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Parent Opinions with Regard to Elementary School Student's Use of the Internet

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Abstract: In the study, while parent opinions were asked with regards to the use of the internet, a 5-point Likert type questionnaire form was used to collect opinions, and the resulting data was analysed to find the arithmetic mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis using the SPSS 20.0 packet program. Following the study, student parents stated positive opinions with regards to internet usage. Also, in this study, necessary suggestions were made so that families could educate their children with regards to the internet and help them.

Keywords: Internet, Web, student internet use, family, parent, mother, father, children, elementary school
Categories: K.3.1, K.3.2, L.2.0, L.3.1, L.3.6

1 Introduction

[Rehm, 99] describes the internet as follows; a mutual meeting environment for individuals of different religion, race, sex, social status, physical status and physical characteristics. One of the benefits the internet has opened to individuals and families is that it holds together alternatives of information, especially in relation to needs, interests and hobbies. With the discovery of the internet, the new means of information, ideas, goals, hopes, feeling and values can change individuals and families lives in a positive way.

Whereas computer and internet usage appeals to a wider mass of users, the majority of these users being young people. Young people constitute a large potential for this field as they are more inclined to learning, as well as being open to accepting and applying change. Young people, who include computer and internet use into the occupational education they receive, will especially be advantageous in the very competitive work environment [Davis, 01; Dias, 13].

The cyber societies formed in the very own culture of the internet can have some negative effects. Together with cyber societies, individuals can become isolated, detach themselves from the real world, become strangers to themselves and the society they live in, they decrease family activities, and by taking the role of imaginary identities they take to deceiving themselves and others. The main function of the internet is correspondence and communication. What makes the internet indispensable is its recording, information sharing, and cyber research characteristics [Toguslu, 02, Sahin, 03].

In order for them to become successful adults and be well prepared for the information environment of the future, computer and internet literacy has become a necessary asset for our children. In our day, the ways children reach the

communication and information they require has been carried over to the internet environment. Environments such as information, art and games constitute rich learning resources for children. Many sites found on the internet are set up for educational purposes providing informative, fun contents. However, unfortunately sites which have contents that can be destructive and harmful are increasing day by day. As the internet is an environment with increasing content and one which is becoming more common every day, this increase will also continue proportionally with an increase in information. Now, as will likely be the case in the future, the internet is not inspected with the means of a central control. Taking into account the likely dangers of the internet and prohibiting children from using it will be an ineffective and wrong reaction. Instead, children need to be guided and made conscious of the correct use of the internet. For this reason that it is very important that families are conscious of the dangers that await them and their children on the internet and educate themselves and their children on internet usage, being aware of their responsibilities and directing their children accordingly. (www.egitim.com, [Rafat et. al., 11]).

It detaches the child from the real world and as with all addictions, leads to the neglect of other responsibilities for the computer and internet. Lost in the cyber world they have created the child's development is negatively affected and they are cut off from social life. Instead of interacting with their friends outside or in school, children who stay indoors and spend excessive periods of time in front of the computer playing computer games especially with violent content can be faced with physical, social and psychological developmental problems, also leading to unhealthy personality development [Semerci, 06; Bouyer, 11].

A different opinion on computer and internet usage is put forth by the education system and educators underlining that with the excessive information the internet holds, normal educational tools such as teachers, books, libraries, research, experimentation and observation suffer a negative effect. Children, especially while doing their homework can cut corners and make do with the computer and internet [Dokurer, 03; Novotná, 13; Poorkarimi, 12].

With the increase in child pornography and the opportunity of accessing such materials on the internet, children have come under the threat of cyber-crime. Recently, many such crimes have been seen in Turkey. One of the main reasons for this is the insufficiency of legal regulations. There are certain filters to protect children from porn, violence, abuse, racism or any other thing parents want to protect their children from. It is believed that, it's easier to be protected from the obscenity of the internet, than the traditional printed media [Murphy, 00; Hagshenas et al., 12].

