

Screen Children: From Television Viewing to Digital Interactivity in Algeria

A Study on Reception Patterns

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Abstract:

This study aims to highlight the topic of reception patterns among screen children, from television viewing to digital interactivity. It will analyze the reception reality of this group, which is considered one of the most important segments of society that is exposed to digital screens daily. This research relied on a survey analysis method using a structured questionnaire as the primary methodological tool, which was distributed to 116 individuals.

Additionally, the study employed two secondary methodological tools: observation and interviews with the parents of the study sample.

Keywords: Screen children; television viewing; digital interactivity; reception.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the world has witnessed significant and rapid development in the ways content from various media is received, due to the technological revolution and the emergence of an interactive digital environment through new media.

Amidst these transformations imposed by technology, a new pattern of media reception has emerged that has affected all segments of society, with children being one of the most impacted social groups. Today, children receive television content and interact with and participate in digital content. This shift from passive television viewing to interactive engagement has not

only altered the child's relationship with screens but has also reflected on their behavior patterns, perception, culture, and worldview. This has led to the emergence of what is termed "screen children," who are exposed to various visual media (television, smartphones, computers, tablets, etc.).

Thus, the importance of our study lies in highlighting the different reception patterns among "screen children," which have become complex. The child is no longer a passive recipient who merely watches television content; instead, he interacts, browses, and participates in this virtual digital space, also becoming an active participant in the creation of interactive content.

Therefore, the following problem statement is raised:

What is the nature of the reception patterns among screen children between television viewing and digital interaction in Algeria?

Research Questions:

- What do the reception patterns among the sample screen children consist of regarding television content?
- What are the forms of digital interactive reception among the sample of screen children?
- What is the role of parental guidance and supervision in regulating the reception of various types of content by the sample of screen children?

Objectives and Importance of the Study:

This study aims to understand the nature of reception patterns among screen children, focusing on the transition from traditional television viewing to digital interactivity in Algeria. It also seeks to attain secondary objectives, including identifying the reception patterns of the sample children regarding television content, understanding the forms of digital interactive reception among them, and focusing on the role of guidance and parental supervision in regulating the reception of these various contents among the sample individuals.

Research Methodology and Study Tools:

Research Methodology:

Methodology refers to the systematic organization of a series of ideas aimed at uncovering the truth. It concerns the manner in which the issues of

the topic are presented and addressed, as well as the means employed by the researcher to fulfill the desired results. Accordingly, the research, its methods, and its tools should be clearly defined, particularly in specifying the type of methodology adopted, whether descriptive, inductive, deductive, or a combination of these approaches. (Abdul Wahab Ibrahim Abu Suleiman, 2005, p. 60).

This study falls within the scope of descriptive research, employing the survey method, which is defined as a set of studies that examine a phenomenon as it exists in reality, analyze and interpret it, and aim to contribute to improving both the present and the future. (Mohamed Jalal Al-Ghandour, 2015, p. 181).

Study Tools:

The Questionnaire:

The questionnaire is a term that can refer to any type of tool containing questions or items to which individuals respond. It typically includes items with fixed options (Mohamed Abdel Aal Al-Naimi & all, 2014, p. 176).

This study relied on a directed questionnaire by distributing the questionnaires and explaining the questions to the sample individuals. A total of 116 questionnaires were distributed to both male and female respondents aged between 6 and 16 years, representing various educational levels.

Note: The age range for the study sample was set between 6 and 10 years, representing the primary school cycle, during which a child's ongoing relationship with television and new media typically begins. Meanwhile, the age group between 11 and 16 years corresponds to early and middle adolescence, a period marked by greater independence and more intensive use of technology, leading to multiple cognitive, social, and psychological effects.

Interviews:

The study relied on two types of interviews directed at the parents of

some children in the study sample to support the results of the survey study. The first type is called the free or open interview, which occurs in an atmosphere of complete flexibility, where the questions directed to the interviewee are not predetermined. The second type, known as the structured or fixed interview, has its format and content determined as much as possible before it is conducted, with a list of questions that all researchers adhere to (Jamal Muhammad Abushanab, 2009, p. 138). In addition, an interview guide containing ten questions was developed.

