

## Internet, Child and Adolescence Social Development

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### **Abstract:**

*Technologies are among the most powerful social force of our world. Internet represent a social and cultural resource that can influence the teenagers life, both in their personal development and as society members too. In recent years, Internet have assumed an important place in teenagers live. Teenagers choose to live in virtual world and losing contact with real world. This paper presents a review of the research on the impact of internet use on the social development of adolescents. Social development study of how adolescence become members of social world. This involves many aspects. The data presented that use of internet by teenagers in this period of life has advanced, internet is not an organization or social network that adolescents' belong to, it has become an integral part of young people's lives. The evidence suggests spending long hours on the internet, neglects of others activities, social isolation, spending less time with family. The paper concludes with recommendations for future study in order to better understand the growing impact of internet on our youth. A smarter and more productive approach is to focus our efforts on protecting and empowering youth so they can use technology positively and safely, and in ways that will promote their well being.*

**Keywords:** *Adolescence; internet effects; behavior problems; social life; technology*

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### **1. Introduction**

Today it is a well-accepted reality that the majority of youth group spends considerable time on internet. This kind of media or communication is rather attractive to children and youth, due to its interactive nature that fits to this age group, along with the novelty and sometimes the practical element this development has brought about. One out of three youngsters gets connected via their mobile phones and one in four via game consoles, according to *EU Kids Online*, a pan-European survey funded by the Safer Internet Programme. 77% of 13-16 year olds and 38% of 9-12 year olds in the EU have a profile on a social networking site. Even in Albania, with the slow, but gradual penetration of infrastructure that enables internet use, this is an increasingly common phenomenon. International Telecommunication Union (ITU) figures show that, within less than 10 years, the percentage of the population with internet access grew from 0.1 (2000) to 43.5 (2010), doubling the number in 2009, which was reported as 20.6 percent. This boom in internet use has also brought about a great presence of news content on the web in both traditional and new media.

Internet penetration rate (total internet subscriptions as % of total population)  
and mobile penetration rate (total active SIM cards as % of total population)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Internet	n/a	n/a	15.3	16.0	20.6	43.0	43.4
of which broadband	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3.7	4.3
Mobile telephony <sup>9</sup>	49	61	74	94	131	139	148

Note: n/a = not available.

Sources: The internet data are available from ITU, via <http://www.internetworldstats.com/euro/al.htm>, reflecting the situation until June 2010 (accessed 12 November 2011). The data on mobile subscribers are from AKEP, "Statistical Indicators of the Market of Electronic Communications of the First Half of 2011," [http://akep.al/images/stories/AKEP/statistika/Treguesit-Statistikore-6\\_Mujori-I-re-2011.pdf](http://akep.al/images/stories/AKEP/statistika/Treguesit-Statistikore-6_Mujori-I-re-2011.pdf) (accessed on 20 January 2012). The percentage was calculated using ITU data on population.

Internet and Facebook Usage					
	Population (2012 Est.)	Internet Users, 30-June-12	Penetration (% Population)	Users % in Europe	Facebook 31-Dec-12
<b>Albania</b>	3,002,859	<b>1,471,400</b>	49.0 %	0.3 %	1,097,800

Fig 1. Numbers of Albanian internet and Facebook users. *Internet World Stats (World Statistics 2012)*  
Recently, Facebook appears to have overtaken Google, which was the most popular site for a long time.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Psychosocial and cognitive development

Adolescence is a period of life that is characterized by numerous biological, cognitive and social changes. Indeed there are numerous and competing positions on childhood and adolescence both in term of disciplinary and focus on ontological viewpoints.