In our day, it is an undeniable fact that parents are more equipped with regards to children using technology; however, prohibiting the internet, depriving children from such an important tool is also for sure, a mistake. However, as parents we can take certain precautions to ensure the safety of our children on the internet. This study puts forth various precautions families can take in order to ensure the safety of their children while using the internet [Odabasi et al, 07].

Anti-social, aggressive behaviours were significantly correlated with an increase to the pattern of abusive internet use in both sexes. Boys tended to favour interest-driven online activities as their levels of addictive behaviour increased while girls favoured communication-driven online activities. [Fisoun et al., 12].

This study, with the hope to find answers to the following questions: "Do children of these parents from this period use the internet consciously?", "How frequently do the children use the internet?", "What is their purpose of using the internet?", "How much do their children, or they know about the internet?"; aims to enable our children to use the internet, the technological concept of our era, safely and consciously. Suggestions were developed based on the findings derived at the end of the study, with the hope of advising parents and children on the subject of internet usage. Also, with the findings emerging from the study, it is believed that light will be shone on how well parents are informed of their children's internet usage. Therefore, questionnaires were prepared to collect the opinions of parents of elementary school students with regards to their internet usage and research was conducted in line with these questionnaires.

2 Research Method

2.1 Research Strategy

As the aim of a study was to put forth the opinions of parents of elementary school students' with regards to their internet usage, a survey model was used from among the quantitative research methods. This model enables opportunity for enumerative values to the collected, describe and present in relation to a past or presently existing condition [Karasar, 95] or a variable; are studies which aim to describe the opinions and characteristics of large populations [Büyüköztürk et al., 08].

2.2 Research Sample

The population of this research were the parents of students receiving education in elementary school institutions within North Cyprus. The research sample however, consisted of 532 student parents chosen from this population.

Parent	**f**	**%**
Mother	291	54,7
Father	226	42,5
Other	15	2,8
Total	532	100,0

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Student Parents

Clustered samples were created as Nicosia, Kyrenia and Famagusta (Cities of North Cyprus) by carrying out a regional separation. The students in these elementary schools were randomly selected using random cluster sampling [Büyüköztürk et al., 08]. Questionnaires prepared with regards to internet usage were distributed to students receiving education in elementary school institutions to be hand given to their parents in the 2012-13 academic year, and collected within a month to form the data. The frequency and percentage values of student parents are given in Table 1.

2.3 Data Collection

A 5-point Likert type questionnaire was put together with demographic questions to find out parents' opinions in relation to the internet. Before the questionnaire was put together 50 randomly selected families were asked to write compositions about their children's internet usage; together with these compositions, items were also created inspired by [Keser, 02] and [Odabası et.al., 07] studies. Following the preparation of the questionnaire, 5 specialist opinions were taken and pre-testing was carried out using 30 families; after the necessary adjustments were made, the questionnaire was ready for application. The questionnaire consisted of 40 both positive and negative opinions related to internet usage. The negative opinions were reversed and re-evaluated to take into consideration the general attitudes. In the positive opinions, 5 points represented "I Strongly Agree", 4 points "I Agree", 3 points "Indecisive", 2 points "I Disagree" and 1 point "I Strongly Disagree". Within the validity and reliability processes of the questionnaire, the content was adjusted following the pre-testing of the parent group and the specialist opinions. Also, the Cronbach's Alpha value was found to be 0.80, which was quite high implying that the instrument is reliable.

2.4 Data Analysis

Parents were sent the questionnaires by hand with the students. The parents' distribution according to age was as follows; 7,0% (37 individuals) were individuals between the age range 20-30, 57,7% (307 individuals) between 30-40, 32,9% (175 individuals) between 40-50, and 2,4% (13 individuals) of the parents were individuals between the ages of 50-60. When the distribution of the students according to gender was examined, it was found that 50,8% (270 individuals) of the students that made up the sample were male and 49,2% (262 individuals) were female. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to investigate the normal distribution of the data.

The assessment of the 40 item questionnaire put together for the opinions of parents in relation to their child's internet usage is given in Table 1, 2, 3 and 4. Items were collected under 4 factors: Child's internet usage in line with the factor of safety, education, worry and socialization.

