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## AN OVERVIEW OF THE TIME THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN SPEND WITH THEIR PARENTS

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**Abstract:** Nowadays, technology is part of our families and is involved in every aspect of our lives. Parents, schools and children are three actors who cannot be excluded from this development cycle. Children spend many hours a day using technology and the vast majority have access to the Internet, smart phones, video games etc. The technology between parents and children is influencing their relationship. Technology - focused families may pay less attention to their family members, which may interfere with their relationship. The questions that naturally arise from this context are: How long do parents and children have together activities, such as watching TV, playing video games or spending time out together? How much control do parents have over their children's 'technological life'? Which is the most important factor to improve this parent – child relationship? The study aims to analyze the time parents spend with their children using mainly technological tools or other activities with their children. This study included 200 parents (71% mothers and 29% fathers), from four schools of Shkodër city in primary education. Their age ranges from 25 years of age to 54, grouped by the following age groups: 29% (N = 58) of parents belong to the age group 25-35; 66% (N = 132) of parents belong to the age group 36-46 years; 5% (N = 10) of parents belong to the age group above 46 years of age. The study was conducted for children of both sexes, of which 53% (N = 105) of the children participating in the questionnaire belong to the female gender (girls) and 47% (N = 95) participants belong to the male gender (boys). We used a standardized questionnaire adapted to the Albanian context and was self-administrated by the parents. Statistical analyses were performed with Microsoft Office Excel 2007 software. The results show that television followed by the Internet are two main technology tools that are used by parents and children together. The study concludes that technology is an indispensable educational tool for children. Parents and school should collaborate with each other in how to use correctly computers and other forms of interactive technology. Schools have an important role in the way these ICT tools may be used accurately by youngsters in and out of school. Technology used properly can be a useful tool in children development, encourage curiosity, and facilitate problem solving and thinking processes. We should keep children and young people safe online while ensuring their technology use is positive and purposeful without damaging the parent-child relationship.

**Keywords:** attachment, children, parents, technology, tools.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Technology has changed the way we live, interact, learn, play and work. It is improving our lives in many ways. Using technology give us more power than ever before to connect, learn, and grow. Many parents may feel like they are not prepared to manage the use of technology by their children and is interfering with the attachment parent-children. Attachment as an emotional bond with another person has a tremendous impact that continues throughout life (Bowlby, 1960). When caregivers respond quickly and consistently, children learn that they can depend on the people who are responsible for their care. The use of technologies has greatly influenced and changed the way children view, conceive, and interact with the world around them.

Education, which aims to improve human relationships and the formation of young offspring, children who grow out of these relationships, should first guide parenting. The necessity of this education can be accepted by all of us, as the chronicle and everyday life are informing us that the consequences of the Internet have come to the fore, and are not easily cured if we do not cure them because of it. Any parent who has a video game, Xbox, PlayStation, PC or internet connection and a child at home who uses that computer daily asks a question to themselves about how to protect their children from the "online" reality (I Sigurt. al, 2014)

On the one hand, the use of technological devices has created opportunities and advantages to get to know the world, reality, the past and human history in the fastest and most convenient way that has ever existed. A main concern is

the online free time of children. Filtering and moderation are good ways to stop inappropriate and harmful content. These make it possible to set boundaries online according to the age of the children. It should be recommended to use these programs not only at home but also in schools (Children Safe, 2016). Parents need to be educated at the fast pace that technology is advancing, because many parents find it difficult to understand technology and the use of the Internet. Children learn much faster than adults, which means that parents should also try to learn something, although this is a real parental challenge. There are parents who hide behind the excuse that they "cannot understand technology", but they must strive to get into the rationality of what the child is looking for, and become problem talkers, co-authors and problem solvers. Everything must be done to be a participant in the dialogue with the child, in order to create a confidential connection, which helps you to understand the potential problems that may arise from the use of technological equipment, especially the child's web navigation. It is well known that as children grow older they require more privacy when using the Internet. They often do this by using their laptops, tablets or other technological devices and the wireless network. In this case it is quite difficult to monitor children while using the Internet. Children should be encouraged to tell if something they encounter online makes them feel threatened or anxious. It should be learned that people when communicating online are often not really who they say they are. The perpetrators often use chat communication to contact children and in many cases they hide behind various nicknames. Sometimes it is simply the neglect, or the fact that we do not need, this or that technology, that leaves us behind and causes us to create a gap between ourselves and technology, a gap that is also reflected in relationships with children. Everything requires patience from parents, time and cultural support for adults, and it is understood that parents' concerns should not be limited to food, clothing and physical health issues of children, but they can and should extend to their care, also in emotional balance, emotional calm, linguistic and intellectual development, morality and socialization of children (Zhapaj, 2014).

Today's children's education sees the last and necessary challenge of restructuring educational content into a new perspective, for example the introduction of age-appropriate textbooks on technology education. Primary school children are assessed for digital competence, which is one of the seven key competences for lifelong learning. It builds on the basic skills of computer use to find, produce, create, present and share information, as well as collaborate on online information networks (Curricular frame of pre-university of Albanian Republic, 2014).