Teenagers have opportunities to explore new roles and adult-level responsibilities and to build a sense of personal identity. During adolescence teens develop a stronger recognition of their own personal identity, including recognition of a set of personal moral and ethical values, and greater perception of feelings of self-esteem or self worth. Psychosocial and cognitive development is best understood when divided into three periods:

- early adolescence (11-14 years): characterized by: adjustment to a new body image, adaptation to emerging sexuality, early moral concepts and strong peer effect
- middle adolescence (15-17 years): characterized by: establishment of emotional separation from parents, emergence of abstract thinking, expansion of verbal abilities and conventional morality; adjustment to increased school demands, increased health risk behavior; sexual interests in peers; early vocational plans
- late adolescence (18-21 years). characterized by: establishment of a personal sense of identity; further separation from parents, development of abstract, complex thinking; emergence of post-conventional morality Increased impulse control; emerging social autonomy; establishment of vocational capability

Each of these special periods of development is marked by the domination of new emotional, cognitive and social skills.

## 2.2. Social life

There is a great deal of interest ambivalence and confusion about today's adolescence and their role and place in contemporary society. At different time explanation of adolescence behaviors has focus on their character, the negative influence of their peer, raging hormones. Teenagers interact with world thus both contribute to and influenced by it. The nature of society that teenagers are part change over time and this has implications for the way that teenagers experience the world. In the industrialized West we see three conflict trends:

- institutionalisation ( where young people spend increasing amount of time in formal spaces as school and after school clubs)
- familisation (spending more time home with leisure )
- individualization (where teen are more independent)

## 2.3. The Ecological Techno-Microsystem

Specific uses of the internet as well as specific contexts of it use are linked to developmental outcomes during childhood. In this regard, theoretical models of childhood Internet use should reasonable include the differential effects of varioambivaus uses across contexts of use. As depicted in Fig2, the proposed ecological *techno-microsystem* constitutes departure from two- dimensional representation of environmental influences on child development. Instead, child social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development are conceptualized as the consequence of ongoing reciprocal and spiraling interactions between:

- **child characteristics** (i.e., *bio-ecology*)
- **use of communication, information, and recreation technologies** (i.e., *techno-subsystem*) across home, school, community environments (i.e., *microsystem*).

In Figure 2, the microsystem rings surrounding the developing child are fluid and the descriptors in the rings are for purposes of illustrations. That is, child developmental outcomes are typically conceptualized in terms of domains which include social, emotional, cognitive, and physical. But child development is holistic (e.g., physical development includes brain changes and brain changes affect and are affected by cognitive development).

Further, online behavior is not meaningfully described as use of communication, information, and recreation digital technologies. Online behavior "refers to organized (e.g., search) and unorganized (e.g., browse) interactions with both human (e.g. chat) and nonhuman (e.g., database) elements in online environments". Theoretically, the techno-microsystem has the capacity to, for example, coordinate children's learning experiences across home, school, and childcare environments, protect children from harmful at-home online experiences by community-based web-awareness initiatives, and prioritize school-based hardware for children without home connectivity.



Fig 2. The Ecological Techno-Microsystem

As newer interactive media have become an integral part of adolescents' lives, and allow them to connect with the other people in their lives, it is clear that they are an important social context, one that provides youth with opportunities to explore the developmental challenges before them.

#### 2.4. To develop with internet

Whether at school, at home, or on the go, today's adolescents are surrounded by digital media such as computers and the Internet, video games, mobile phones, and other handheld devices. The Internet was born in the Cold War era of the 1960's as a decentralized, redundant communications network designed to allow the government to maintain order and control after a nuclear war. The World Wide Web (WWW) was launched in 1989, providing standards that allowed local computer networks to connect with each other and make it easier for users to sort through the growing mass of information available online. In the relatively brief period since the advent of the WWW, the Internet has had a significant impact on nearly every important area of modern life (*Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2005*). The last decade the daily experience of adolescents has been transformed by developments in technology, including the computer, the Internet, and cell phones. The Internet has become an increasingly important factor in the lives of most adolescents, particularly as a medium of communication and social connection.