When the Table 2, as well as the given sample is taken into consideration, especially the highest and lowest averages, it was stated that (M=3.39, SD=1.29) families agrees that "It angers me that my child spends more time on the internet playing games", at the same time (M=3.37 SD=1.06) families mentioned that they thought their child's desire to use the internet pleases them. They stated that (M=2.07, SD=1.19) they did not allow their children to go to an internet café.

Child's internet usage in line with the factor of safety:	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
	M	**SD**
1. I believe the internet is safe for my child	3.11	1.14
2. If I had the means I would increase the speed of my internet connection.	3.20	1.25
3. My child's desire to use the internet pleases me.	3.37	1.06
4. I allow him/her to go to an internet café.	2.07	1.19
5. I believe the internet is more useful for my child's development than the library.	3.11	1.22
6. I believe my child has developed an addiction to the internet.	3.20	1.28
7. I believe the internet has a bad influence on my child.	2.87	1.11
8. I believe the internet hinders the development of my child's social skills.	2.97	1.22
9. The internet is a suitable tool for my child to utilise his/her free time.	3.08	1.19
10. It angers me that my child spends more time on the internet playing games.	3.39	1.29

Table 2: The Assessment of The Opinions of Parents In Relation To Their Child's Internet Usage with the factor of safety

When Table 3 is taken into consideration, it was stated that (M=3.74, SD=1.17) families saw the internet as the first source their children contacted to learn about subjects they were curious about, at the same time (M=3.75, SD=1.10) their children reached the most detailed information about the topic they were researching on the internet and (M=3,69; SD=1,02) that families believed the internet increased their children's desire to research and (M=3.67, SD=1.06) they believed that the internet is a universal library which their child can use.

Child's internet usage in line with the factor of education:	**M**	**SD**
11. The internet is the first source my child contacts to learn about subjects he/she is curious about.	3.74	1.17
12. My child reaches the most detailed information about the topic he/she is researching	3.75	1.10
13. I believe the internet develops my child from an educational perspective.	3.54	1.05
14. The internet increases my child's desire to research.	3.69	1.02
15. The internet is a tool that develops my child's general knowledge.	3.51	1.08
16. I believe that my child has grasped the opportunity to learn in his/her own pace on the	3.51	1.03
17. I think the homework sites on the internet are beneficial for my child.	3.60	1.05
18. I believe that the teaching on the internet is interesting for my child.	3.43	1.01
19. I believe the teaching on the internet saves my child from boredom.	3.22	1.07
20. The internet causes an increase in my child's productivity of lessons.	3.17	1.09
21. The internet is a universal library which my child can use.	3.67	1.06

Table 3: The Assessment of the Opinions of Parents in Relation to Their Child's Internet Usage with the Factor of Education

When Table 4, as well as the given sample is taken into consideration, especially the highest and lowest averages, families mentioned that (M=2.62, SD=1,16) they thought the internet held information that was unnecessary and useless for their children, and (M=3.76, SD=1.21) that they preferred their children to read a book than use the internet. They stated that (M=3.78, SD=1.26) the possibility of them accessing sites with inappropriate content worried them.

Child's internet usage in line with the factor of worry:	**M**	**SD**
22. My child's desire to use the internet worries me.	2.90	1.16
23. I believe that with the internet he/she will acquire information in an uncontrolled way.	3.11	1.22
24. My child's desire to go to an internet café worries me.	3.56	1.30
25. I prefer he/she reads a book than use the internet.	3.76	1.21
26. I think the internet has information which is unnecessary and useless for my child.	2.62	1.16
27. I do not find it safe that my child buys things over the internet.	3.48	1.48
28. I do not allow my child to use the internet apart from his/her free time.	3.56	1.31
29. I am afraid of him/her being abused while on the internet.	3.55	1.31
30. I do not trust internet safety programs.	3.27	1.12
31. The possibility of him/her accessing sites with inappropriate content worries me.	3.78	1.26
32. I believe that working on the internet is frustrating for my child.	2.69	1.11
33. I think the internet makes my child more aggressive.	2.73	1.17

Table 4: The Assessment of the Opinions of Parents in Relation to Their Child's Internet Usage with the factor of Worry

Lastly, families stated that (M=2.61, SD=1.20) they were not pleased that the internet enabled their child to meet new people, and (M=2.37, SD=1.26) they were not relieved that with the means of the internet, their children shared their problems with people from different backgrounds.