Observation:

Observation is the process of seeing and hearing others according to specific criteria, as it involves systematically and rigorously observing human behavior to ensure that this observation serves as a stable and objective tool for reaching accurate and truthful conclusions (Mohamed Abdel Aal Al-Naimi & all, 2014, p. 177). The observation tool is very important in this study to support the analysis of the questionnaire results by observing the behavior of the targeted study sample (the children), as well as the behavior of the parents.

Study Population and Sample:

Research Population:

The research population differs from the general concept of population, as it represents a specific subset of the broader population. It is defined as all the components of the phenomenon under study or the total group to which the researcher seeks to generalize the results associated with the studied problem. This population possesses specific characteristics, and the more precisely these characteristics are defined, the greater the potential for conducting a study whose results can be validly generalized (Naheda Abdul Zaid Al-Dulaimi, 2016, p. 81). It is essentially the collection of units from which the sample is actually drawn (Zakaria Ahmed Al-Sharbini et al., 2013, p. 205). In this study, the research population consists of screen children in Algeria who are enrolled in school and are between 6 and 16 years of age.

Study Sample:

The sample is defined as a group of individuals, units, or elements selected from the research population to represent that population in the study. The sample unit is the individual unit or group of units considered at each stage of the sampling process (Zakaria Ahmed Al-Sharbini & all, 2013, p. 205).

In this study, a selected purposive sample was selected, where the researcher establishes criteria for the required sample and then selects individuals that meet those criteria. This type of sampling is employed to fulfill the study's objectives, enabling the researcher to identify the information needed and to freely select participants accordingly (Mohamed Jalal Al-Ghandour, 2015, p. 144).

The purposive of 116 individuals was chosen because it provides sufficient diversity in social and economic backgrounds, allowing for a comprehensive and reliable analysis of the effects of media on children in Algeria. The individuals in the sample were selected based on specific criteria related to their age and experience with digital media.

The study sample consists of screen children who are enrolled in school and aged between 6 and 16 years, receiving audiovisual content through television and new media, as demonstrated in the following table:

Table 1: Characteristics of the Sample According to Variables

Educational Level			Age		Gender	
Primary School	Middle School	Secondary School	06-10	16-11	Female	Male

Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
43.96%	51	44.82%	52	11.20%	13	46.55%	54	53.44%	62	38.7%	45	61.2%	71

The table above represents the characteristics of the sample in terms of variables. Males accounted for 61.2% of the sample, while females represented 38.7%. Regarding age distribution, 53.44% of the children were between 11 and 16 years old, whereas 46.55% were aged between 6 and 10 years.

Regarding the educational level, it is noted that 44.82% of the children study at the middle school level, 43.96% are in the primary school, while 11.20% of the sample children are enrolled in secondary school.

Study Concepts:

Providing some scientific definitions within the research plan is essential to avoid any confusion regarding the concepts (Abdul Wahab Ibrahim Abu Suleiman, 2005, p. 61). Therefore, several fundamental concepts will be presented within each axis of the field study to clarify the general understanding of the terms employed and to precisely define the scope of the research.

2. Reception Patterns of Television Content Among Screen Children in the Study Sample :

2.1 Children and Screens:

Screen Technology is defined as the technology that encompasses all techniques used to display data in various forms, including cultural, political, social activities, movies, animations, etc., on screens such as

televisions, computers, and phones. This is known as media and communication technology. Through these technologies, diverse audiovisual content is broadcast (Zoubeida Ben Ouicha and Fatima Neboush, 2019, p. 176).

The term screen children is not a common term; it refers to children who are addicted to and receive content from various screens, meaning audiovisual media. It describes a generation that spends long hours in front of televisions and different new media.

