the Internet by the teens is navigation on the Internet to see/learn new things (68.6%), during the week the subjects spend approximately less than 2 hours per day (34.1% of them). Most of teenagers (82.7%) claims to have communication with their parents about how they treats their friends and 56.5% of them say that sometimes have control by their parents for what they do online. If pupils would victim of pressure on the internet and do not have opportunities to can be contained by those 69% of them approve

that they would tell to their parents and also (63.9%) to school staff members. When there have been cases of violence, even threatening suicide rate of reporting and collaboration between parent - teacher is high, while in other elements resulting lower interest rates. One of the main factors in management of this online communication and Internet is the parent care, which is considered most important in terms of education and not only.

Keywords: social networks, parental care, online communication, Internet, teens

Introduction

The Internet plays important functions in identity formation, personal autonomy, and relationships outside the family. It allows teens to develop their own interests, to identify with others and, at the same time, differentiate from others. The Internet is also an arena in which adolescents develop and practice autonomy. The Internet can be a source of conflict with parents, because of parents' concerns about Internet use (Borca et al., 2015).

Teens tend to be less skeptical of social media than adults are. They do not try to analyze how things are different because of technology; they simply try to relate to a public world in which technology is a given. Because of their social position, what's novel for teens is not the technology but the public life that it enables. Teens are desperate to have access to and make sense of public life; understanding the technologies that enable publics is just par for the course. Adults, in contrast, have more freedom to explore various public environments. They are more likely and more equipped to compare networked publics to other publics. Because of their experience and stage in life, teens and adults are typically focused on different issues. Whereas teens are focused on what it means to be in public, adults are more focused on what it means to be networked (Mills, 2014).

Moreover, on-line communication appears to be similar in several ways to traditional means of youth social interaction: it occurred largely in private settings (i.e., e-mail and IMs) with friends who were also part of participants' daily, off-line (e.g., school) lives. Teens who felt lonely or socially anxious in school on a daily basis are more likely to communicate through IMs with people they did not know well (i.e., strangers vs. friends). When they feel connected and comfortable with school-based peers, early adolescents use the Internet to seek out additional opportunities to interact with them. In the case of chronic or even temporary feelings of social discomfort, however, adolescents may use the Internet to avoid being alone, and, in doing so, turn to people disconnected from their daily life (Gross et al., 2002).

While adolescents mainly use the internet to maintain pre-existing friendships, some adolescents make close friendships online. They also encounter negativity online in the form of cyberbullying. In addition to seeking out internet-based friendships due to restricted social support networks or limited closeness, adolescents who experience particularly problematic peer relationships as a result of bullying or victimization also may be drawn to the internet to form new friendships, for similar reasons. Bullying research to date identifies social isolation and marginalization as some peer group characteristics that serve as risk factors for engaging in bullying behavior and for being victimized by bullying. To the extent that bullying and victimization interfere with feelings of social support within a cohesive peer group, students who experience frequent bullying and victimization may be motivated to seek social support outside of their normative face-to-face peer group. Those students with pervasive and frequent bullying experiences may seek out internet friendships in order to compensate for the otherwise lacking social relationships (Blais, 2008). A Pew Research Center survey of parents of 13 – 17 year-olds finds that today's parents take a wide range of actions to monitor their teen's online lives and to encourage their child to use technology in an appropriate and responsible manner. Some of

them have taken their teen's cell phone or internet privileges away as a punishment and other parents often have rules in place about how often and when their teen can go online, limit the amount of time or times of day their teen can be online. A majority of parents check their teen's web history or social media profile, while nearly half look through their teen's cell phone history; fewer use tech-based parental controls. Half of parents know the password to their teen's email account, while one-in-three parents are privy to their teen's social media passwords.¹⁾

Methodology

Participants

The sample of the study includes 255 pupils aged 15 – 19, 110 Male and 145 Female at “Arben Broci”, “Petro Nini Luarasi” and “Sinan Tafaj” from High School's Tirana.

Instrument

The questionnaire used was “Student Needs Assessment Survey” by N. E. Willard (2007), but the author has selected and elaborated questions to the scope of its study. The questionnaire was modified by the authors and contains 11 items. Likert scale questions contain three alternatives (1 - Often to 3 – Never) while other questions are categorical. Also from the questionnaire we have selected and an open question to highlight a concrete opinion about sub-issues in the study.