Child's internet usage in line with the socialization factor:	**M**	**SD**
34. I believe my child can freely express himself/herself on the internet.	3.07	1.12
35. I prefer him/her to use email instead of writing letters.	3.10	1.27
36. I think that too much internet usage causes communication deformity for my child.	3.40	1.28
37. It pleases me that the internet enables my child to meet new people.	2.61	1.20
38. I feel relieved that with the means of the internet, my child shares his/her problems with	2.37	1.26
39. I think the internet creates anxiety in my child.	2.72	1.18
40. It angers me that my child loses track of time while on the internet.	3.50	1.30

Table 5: The Assessment of the Opinions of Parents in Relation to Their Child's Internet Usage with the factor of Socialization

2.5 Comparison of the Parents' Demographic Information and Questionnaire Items

The personal information of the parents in the sample and the results of the questionnaire items are given in this section. In Table 16, data is given of the results of the paired sample t-test, one-way (Anova) and post-hoc tests carried out to determine if a significant difference exists between the personal information of the parents in the sample and the questionnaire items

A significant difference was found between whether the parents had an internet connection at home and the sample t-test results of the questionnaire items ($t=1.963$, $p<.05$). This result shows that the majority of the parents in the sample had and was happy to have internet connection at home.

No significant difference was found between the gender of the children of the parents in the sample and the t-test results of the questionnaire items ($t=1.053$, $p>.05$). This result shows that no significant difference existed between the gender of the children of the parents in the sample and internet usage, as well as that the parents wanted their children to use the internet regardless of their gender.

No significant difference was found between the class repeating of the children of the parents in the sample and the t-test results of the questionnaire items ($t=2,590$, $p>.05$). This result shows that no significant difference existed between the class

repeating of the children of the parents in the sample and internet usage, as well as that the parents did not use restriction of internet use as a means of punishment.

No significant difference was found between the gender of the parents in the sample and the t-test results of the questionnaire items (1.030, p>.05). This result shows that the gender of the parents in the sample did not have any effect on their opinions on their children's internet usage.

The averages of the total time the children of the parents used the internet in a week is as follows: 1 day (M=112.70, SD=17.07), 2-3 days (M=121.12, SD=17.19) and 4 days and above (M=126.60, SD=17.26). The One-way Anova carried out with respect to the total time the children of the parents in the sample use the internet in a week. A significant difference existed between children who used the internet 1 day and children who used the internet 2-3 days, 4 days and above (One–way Anova result, F=29.728, P<.05). According to this, it was seen that more parents wanted their children to use the internet 1 day in a week. Families of children who used the internet 2-3 days, 4 days and above also wanted their children to use the internet 1 day in a week. Families of children who used the internet 4 days and above were found to have more positive opinions with regards to internet usage.

The averages of the students in relation to their year groups is as follows: Year 3 (M=117.94, SD=16.11), Year 4 (M=119.97, SD=19.49) and Year 5 (M=119.51, SS=18.36). The One-way Anova carried out with respect to the year groups and no significant difference was found between the year groups of the children and their parents' opinions regarding their children's internet usage (F=0.574, P>.05). According to these findings, it was derived that parents, regardless of their year group, saw no danger in their children using the internet.

The averages of the mothers of the children in relation to their educational status is as follows: elementary school (M=115.21, SD=15.05), middle school (M=116.74, SD=19.80), high school (M=120.93, SD=18.14), university (M=121.52, SD=19.35) and mothers graduated from other branches (M=115.46, SD=16.70). The One-way Anova carried out with respect to the educational status of mothers and a significant difference was found between mothers who were elementary school graduates and mothers who were graduates of middle school, high school, university and other branches (F=2.947, P<.05). This goes to show that with the majority of the mothers being graduates of high school, university and other branches, as the educational level of parents' increases, the probability of them wanting their children to use the internet increases too.