In addition, adults need to educate themselves so that they can help their children, including teachers and educators, in an even more personal dimension to the use of new technologies, as each child learns in different ways and by describing different paths, so it should be designed on multiple paths, leaving space for different cognitive styles. Education and school are the actors that should start reflecting as soon as possible the negative phenomena that come about as a result of technological and information changes, they should improve school curricula related to information technology, internet, etc. and the relevant staff of this subject be qualified. Better interaction between the community of parents and teachers for more security, more culture and better outcomes for our children (Zhapaj, 2014).

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The target population of the study were parents of Shkodra city who have at least one child in primary education. The primary schools were selected randomly. Four primary schools (located in center and suburbs area) were involved in the study; "Ndre Mjeda" and "Dëshmorët e Prishtinës" (center area) "Azem Hajdari" and "Skanderbeg" (suburb area). In these 4 schools were scattered and supplemented by 50 questionnaires respectively in the elementary education classes. The selection of the parents who would complete the questionnaires was done with random selection. Ten parents of the top ten students listed in the class register (ordinal numbers 1-10) were selected for each classroom. Questionnaires are designed for parents and are based on self-report of parents. The total number of questionnaires distributed to parents was 200, of which 200 questionnaires (100%) were returned by parents. The applied questionnaire is based on a standardized questionnaire, which is adapted in the Albanian context (Zhapaj, 2014). Questionnaires were processed with the Microsoft Office Excel 2007 program. One of the highlighted aspects during the distribution of questionnaires was to retain the anonymous of respondents.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The questionnaire was completed by 200 parents, of whom 71% (N = 142) belong to the female gender (mothers) and 29% (N = 58) belong to the male gender (fathers). Their age ranges from 25 to 54 years old, grouped by the following age groups: 29% (N = 58) of parents belong to the age group 25-35; 66% (N = 132) of parents belong to the age group 36-46 years and 5% (N = 10) of parents belong to the age group above 46 years of age. The study was conducted for children of both sexes, of which 53% (N = 105) of the children participating in the questionnaire were girls and 47% (N = 95) boys. The children were between the ages of 6 and 11, of which 3% (N = 6) of the participating children were 6 years old, 20% (N = 40) were 7 years old, 21 % (N = 42) 8 years old, 16% (N = 32) 9

years old, 21% (N = 42) aged 10 and 19% (N = 38) of children were 11 years of age. The study included parents with different levels of education, from which: 8% (N = 32) had primary education, 49% (N = 196) secondary education, 36% (N = 144) university education and 7% (N = 28) postgraduate education. According to the confirmation of parents participating in the questionnaire, their economic level results in 2% (N = 4) of families with low economic level, 93% (N = 186) with medium economic level and 5% (N = 10) of families with high economic level.

On this modest study, we have tried to analyze the time the parents spend with their children together when they use different ICT tools and other leisure activities with them.

**Data on time frequency (day - week) that parents use technology equipment together with their children**

	Every day	2-6 times/week	Once a week	Less than once a week	Never
Watch TV	59%	36%	5%	-	-
Watch video/DVD	4%	20%	16%	42%	18%
Use computer games	2%	27%	35%	20%	16%
Listen to radio	-	5%	19%	5%	71%
Use computer	32%	27%	23%	14%	4%
Use internet	39%	30%	19%	12%	-
Read books	20 %	25%	22%	31%	2%
Participate in children's favorite activities.	15%	25 %	43%	17%	-

Based on the results presented in the table on the frequency of using technology devices together with their children have the following data:

Regarding the time spent by parents with their children watching television, parents gave the following answers: 59% of parents watch TV every day with their children, 36% of parents 2-6 times a week, 5% of them watch TV once a week with their children, and no parent claimed to watch TV less than once a week or never with their children. From the above data it can be asserted that parents have this usual and simple activity to be done together or in the same room together, which allows direct control of the information that children see on television.

Parents admit that in 4% of them, they spend daily time watching videos / DVDs with their children, 20% of parents watch 2-6 times a week with them, 16% of parents watch less than once a week with their children, and 18% of parents never watch videos / DVDs with their children. This result implies that parents in most cases do this activity at least once a week, enabling parents to be aware of the material preferences their children have.

About the time parents spend with their children using computer games 2% of parents claim to use computer games daily with their children, 27% use them 2-6 times a week with them, 35% of them use them once a week with their children, 20% of parents less than once a week and 16% of parents never use computer games with their children. It is noted that parents play with their children with computer mostly over 2-3 times a week, which allows parents to be different with their child, even as peers, giving them the chance to implicitly appreciate the child's connection to the computer and understanding what they are pursuing and navigate online.