Data analysis

The statistical data processing was performed by SPSS statistical program, version 20. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the reliability of the instrument. $\alpha = 0.764$ that identifies high reliability level.

Procedures

In completing questionnaire was maintained entirely pupils' anonymity. The administration of questionnaires is carried out by the authors.

Discussion

The data show that 72.2% of pupils use the Internet at home and 27.8% of them are not affected by it (Fig.1). During the week the subjects spend approximately less than 2 hours/day (34.1% of them), 27.5% of them spend 2 hours, 17.6% of them spend 3 – 5 hours and 20.8% spend more than 5 hours (Fig. 2).

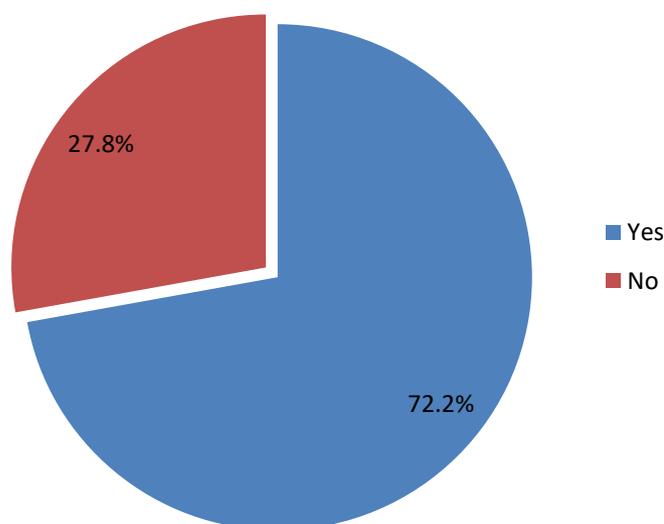


Fig. 1. Internet used at home

The most favorite activities on the Internet by the teenager are: (i) navigation on the Internet to see/learn new things (68.6%); (ii) communication with classmates (65%); (iii) playing online games (44.7%); (iv) doing homework (42.4%) etc. (Fig. 3). This is a positive phenomenon that they are directed towards receiving new knowledge and establishing interpersonal communication with peers.