This study defines “screen children” as individuals aged between 6 and 16 years who spend long hours in front of screens. This age range involves the period from school-age childhood to early adolescence, which is regarded as an extension of school-age childhood. The selection of this group, referred to as screen children, constitutes a methodological decision within a scientific framework, enabling participants to respond to the research instrument in a focused and straightforward manner.

2.2 Reception Patterns of Television Content Among Screen Children in the Study Sample:

Table 2: Television Viewing Habits of the Sample Individuals

How much time do you spend in	Do you watch television?
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front of the television each day?											
Less than an hour		From 1 to 3 hours		More than 3 hours		Always		Someti mes		Rarely	
Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
4.31%	05	27.58%	32	68.1%	79	71.55%	83	26.72%	31	1.72%	02

The results of Table 2 show that 71.55% of the children in the study sample watch television regularly, and 68.1% are exposed to this audiovisual medium for more than three hours. These high percentages indicate that television still maintains its strong position within the family despite the proliferation and diversity of digital screens. These figures suggest that children are daily and almost constantly connected to television, reflecting the continuity of television viewing even in the era of interactive media.

Moreover, these percentages demonstrate that television is considered a source of entertainment and amusement for children. The persistence of viewing can also be attributed to the ease of access, as television is present in every home and does not require knowledge of the various technologies needed for digital media. Additionally, children often watch television in a family setting, which has accompanied them since childhood, reinforcing their familial atmosphere.

Table 3: Main Reasons for Watching Television among Screen Children in the Study Sample

Why do you watch television?					
To watch my favorite	Learning and lessons	Movies and series	Watching videos online	For playing	Other

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shows											
Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
10.34%	12	7.75%	09	25%	29	28.44%	33	28.44%	33	00 %	00

Table 3 demonstrates that the percentages for the reasons children in the sample watch television for playing and for watching videos online are equal at 28.44%. These results reveal that the exposure of the children in the study sample to television is not limited to merely following programs as passive recipients but extends to entertainment and digital activities. These percentages indicate that children no longer perceive television as a classic tool dedicated solely to broadcasting; instead, they view it as an interactive digital tool with multiple uses.

Viewing television for the purpose of play can be explained by the development and proliferation of children's games and their connection to the medium (television), making it an interactive device rather than just a medium for watching. Additionally, using it to watch videos online suggests a merging with digital platforms such as YouTube, Netflix, and others.

Table 4: Preferred Types of Television Programs for Screen Children

What is your favorite type of television programs?			
Cartoons	Entertainment Programs	Educational Programs	Other

Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
36.2%	42	42.24%	49	19.82%	23	1.72%	02

It is clear from the table above that the majority of the sample individuals (42.24%) prefer watching entertainment programs. These results are logical, as they indicate the child's inclination towards entertainment and preference for recreational programs. This is attributed to the nature of the age group of the studied sample, which requires play, fun, and an escape from reality. Additionally, the extensive availability of these programs, the variety of specialized channels, and the diversity of programs that address content suitable for their needs and desires contribute to this preference, especially since the sample individuals are students who require entertainment.

3. Digital Interactive Reception and Screen Children:

3.1 Conceptual Introduction to Digital Interactivity:

******The distinguishing feature of new media is interactivity. Some researchers define this process in digital innovations as: the process of searching, accessing, returning, and the speed and ease of communication enabled by computers on our behalf. The communicative environment of these innovations is specifically designed to accommodate multiple options for accessing the information targeted by the recipient. This design enables selection and browsing in ways that influence the structure of choice interfaces and content pathways. In some cases, it even allows the recipient to participate in the content creation process by commenting and expressing opinions, rather than merely accepting or rejecting the content. Additionally, various browsing tools are used in the design of interactivity among materials such as "images, videos, and information" (Mustafa Youssef Kafi, 2015, p. 47).

All of this has led users to interact with the websites they visit, enabling them to engage in dialogue and express their opinions. In audio and video chat rooms, they can communicate with whomever they wish, at any time, and in any language they choose (Najla Abdel Fattah, 2015, p. 83).

