



The Impact of Technology on Childhood The Phenomenon of Early Sexual Behavior

تأثير التكنولوجيا على الطفولة ظاهرة السلوك الجنسي المبكر

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Abstract:

الملخص:

The use of technology, including the Internet, is no longer limited to adults but has increasingly extended to children. While easy access to the virtual world offers many opportunities, it also poses serious challenges and risks to children's psychological and cognitive development. Much of the content available online—such as images, videos, and electronic games—contains explicit or implicit violent elements, which can directly affect the formation of a child's personality and cognitive growth. In the absence of parental supervision and with weak regulations

لم يعد استخدام التكنولوجيا، بما في ذلك الإنترنت، مقتصرًا على البالغين فقط، بل أصبح يشمل الأطفال بشكل متزايد. توفر سهولة الوصول إلى العالم الافتراضي فرصًا كبيرة، لكنها في الوقت نفسه تطرح تحديات ومخاطر جديدة على مستوى النمو النفسي والإدراكي للأطفال. كثير من المحتويات المتاحة على الإنترنت من صور، وفيديوهات، وألعاب إلكترونية، تحمل مضامين عنيفة صريحة أو ضمنية، مما قد يؤثر بشكل مباشر على تكوين شخصية الطفل وتطوره المعرفي. في ظل غياب الرقابة الأسرية وضعف القوانين المنظمة لهذه المواقع، يصبح الطفل عرضة للاستخدام السيئ للتكنولوجيا، خاصة فيما يتعلق بالتواصل مع أشخاص مجهولي الهوية الذين قد يستغلون براءته، ما يعرضه للعنف الإلكتروني.

الأمر الأكثر خطورة هو تعرض الطفل لمحتوى إباحي في سن مبكرة، ما يؤدي إلى

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governing these platforms, children become vulnerable to misuse of technology, particularly when interacting with individuals of unknown identities who may exploit their innocence, exposing them to cyber violence.

A more severe risk is children's exposure to pornographic content at an early age, which can trigger premature sexual awakening characterized by distorted sexual awareness, often carrying aggressive or sadomasochistic tendencies. Such early experiences may cultivate both internal and external aggressive impulses and are considered a form of direct violence against children.

This research paper aims to examine the manifestations and risks of children's Internet use and identify the forms of virtual abuse they may encounter. Furthermore, it seeks to analyze the consequences of early sexual awakening on children's sexual identity, psychological well-being, and social life. Emphasis is placed on the urgent need for enhanced parental supervision and the establishment of legal frameworks to protect children from the hazards associated with modern technology, ensuring their safe development in the digital environment.

Keywords: Childhood, Technology, Impact, Sexual Behavior, Early

إفافة جنسية غير ناضجة تحمل غالبًا وعيًا جنسيًا مشوهًا قد يتسم بالطابع العدوانية أو السادي-المزويحي. هذه التجارب المبكرة تشكل نزعات عدوانية سواء داخل الطفل أو تجاه الآخرين، وتعتبر شكلاً من أشكال العنف المباشر ضد الطفولة.

تركز هذه الورقة البحثية على دراسة مظاهر ومخاطر استخدام الأطفال للإنترنت، والتعرف على أشكال التعنيف التي قد يتعرضون لها في العالم الافتراضي. كما تهدف إلى تحليل تبعات الإفافة الجنسية المبكرة على هوياتهم الجنسية وعلى حياتهم النفسية والاجتماعية، مع تسليط الضوء على الحاجة إلى تعزيز الرقابة الأبوية ووضع أطر قانونية تحمي الأطفال من المخاطر المرتبطة بالتكنولوجيا الحديثة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الطفولة ، التكنولوجيا ، التأثير ، السلوك الجنسي ، الإفافة المبكرة.

Arousal.

1. Introduction

Modern technology has contributed to the emergence of new forms of violence, among which cyberviolence has become particularly prevalent. This type of violence has recently surfaced through the Internet and has become an escalating and ongoing issue due to the large number of users, their diverse ideas and attitudes, and their misunderstandings of the concept of freedom in the virtual world, especially following the rise of social media platforms. These platforms have become fertile grounds for online stalking, cyber-extortion, sexual harassment, illegal use and manipulation of images and videos, and various forms of threats.

The danger of cyberviolence is heightened by the fact that the perpetrator's identity is often anonymous or disguised through pseudonyms, making it intangible and difficult to trace. All demographic groups are targeted, with children being particularly vulnerable. Forms of cyberviolence directed at children include exposure to direct or indirect scenes of violence on social media. Much of the content children encounter, such as online games, images, and videos, often contains violent and pornographic material that stimulates sexual and aggressive impulses.