Surveys have found that between 93% and 97% of teenagers go online, and more than half of them do so every day (*Macgill, 2007; USC Annenberg School Center for the DigitalFuture, 2004*). Although the growth of social technology has been meteoric, to say the least; the most popular website in the world currently is Facebook, a social networking website with more than 500 million registered users worldwide. A large majority of these users are adolescents or young people, labeled the "Millennial Generation" by the PEW Internet and American Life Project (*PEW, 2010*).

Other research on Internet use, raised concerns that teenagers who spent a lot of time online might be prone to social isolation, loneliness, depression, and reduced psychological well-being. Teenage boys and girls do not differ significantly in their daily overall use of the Internet. Study done in Albania results as followed (see graph below)



\*World Visions Albania

In summary, although teenagers make greater use of the Internet than adults (see e.g., *Subrahmanyam et al., 2001*). Most striking about these newer interactive media is that they have brought social interaction into electronic worlds and among adolescents, communication with peers is one of the most popular uses of technology.

#### 2.5. The impact of internet in adolescence development

Adolescence is often characterized as time of challenge and turbulence. When online communication technologies, such as e-mail and chat rooms, became popular in the 1990s, several authors believed that these technologies would reduce adolescents' social connectedness and well-being. Several studies on Internet, conducted among adolescents demonstrated that Internet use can cause "Internet addiction". In June 2007, the American Medical Association discouraged the American Psychiatric Association from including "Internet Addiction Disorder" as a formal diagnosis in the next edition of the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) and did not recommend categorizing "video game addiction" as a serious mental disorder. Teenagers describe "internet addiction" as behaviors that interfere in normal life and cause different type of family, friends, loves and environments stress. Not all researchers are agreed of

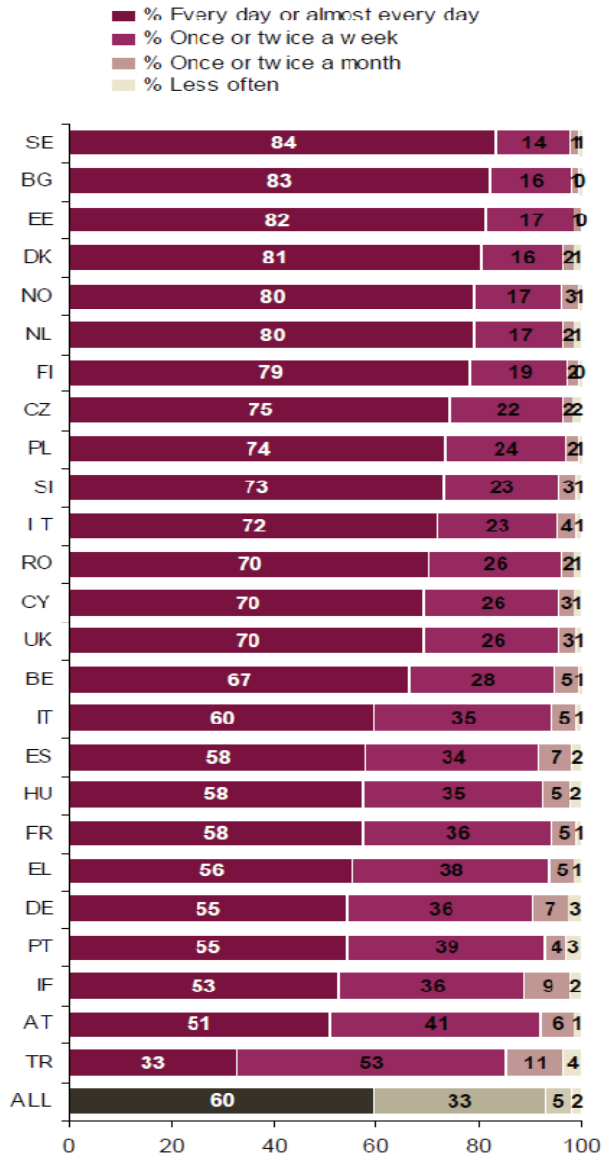
use this term. Researchers who disagree with the characterization of such excessive behavior as “Internet addiction” have instead used other terms such as “addictive behavior,” “dependence,” “high engagement,” “compulsive behavior,” “excessive use,” and “problematic use”. There is a general perception that young people are at greater risk for addictive behavior on the internet compared to adults. As you can see in graph below the prevalence of adolescence use of internet is more than adults.