3.2 Forms of Digital Interactive Reception Among Screen Children in the Study Sample:

Table 5: Use of New Media by Sample Individuals

How many hours per day do you spend in front of these devices?						Do you use a smartphone or tablet/computer?					
Less than an hour		From 1 to 3 hours		More than 3 hours		Always		Sometimes		Rarely	
Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
3.44%	04	25%	29	71.55%	83	78.44%	91	20.68%	24	0.86%	01

Table 5 reveals that the sample individuals use various new media constantly, spending more than 3 hours daily, with percentages exceeding 70%. This figure indicates that this studied group has come to rely heavily on the extensive use of smartphones and tablets, due to the diversity and ease of use of these interactive media. Children and adolescents are no longer limited to passive exposure; instead, they have become participants, interactors, and active creators of digital content, as these devices have become their daily companions.

Table 6: Areas of Use of Digital Devices by Sample Individuals

What do you use these devices for frequently?
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Games		Chatting with friends		Browsing social media		Watching videos		Other	
Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
19.28	6	18.96	8	25	0	35.34	53	0.98	0
	23		22		29		41		10

The results of the above table show that 35.34% of individuals use digital devices frequently to watch videos. This is due to a feature of new media that television does not provide, namely “flexibility.” This enables sample individuals to choose what they wish to watch, diversify the videos, re-watch content, transition from one clip to another, and explore various applications and platforms. This highlights a shift in reception patterns from passive collective viewing of television to flexible individual and personal use of these devices, offering independence and freedom of choice.

Table 7: Playing Methods Among Sample Individuals Using Digital Devices

If you use these devices for playing, how do you use them?							
Just for games		Playing and sharing the results I achieved		Playing and interacting with my friends		Other	
Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency

19.82%	23	12.93%	15	64.65%	75	2.58%	03
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Playing and interacting with friends represents the highest percentage in the table above regarding the method of play when using digital devices (64.65%). The sample individuals' use of these devices for play and interaction with friends allows them to experience a reality-like environment in an interactive and participatory virtual world. This is particularly evident given the dimensions provided by the interactivity feature, which is characterized by mutual and instantaneous communication, as well as spatial and temporal flexibility that enables users to communicate with their virtual friends anytime and anywhere. Moreover, the level of control over the medium is simple and user-friendly.

4. The Role of Parental Guidance and Supervision in Regulating Reception Patterns of Content Among Screen Children in the Study Sample:

4.1. Concept of Parental Guidance and Supervision:

Parental supervision in the digital environment is a set of actions taken by the family to monitor and guide their children's use of digital technology, including the internet and social media, to ensure their safety and protect them from potential risks. This supervision involves observing children's online activities such as the websites they visit and the content they access, while also directing them toward the responsible and safe use of technology (Abed Saleem and Shawini Khaled, 2025, p. 77).

4.2. Parental Guidance and Supervision from the Perspective of Screen Children in the Study Sample:

**Table 8: Parents' Enforcement of Rules for Their Children
Regarding Screen Exposure**

Do your parents or family set rules for screen exposure?			
Yes		No	
Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
79.31%	92	20.68%	24

It is clear from the results of the table above that 79.31% of the sample individuals confirm that their parents set conditions and rules for screen exposure. This indicates that parental supervision is present and effective despite the widespread prevalence of technology and the difficulty of controlling it, especially with the addiction of all segments of society to digital devices and screens, particularly among children and adolescents, which leads to a decline in their academic performance. Moreover, many parents from the study sample have confirmed that they impose various rules on their children due to their awareness of the dangers resulting from excessive exposure to these media.