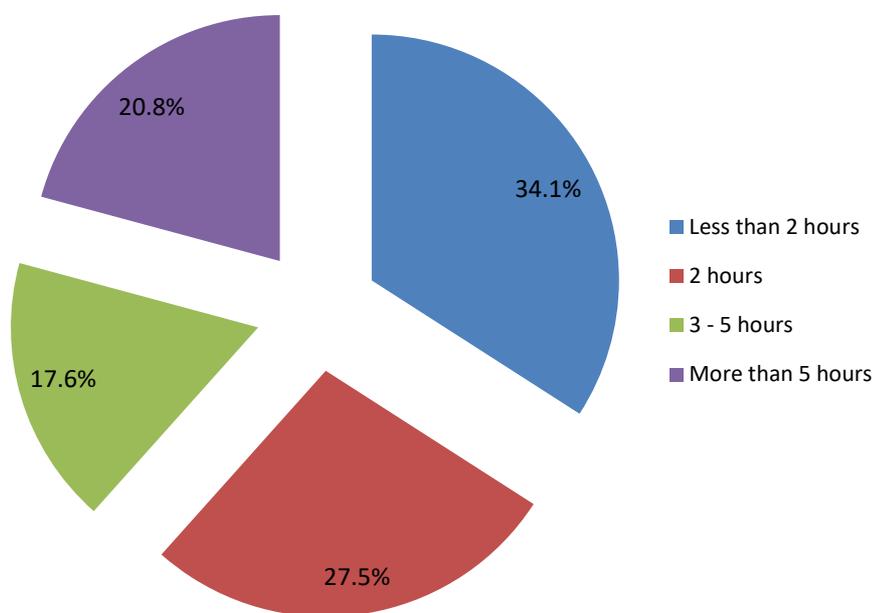


Fig. 2. Approximately how many hours/day you use the Internet during the week

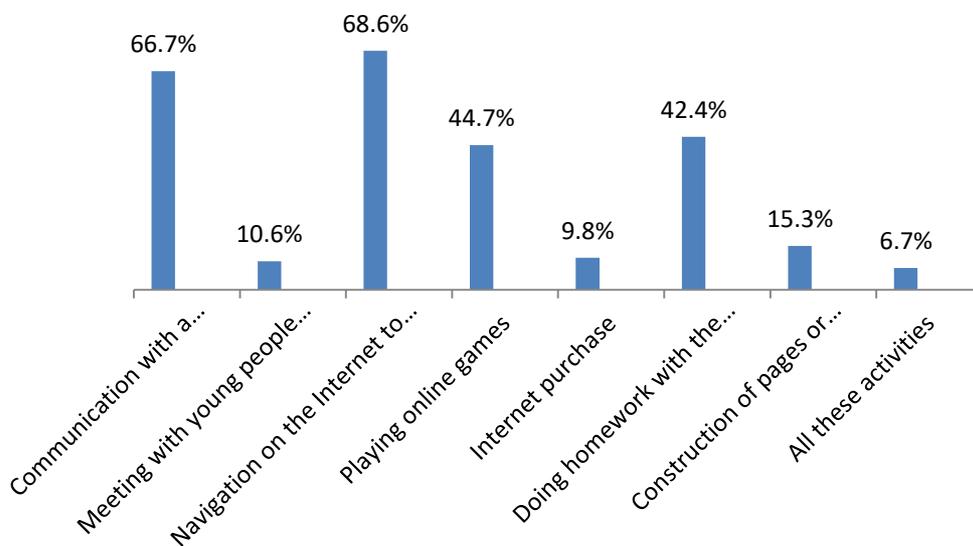


Fig. 3. Favorite activities on the Internet

An important role in managing the use of internet functions child is the parent, which is considered of particular importance in terms of education and

not only. Communication between the parties is necessary because it helps in eliminating many problems caused by technology. The data show that 82.7% of teenagers claim to have communication with their parents about how they treat their friends and only 17.3% don't have this kind of communication. (Fig. 4). Also from our data 56.5% of teens say that sometimes have control by their parents for what they do online, but also at a percentage equal (22% and 21.6% of them) affirm that they haven't control by their parents for what they do online. (Fig. 5).

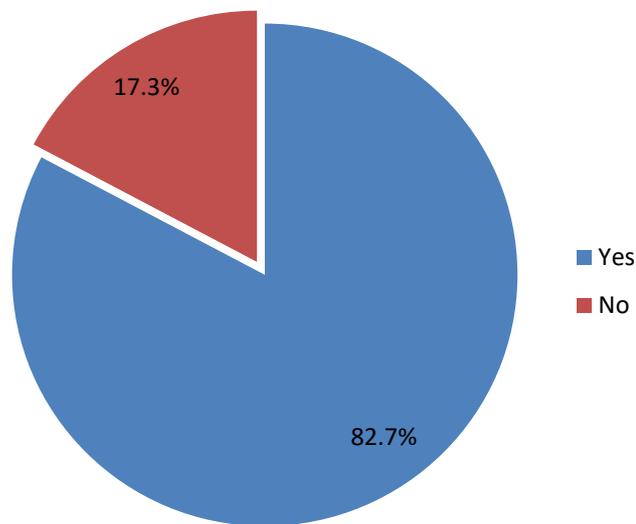


Fig. 4. Do your parents have talked about the way how you should treat your relatives?

It results that 73.3% of pupils use the most widespread social network Facebook, and 47.8% say that their profile is sometimes viewed by their parents, where 52.9% of them stated that they discuss with parents about people who have friends in this network social (Figs. 6-8).

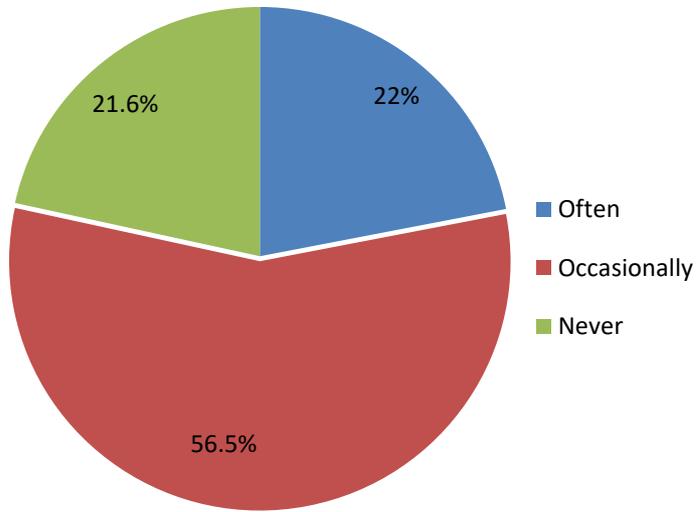


Fig. 5. Do you see your parents what you do online?