Morahan- Martin and Schumacher surveyed 277 US undergraduate Internet users and identified 8.1% of the sample as pathological users, who showed at least four of six symptoms of pathological Internet use. Pathological Internet users spent an average of 8.5 h on the Internet weekly.

Another *EU Kids Online* survey with random stratified sample of 25,142 children aged 9-16 who use the internet, plus one of their parents, was interviewed during Spring/Summer 2010 in 25 European countries show that 93% of 9-16 year old users go online at least weekly (60% go online every day or almost every day).

**Figure 12: How often children use the Internet, by country**



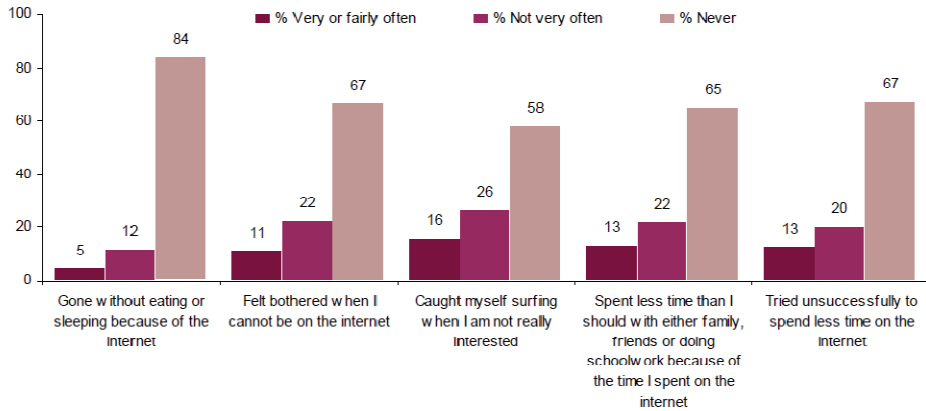
QC303: How often do you use the internet?

Base: All children who use the internet.

Analysis of the Flash Eurobarometer survey of European parents in 2008 showed that, since the previous Eurobarometer survey in 2005, parents have been ‘catching up’ with their children in many countries. The 2008 data showed that, in most countries, parents are as likely, or more likely, to use the internet compared with their children. This matters because, as previous research has shown, the more parents use the internet, the more skilled they are and the more they manage their children’s internet use. While spending long hours on the Internet alone is not indicative of

addictive behavior, a red flag should be raised when the online activity interferes with other offline activities and creates conflict, such as when an adolescent neglects school because of Internet use, or when family relationships and offline friendships suffer due to Internet use.

Figure 16: Excessive use of the internet among children (age 11+)



QC144a-e: How often have these things happened to you?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

\* EU Kids Online survey

### 3. Conclusions

- For youth, the Internet has become both an important social context and a tool.
- It is becoming increasingly clear that we must consider digital worlds as another social context for adolescent development along the lines of other familiar contexts such as families, peers, and schools. It is therefore important to consider the implications of the diffuse, pervasive, and developmentally early immersion of young people in digital worlds.
- A first step parents must talk to their teen if their notice changes in mood, school performance, and differences in time spent socializing, or problems with friendships
- When adolescents, particularly younger ones, are not able to self-regulate their technology use, parents must step in and be more proactive
- Parents must monitor their teen so they can more effectively use internet.
- Addictive behavior on the internet takes on many forms and has many labels such as, “excessive Internet use,” “problematic internet use”, or simply “Internet addiction.” Regardless of whether problematic internet use is a true addiction or not, parents should be concerned when the Internet becomes the single biggest activity in their teen’s life

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