The averages of the fathers of the children in relation to their educational status is as follows: elementary school (M=113.71, SD=16.78), middle school (M=120.84, SD=15.10), high school (M=119.77, SD=17.68), university (M=122.14, SD=19.95) and fathers graduated from other branches (M=119.28, SD=19.30). The One-way Anova carried out with respect to the educational status of fathers and a significant difference was found between fathers who were elementary school graduates and fathers who were graduates of middle school, high school, university and other branches (F=3.837, P<.05). This goes to show that with the majority of the fathers being graduates of high school, university and other branches, as the educational level of parents' increases, the probability of them wanting their children to use the internet increases too.

The averages of the parents' children total time of using the internet in one day is as follows: 1 hour, at most (M=114.94, SD=16.43), between 1-2 hours (M=124.22, SD=17.48) and between 3-4 hours (M=129.27, SD=23.62). The One-way Anova carried out and a significant difference found between children who used the internet 1 hour, at most and children who used the internet between 1-2 hours and 3-4 hours (F=23.138, P<.05). According to this, it was found that parents of children who used the internet for longer hours had positive opinions with regards to the internet.

The averages of the parents' children total time of using the internet in one day is as follows: 1 hour, at most (M=115.06, SD=16.87), between 1-2 hours (M=124.87, SD=16.67) and between 3-4 hours (M=138.81, SD=35.132). The One-way Anova carried out and a significant difference found between children who used the internet 1 hour, at most and children who used the internet between 1-2 hours and 3-4 hours (F=24.323, P<.05). According to this, it was found that parents of children who used the internet for longer hours had positive opinions with regards to the internet.

3 Results

This study examines parent opinions with regards to the internet usage of students in elementary school. A sampling has been carried out for this study. The sample consists of 532 parents of students receiving education in elementary school. A personal information form consisting of personal information has been applied, as well as a questionnaire to collect the opinions of the sample with regards to their children's internet usage. When we looked at whether they had internet connection at home, it was noted that 72, 4% (385 individuals) had internet at home, whereas 27, 6% (147 individuals) did not have internet at home. When the educational status of the mother and father was examined together with the child's internet usage, a statistically significant difference was found between the educational status' of the mother and father and the child's internet usage; also regardless of the graduation of the families there was a decrease in parents who said "I give permission", "I don't give permission" and "other", underlying that most parents gave permission to their child to use the internet. When an assessment was carried out with regards to the parent opinions of their children's internet usage, the sample stated that they saw the internet as the first source their children contacted to learn about subjects they were curious about, at the same time families mentioned that they thought the internet held information that was unnecessary and useless for their children. Families stated that their children reached the most detailed information about the topic they were researching on the internet; that they believed that working on the internet was frustrating for their children; that they believed the internet increased their children's desire to research; and that they preferred their children to read a book than use the internet. They stated that the possibility of them accessing sites with inappropriate content worried them, and that they did not allow their children to go to an internet café. Lastly, families stated that they were not pleased that the internet enabled their child to meet new people, and they were not relieved that with the means of the internet, their children shared their problems with people from different backgrounds. A significant difference was found between whether the parents had an internet connection at home and the t-test results of the questionnaire items (p<.05). This showed that the majority of the parents in the sample had and was happy to have an