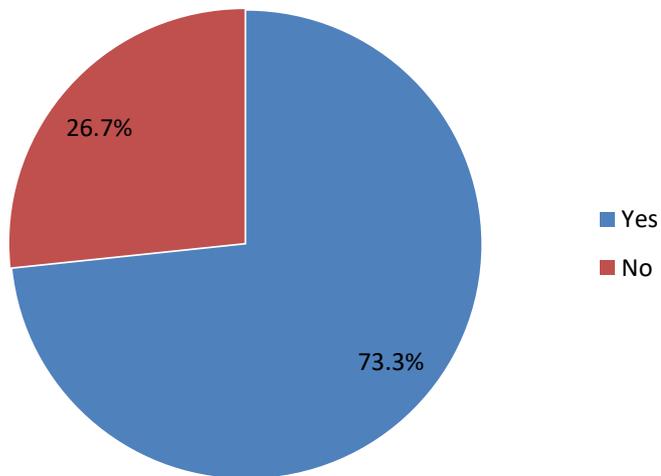


Fig. 6. Do you have your own profile on any social network like Facebook or other social networks?

If pupils would be a victim of pressure on the internet and do not have opportunities to be contained by those 69% of them approve that they would tell to their parents and also (63.9%) to school staff members. Also if they see a peer

that has become a victim of pressure (59.2%) or suggested violence or suicide (77.6%) they were still cooperating with parents or any member of the school staff. By the psycho-pedagogical point of view we can say that viewed a positive report communication not only between children and their parents, but also among school staff. Also admit that when we have cases of violence, even threatening suicide rate of reporting and collaboration between partners parent - teacher is high, while in other elements resulting lower interest rates, which means for a greater reliability in self-management of the situation by them. (Fig. 8).

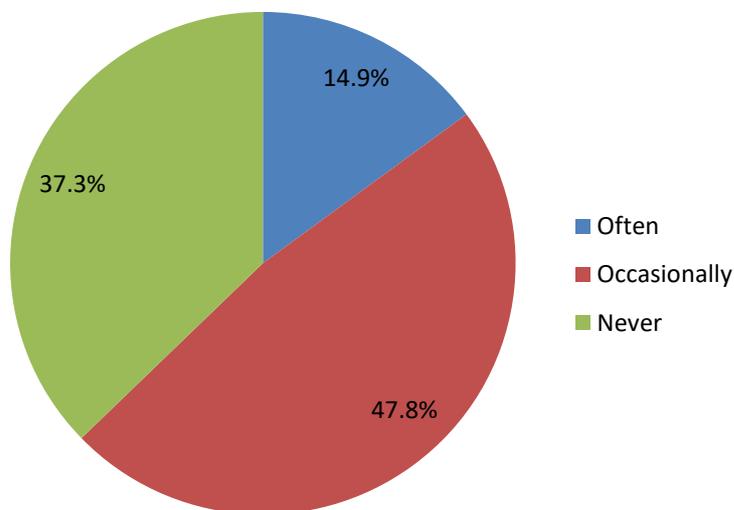


Fig. 7. Did your parents see this profile that you have?

Data from the percentage of those adolescents who have hesitated to report on the violence caused by technology is significant. In the open question regarding what were the reasons they cannot report, teens say they can manage themselves their own situation, as they feel adult and there is no reason to worry parents or the school staff, something that highlights the coherence of the answers in Fig. 9.