Table 9: Types of Rules Imposed by Parents on Their Children in the Study Sample

If the answer is yes, what do these rules consist of?							
Setting Time Limits		Punishment for Non-compliance		Cutting off the Internet		Other	
Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency

40.21%	37	33.69%	31	20.65%	19	05.43%	05
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Table 9 demonstrates that the most important rules imposed by parents on their children are setting time limits for usage at 40.21%, and imposing punishment in case of non-compliance at 33.69%. These percentages indicate that most individuals in the sample live under a controlled supervisory system, even though the duration of usage exceeds three hours (as shown in the table...). Setting time limits is considered a form of supervision, which reflects that parents are striving to organize their children's usage behavior by creating a balance between the tangible world and the interactive virtual world created by technology.

Therefore, parents should guide their children's behavior. Behavioral guidance involves nurturing the child and teaching them how to be responsible for their actions through their interactions with others, especially with adults, in a manner characterized by respect (Huda Mahmoud Al-Nashif, 2011, p. 191).

Table 10: Adherence to Rules Set by Parents

Do you respect these rules?					
Always		Sometimes		Rarely	
Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
%41.30	38	%48.91	45	%9.78	09

Table 10 indicates that more than half of the sample individuals respect the rules sometimes, at a rate of 48.91%, while 41.30% do so always. These percentages demonstrate that adherence to these conditions and rules is linked to various factors and circumstances, including the

busyness of parents and the insistence of users to finish games with friends, which we have frequently noticed among the sample individuals. This reveals that parental supervision is not always strict.

One parent from the sample confirmed that their child's use of these media provides them with a bit of relief from family responsibilities and pressures, offering a sense of comfort and tranquility at home. This situation leads the parent to be lenient in enforcing these rules, despite being aware of the potential risks associated with screen exposure for their children, whether in terms of behavioral, psychological, or health-related aspects.

Through our observations of the individuals in our study sample, it is noted that the implementation of these rules has created a sense of mutual respect between the sample individuals and their parents. This is due to the flexibility in dealing with children, as well as the importance of dialogue and family understanding, especially in light of the widespread use and addiction to these digital screens that offer enticing and diverse content. This leads individuals to immerse themselves in the virtual space for long hours without feeling bored or wasting time.

Therefore, it is essential to enhance flexible and participatory family supervision and guidance instead of imposing outright bans. Furthermore, promoting a healthy media education that aligns with the personality of each user is crucial.

4.3. Visual Elements That Helped in Child Development

Table 11: New Things Learned by Sample Individuals Through Screens

What new things have you learned through screens?					
Knowledge of Using New Technology	Gaming Techniques	Website	Friends	Game	Language

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Frequency	03
Percentage	2.58%
Frequency	33
Percentage	28.44%
Frequency	12
Percentage	10.34%
Frequency	15
Percentage	12.93%
Frequency	31
Percentage	26.72%
Frequency	22
Percentage	18.96%

Table 11 indicates that 28.44% of the respondents stated that the most enjoyable thing they gained through screens was learning a new game, while 26.72% reported that what they learned through screens involved gaming techniques.

These results indicate that digital screens have become, for the sample individuals, a space for entertainment and play where they acquire knowledge and techniques related to gaming. This suggests that children strive to improve their performance within games, reflecting their perception of this technology as a realm solely for play, without considering it as meaningful educational tools, despite the fact that they are a school-aged group.

5. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the individuals in the sample live within a complex audiovisual environment that encompasses various forms of entertainment, interaction, and education through exposure to multiple screens. A duality in usage was observed; the television, which in the past was a means of viewing within the family where the viewer was a passive recipient, has become an interactive user today through its connection to the internet and various applications and interactive platforms. The results of the field study showed that the sample individuals still consume television content at a significant rate, but most of them use it

as an interactive digital screen that provides them with the opportunity for play and entertainment. Moreover, the widespread use of portable digital devices such as smartphones and tablets has further contributed to widening the gap of family disintegration.

The results revealed that the individuals in the sample exhibit signs of addiction to digital screens, which underscores the serious risks posed to children's psychological, behavioral, and physical health. Therefore, the implementation of rules and conditions by the family is essential, as their role is crucial in regulating the child's relationship with screens through supervision and flexible guidance, along with establishing a sound digital media education.

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