internet connection at home. No significant difference was found between the gender of the children of the parents in the sample and the t-test results of the questionnaire items ($p>.05$), showing that no significant difference existed between the gender of the children of the parents in the sample and internet usage, as well as that the parents wanted their children to use the internet regardless of their gender. When the class repeating of the children of the parents in the sample and the t-test results of the questionnaire items were compared, no significant difference was found ($p>.05$) and that the parents did not use restriction of internet use as a means of punishment. No significant difference was found between the gender of the parents in the sample and the t-test results of the questionnaire items ($p>.05$) and also that the gender of the parents in the sample did not have any effect on their opinions on their children's internet usage. When we looked at the One-way Anova results in accordance to the questionnaire items and the total time the children of the parents in the sample use the internet in a week, a significant difference existed between children who used the internet 1 day and children who used the internet 2-3 days, 4 days and above ($F=29.728$, $P<.05$). According to this, it was seen that more parents wanted their children to use the internet 1 day in a week. Families of children who used the internet 2-3 days, 4 days and above also wanted their children to use the internet 1 day in a week. Families of children who used the internet 4 days and above were found to have more positive opinions with regards to internet usage. When we looked at the Anova results in accordance to the questionnaire items and the year groups of the children of the parents in the sample, no significant difference was found between the year groups of the children and their parents' opinions regarding their children's internet usage. According to these findings, it was derived that parents, regardless of their year group, saw no danger in their children using the internet. When we looked at the Anova results in accordance to the questionnaire items and the educational status of the mother and father in the sample, a significant difference was found between mothers ($F=2.947$, $P<.05$) and fathers ($F=3.837$, $P<.05$) who were elementary school graduates and mothers and fathers who were graduates of middle school, high school, university and other branches ($F=3.837$, $P<.05$), showing that with the majority of the mothers and fathers being graduates of high school, university and other branches, as the educational level of parents' increased, the probability of them wanting their children to use the internet increased too. When we looked at the Anova results in accordance to the questionnaire items and the total time the children of the parents in the sample use the internet in one day, a significant difference existed between children who used the internet 1 hour, at most and children who used the internet between 1-2 hours and 3-4 hours ($F=23.138$, $P<.05$), meaning that parents of children who used the internet for longer hours had positive opinions with regards to the internet. Whereas when we looked at the question what is the total time the parents in the sample wanted their children use the internet in a day, a significant difference existed between children who used the internet 1 hour, at most and children who used the internet between 1-2 hours and 3-4 hours ($F=24.323$, $P<.05$).

4 Conclusions

It was found that parents of children who used the internet for longer hours had positive opinions with regards to the internet. As a result it was found that parents had positive opinions with regards to their children's long term use of the internet. Especially parents with higher educational status allowed their children to use the internet more during their homework and research. However, they stated their concerns about internet sites with inappropriate content.

If parents have concerns regarding their children's online activities, they must talk about this with their children, and seek advice and counselling from teachers and other internet users. Families must make an agreement with their children and make it clear that if they do not behave within the scope of these rules, they will be prohibited from using the internet. Having said this, in America children in schools are asked to sign an "Internet Safety Contract" and as a suggestion from Microsoft (2004) there also is an "Online Behaviour Rules Agreement". Parents can have their children sign these agreements hence ensuring that they take responsibility [Odabasi et al, 07].

5 Suggestions

Teachers in schools should hold courses for the families on the internet. Parents should set rules for their children for using the internet at home. Children should listen to their families; whereas families should give their children information on the problems they can encounter on the internet so that they do not access the internet without permission in other places [Benli and Doğan, 11]. Families should, instead of prohibiting their children from using the internet, create opportunities to use the internet together with their parents. Families should use filter programs to rid themselves of concern about their children accessing sites with inappropriate content. Parents should teach their children that talking in a chat room is the same as talking to a stranger, and by mentioning the dangers, tell them that they must never accept to meet these people face to face.

Suggestions in relation to the children's internet usage:

When chatting on the internet, sending a message or corresponding they must never give their personal information (such as their name, surname, address, telephone number, school information). They must never share the name and password they use on the internet with others. They must check if the site is safe while shopping over the internet [Aboderin et al., 12].

Suggestions to parents on internet usage:

Listed below are general precautions which parents can take in order to ensure the safety of their children on the internet. Families must investigate signs towards their children becoming addicted to the internet while taking into consideration whether their internet usage is affecting their performance at school, their health, and their relationships with their families and friends; and if they do show signs of addiction,

seek professional counselling. Families must not prohibit their children from using the internet. They must not forget that the internet is an important part of social life. However, parents must set restrictions to the amount of time spent in front of the computer. Children must be taught that information they access or everything they see on the internet may not be true, the need to question the truth of this information and how they need to question it.

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