Parents report that they do not listen every day to the radio with their children, 5% of them listen 2-6 times a week with their children, 19% of them listen to once a week with their children, 5% listen to the radio less than once a week with their children, and 71% of parents never listen to the radio with their children. It is noted that radio is not such a widely used tool among parents and children, since it is a less well-attended tool, but it must also be admitted that it does not have the weight of a favorite TV, computer or other children's tool today as Xbox, PlayStation etc.

Regarding the time parents spend with their children using the computer 32% of parents admit they use the computer daily with their children, 27% of parents use it 2-6 times a week, 23% of them use it once a week with their children, 14% of parents use the computer less than once a week with their children, and 4% never use the

computer with their children. It is noted that the computer is the most used technological tool in the families included in our survey, for the purpose of entertainment, learning, research or even communication, leaving us to grasp the importance of the tool today. Parents say they spend more time per week using computers than other precursors. Time requires parents to keep pace not only with the quality of the computer but also with the service they provide for their children, not only as entertainment but also as a learning tool. School through different tasks allows children to focus on their purpose, but on the other hand, it also enables parents to be closer to the children to support them and to control whatever activities they do with technological tools.

About the Internet use, they report that 39% use them daily with their children, 30% of them use it 2-6 times a week with their children, 19% of them once a week, 12% of parents use the Internet less than once a week with their children, and no parent stated that they never use the internet with their children. As can be seen, parents spend more time online during the week with their children, which mutually affect both parties. Parents' presence in shared internet exploration provides parents with the opportunity to prevent potential online risks that children may encounter such as cyber bullying, various porn sites, violent scenes or material under the age of 18. The school aims to guide the child through learning through tasks, projects, research, etc., and the presence of parents gives more opportunity to prevent and cope with the cyber "unexpected".

About the time parents spend with their children reading books and magazines together, parents admit that 20% of them read books daily with their children, 25% of parents read books 2-6 times a week with their children, 22% of parents read books with their children once a week, 31% of parents read books less than once a week with their children, and 2% of parents never read books with their children. It is noted that parents read with their children, mostly 2-6 times a week, which allows them to get to know and be close to their children, with the aim of educating them on reading, getting to know the world through reading or even the exchange of parent-child ideas. Reading, on the other hand, makes children more parental-controlled than technology.

The time parents spend participating in their children's favorite activities is stated that 15% of them participate every day, 25% of parents participate 2-6 times a week, 43% once a week, 17% less than once a week and no parent claimed that they do not participate in their children's favorite activities. We can note that parents spend time with their children, mainly once a week, mostly during weekends, where parents are more dedicated to satisfying their children's desires and needs. This gives them the opportunity to spend quality, productive and fun moments with each other, thus realizing the educational goals of the family in many ways at the same time.

Taking in consideration the results we notice that television is the mayor technology that parents, and children use together every day. On the one hand co-viewing TV together creates the possibility to spend more time with each other but on the other hand the studies show that even when parents and children spend time together, background television negatively affects the quantity and quality of interactions between them (Kirkorian, Pempek, Murphy, et.al 2009). The results show that parent-children spend time together using also internet. Internet is at second place as technology tool being used by parent-children. Parents should spend time and talk to their children about what they're doing online. Take an interest in their interests and consider co-viewing or co-creating with them from time to time. Digital technology can promote parent-child bonding when used sparingly and appropriately. Children learn from passive or interactive media when caregivers co-view and teach them about the content and repeat this teaching through daily interactions (McDaniel & Radesky 2017).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

According to the study, parents are involved in various child activities, where we can distinguish the most common ones: watching television, computer games, use of the Internet and weekend recreation activities. Definitely, technology tools come in the first place between parents and their children. The use of the technology by the children can be for education or personal interests. As today's children are using digital tools at a very young age, the school should respond to the needs of the learner by providing them with the ability to evaluate and understand the complex relationships between technology and society. Based on this fact, parents need to be better informed by the school about how to cope with new technological challenges, the recognition of the ICT curriculum and some strategies they should use with their children. Teachers and parent should communicate, work together to educate, prevent, and solve digital issues as they arise. Children need guidance to use the technology and navigate on internet. This requires the school to continue to be an important hub not only in the mainstream activities it provides for parents, but also to be an informant and supportive of this challenge. Time spent with technology decreases time spent doing other activities. Parents should try to be involved and to balance children screen time and green time, encouraging offline interests, activities. Adults should be aware of the technology risks and health problems on children from overusing technology and how to minimize those adapting right strategies. Technology should not ever compromise children's basic developmental needs. Needs like sleep, nutrition, play, relationships, exercise, are crucial for child development. As long as basic needs are not being compromised and key safety messages are being

followed, children can be productive digital actors. Ensure you're familiar with your child's favourite apps or websites. Find out how they work and use technology collaboratively at suitable times is clearly better than using inappropriate apps or sites alone. Trying to shift in conversation to quality over quantity may be helpful for the relation parent-child. Psychologists should inform parents about secure attachment processes and help them to form strong attachment bonds with their infants and children through interactive, indoor and outdoor activities, nurturing parent-infant/child play activities.

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