Such exposure can negatively shape a child's imagination, leading to premature sexual awakening characterized by distorted sexual awareness, which may include sadistic or masochistic tendencies. This contributes to the development of internal or external aggressive behaviors, affecting the

child's psychological, cognitive, and behavioral development, ultimately undermining personality formation.

The impact of cyberviolence on children is particularly severe due to their lack of awareness of technological risks and their misuse of online platforms, which are attractive due to their interactivity and ease of access. The absence of parental supervision and regulatory frameworks governing these platforms further exacerbates children's vulnerability, posing significant challenges regarding its effects and strategies for mitigation.

Based on the foregoing, this study seeks to address the following central question:

- **How have the Internet and modern technology affected children, leading them to experience premature sexual awakening that precedes their chronological and psychological age?**

1. Cyberviolence: Sexual Harassment and Child Exploitation :

Technological advancements have transformed interpersonal interactions, both positively and negatively, affecting individuals' expressive and communicative behaviors. Among all groups, children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of technology. Their limited awareness of Internet risks makes them easy targets, exposing many children to aggressive harassment in both virtual and real-world settings. Consequently, the concept of violence and aggression has evolved alongside technological development.(**Wesche, R., Kreager,2017,617**)

Online bullying and cyberviolence offer perpetrators the advantage of anonymity, hiding their real identity behind a computer screen, which can reinforce tendencies toward revenge. This type of violence often has a more profound negative impact on children compared to traditional forms of aggression .

Traditionally, violent behaviors among children were observed in more conventional forms, such as harassment from peers at school. Victims often sought refuge at home to escape these situations. Although face-to-face

harassment still occurs within school settings, most bullying has now shifted to electronic forms via Internet platforms. Currently, it is common for students to access their social media accounts daily, which increases their exposure to challenging situations that may lead to cyberbullying .

2. The Virtual World and Early Sexual Awakening in Children :

Engagement in the virtual world raises numerous concerns, among them the continuous use of technological tools such as email, websites, Bluetooth, Facebook, and other online forums and platforms. These digital spaces often disseminate both explicit and implicit sexualized content, directly targeting children—the most active users—through websites and unsolicited messages containing sexual links. In recent years, several online forums have emerged that promote sexual culture and pornography, contributing to moral and behavioral deviation .

Misuse of the Internet and unsupervised access without prior parental guidance exposes children to substantial risks. Among these are interactions within chat rooms and social networks inappropriate for their developmental stage, which negatively affect their cognitive growth and social behaviors. Exposure to such content facilitates access to unsuitable material, leading to aggression and deviant sexual behaviors .

Exposure to sexual material—through advertisements, random images, or provocative media content—often results in what is known as *early sexual awakening*. This condition may cause excessive sexual activity in children, even though at that age they lack mature sexual awareness. Such behavior usually manifests as imitative or coerced acts rather than instinctive drives, leading to the appearance of sexualized behaviors or even harassment tendencies .

Children who have been sexually harassed or exposed to pornography often experience anxiety and guilt. According to Gabel , this anxiety stems from

the “feeling of bodily contamination,” which damages the child’s sense of bodily integrity and narcissistic wholeness.

It is well known that curiosity and the desire for exploration are vital components of a child’s intellectual development. However, these traits must be nurtured appropriately according to the child’s age. Since children naturally have sexual questions, the absence of scientific and reassuring answers from parents drives them to seek information from peers or the Internet. At this point, a serious danger arises: the child’s premature sexual awakening, leading to fixation on sexual exploration—especially when coupled with exposure to pornographic content.

3. Pornographic Films and Their Impact on Sexual Fantasies in Children : (Viner, R. M., Ozer, E. M., Dewing,2012,p379)

Dozens of websites and electronic services providing pornographic materials in Arabic have proliferated across the Internet, targeting Arabic-speaking users, especially children and adolescents who access them in significant numbers. One of the most alarming global concerns regarding online pornography is the ease with which children and teenagers can obtain these harmful materials, exposing them to dangerous and destructive consequences. Several studies have found a correlation between children’s exposure to pornography and the development of deviant sexual behavior.

Potential online risks faced by children include: **(Hargreaves, D. S., & Elliott, E,2000,p144–151)**

- The possibility of accessing pornographic websites that promote child prostitution. Even if these sites are blocked, children—despite their young age—are often more skilled than adults at manipulating technology to bypass restrictions, thereby gaining entry to prohibited sites.
- The Internet also serves as a meeting ground for dangerous individuals (pedophiles) who target children, luring them through

deceptive communication and sometimes arranging in-person encounters that may lead to sexual assault .