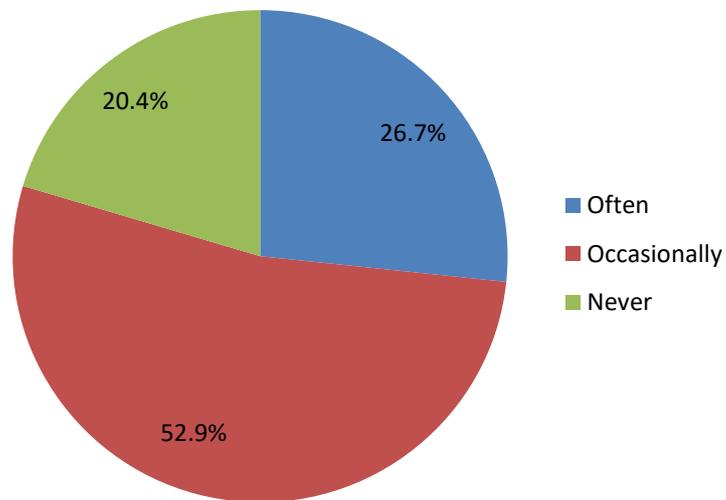


Fig. 8. Do you discuss with parents about people who you have in this social network and what you do?

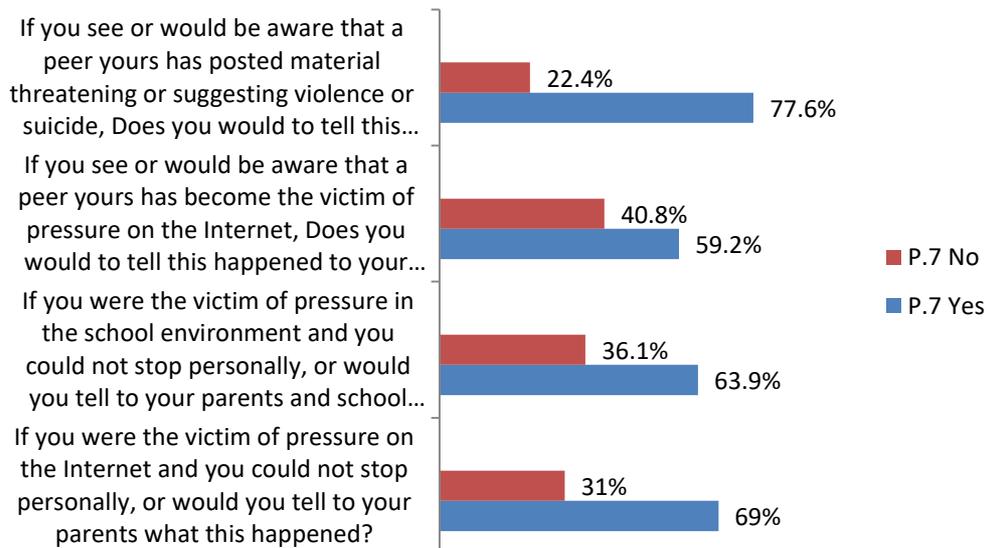


Fig. 9. Report of being bullying by the adolescents' vs. parents' collaboration

Conclusion

In a final conclusion we can affirm that the impact of the social networks to our teens that use these social networks as a form of communication between

peers is the same as that of the other developing countries. The process of communication between educational partners (child - parent - teacher) is at the appropriate level, which shows the best of a successful management of the relationship to virtual world from this real world, not only in the family but even at school.

NOTES

1. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/01/07/parents-teens-and-digital-monitoring/>

REFERENCES

- Blais, J. J. (2008). *Chatting, befriending and bullying: adolescent internet experiences and associated psychosocial outcomes: PhD thesis*. Kingston: Queen's University.
- Borca, G., Bina, M., Keller, P.S., Gilbert, L.R. & Begotti, T. (2015). Internet use and developmental tasks: Adolescents' point of view. *Computers Human Behavior*, 52, 49 – 58.
- Gross, E.F., Juvonen, J. & Gable, S.L. (2002). Internet use and well-being in adolescence. *J. Soc. Iss.*, 58, 75 – 90.
- Mills, K. L. (2014). Effects of internet use on the adolescent brain: despite popular claims, experimental evidence remains scarce. *Trends Cogn. Sci.*, 18, 385 – 387.

✉ Marsela Shehu (corrsponding author)
Department of Social Sciences and Education
Sports University of Tirana
Tirana, Albania
E-Mail: marsela.shehu@gmail.com