Pornographic materials vary in levels of danger, ranging from suggestive imagery to highly explicit sexual acts. Such exposure transmits harmful messages that can profoundly affect a child's psychological and sexual development. The images, videos, magazines, and interactive games available online often carry explicit or implicit connotations of sexual deviance.

Early sexual experiences and discoveries strengthen a child's capacity for sexual fantasy. Since sexual imagination often relates to later behavioral patterns, early exposure to pornography influences children's perceptions of future sexual conduct, including deviant practices such as rape, sadism, and masochism. These fantasies may evolve into behavioral imitations of what they have seen.

Sexual fantasies (*hoamat jinsiyya*) are, therefore, the continuation of early childhood erotic thoughts, resembling daydreams. According to Reich , sexual imagination encompasses all erotic and visual fantasies that spontaneously stimulate sexual desire, combining impulses of sexuality, aggression, and affection.

From the above, it may be concluded that sexual fantasies originate in childhood and become more active during adolescence. Every child possesses some degree of sexual curiosity; however, exposure to pornography differentiates responses into two categories. Some children experience psychological trauma and guilt concerning sexuality, shaping distorted future sexual attitudes. Others, possessing pre-existing fragmented sexual knowledge, reinforce their curiosity and desire for exploration. Given that most pornographic films portray violent and sadomasochistic acts, these children internalize the notion that normal sexual relations are inherently violent. Consequently, they may become vulnerable to sexual abuse or exploitation, driven by their evolving fantasies.

4. Technology and the Formation of Distorted Sexual Awareness: Sadism and Masochism : (Martellozzo, E., Dann, S., Feasey, R., & Jones, K. ,2016, p266)

As previously discussed, children may encounter explicit advertisements or images while browsing gaming websites, leading them to pornographic content. These websites rarely present factual depictions of human sexuality; instead, they promote deviant and abnormal sexual practices. When children are exposed to such material, they may develop distorted perceptions of sexuality, believing such acts to be natural—thereby increasing their vulnerability to harassment and abuse.

Once a child becomes aware that adults, including their parents, engage in sexual relations for reproduction, aggressive impulses may arise directed toward the parents, stemming from confusion, guilt, and resentment. Sigmund Freud explains:

“When children witness sexual intercourse between their parents, they interpret the act as a form of mistreatment or abuse of power—a sadistic act. Such impressions, formed in early childhood, significantly contribute to the later transformation of sexual goals into sadistic tendencies.”

The sadistic desires observed in deviant sexual relations can be explained by the suppression of sexual drives during the process of gratification. Aggressive instincts, being older and more dominant, take precedence, and the pleasure derived from sadistic activity becomes a means of satisfying aggression. This fusion between sexual satisfaction and violence reflects an inherent sadistic impulse within the rebellious drives of the ego .

Observation of children exposed to explicit sexual material reveals that many perceive sex as something painful or disgusting. This perception stems from exposure to sadomasochistic content, which disrupts psychological stability and raises serious concerns about its long-term effects on children’s mental and sexual well-being. Early and inappropriate

sexual experiences may drive children to imitate what they see, mistakenly believing it represents normal behavior.

Therefore, families and educational institutions must play a critical role in prevention and rehabilitation—raising awareness, offering proper sexual education, and providing early psychological support to reintegrate affected children, correct their misconceptions, and protect their right to a healthy childhood.

Conclusion :

The electronic invasion that has deeply permeated our daily lives—and the cyberviolence it has generated—has had a particularly profound impact on children. This reality necessitates a focused examination of its dangers, as it represents one of the most insidious forms of violence due to its *anonymous* and *unidentifiable* nature. Consequently, there is an urgent need for rapid intervention through community-wide awareness programs, particularly within schools and families, to guide and educate children on the safe and responsible use of technology, including the Internet and smartphones.

Parents, in particular, must play a proactive role in supervising their children's online activities. Computers should be kept in visible, shared spaces within the home, and specialized software should be installed to block access to pornographic or harmful websites. In Algeria, the danger has reached every household, as nearly all homes now contain smartphones and portable computers, with many children possessing their own personal devices. This situation has granted them unrestricted access to the digital world, thereby increasing their exposure to online predators and pornographic content.

Therefore, families must remain vigilant and recognize that technology, while beneficial, also carries destructive potential that can erode the innocence and personality of the child. Caution, guidance, and intelligent

engagement with technology are thus essential to preserving the integrity and well-being of future generations.

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