

## Digital violence and its impact on children's socialisation

Dr. Khalida Ouldgouail<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Akli Mohand Oulhadj University Bouira (Algeria)

The E-mail Author: [kh.ouldgouail@univ-bouira.dz](mailto:kh.ouldgouail@univ-bouira.dz)

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### Abstract:

Digital violence is one of the most prominent challenges in the current technological era, as it can greatly affect the **socialisation** and psychological and social development of children and represents a major challenge for the family. This violence varies from cyberbullying, incitement to violence via the Internet to sexual exploitation and digital harassment. Hence, this research paper came to understand this impact from a sociological perspective by analyzing the social and cultural environments surrounding the child that play a major role in shaping their interaction with the effects of digital violence, in addition to highlighting the role of the family in guiding their children and protecting them from digital violence. The paper also discussed advice and strategies for parents and educators to protect them and enhance the digital environment based on international experiences, as well as the importance of digital awareness and preventive steps to ensure raising children in a safe technological environment.

**Keywords:** digital violence, socialization, child, family, digital environment.

### Introduction:

Today, childhood faces many changes in the social and technological environment that affect children's experiences and shape the way they interact with the outside world. A United Nations report indicates that globally, only one in three children and youth has access to the Internet at home. In addition to the opportunities provided by the digital environment and social media for children, such as entertainment, easy access to information, distance learning, speed of communication, openness to the outside world and the cultures of societies, and the development of knowledge and skills in all fields, some of these experiences include risks, including digital addiction and technological immersion, in addition to violence directed towards it, which appears in several forms, such as

cyberbullying, incitement to violence via the Internet, sexual exploitation, digital harassment, and others. Here lies the scientific importance of the subject, in addition to the long-term effects of digital violence on the child's psychological, emotional, and social health, as well as his behavior. Accordingly, the family must adapt the methods and ways of social **socialisation** in line with the aforementioned risks.

Accordingly, in this article we will try to highlight the violence practiced against children in the digital environment and the challenges facing the family in raising them, based on the following research questions:

- What is digital violence against children?
- What is the impact of digital violence on children in its various forms and what are the challenges facing families in raising their children? What are the social factors associated with digital violence against children?
- What are the most important social and societal challenges to protecting children from violence in the digital environment?
- What are the most important legal and legislative challenges?

**Firstly:**Child violence in the digital environment

**1. Childhood and social challenges:**Many sociologists have published articles on what is known as digital childhood.Digital childhood: Susan Livingstone, who focused on the media and the impact of technology on children through articles and books on digital childhood and children's behavior online. Dana Boyd, who studied the behavior of young people and their use of social media and its effects on their lives. Jonnna Bryson, who studied the social effects of technology on the behavior of children and young people.

Digital technologies and internet connectivity increasingly permeate almost every aspect of young people's lives, with children and young people under the age of 20 thought to make up one in three internet users.(Livngstone S, 2016)The effects of these generational shifts are many.The generational shift of experiences and practices expressed by the Governance of Health Futures 2030 (The GH Futures) in the term digital childhood.

It is important to understand what it means to grow up in a digital world in order to better understand the potential impacts of digital transformations in health on children and young people, how they can help or hurt them. They are experiencing digital transformations that are different from those of previous generations, as their lives are recorded digitally from birth or even before. Young people generally use digital technologies more than their elders, and

therefore have greater opportunities to benefit from them, but they are also more vulnerable to harm to their health and well-being. Children and young people may need more support and protection in particular because they have not yet developed the knowledge and skills to use digital technologies safely and effectively. (HealthFutures2030, 2021)

Digitization is Digitization, Numerization on a set of relationships and links that the network includes. It is a state of structural interconnection between different points usually called nodes, connected in general by multiple, interconnected, overlapping links, and secured through a network of links that intersect with other node links. When a child joins the matrix, he is exposed to a huge amount of complex and overlapping relationships that are difficult to define, control, or even know their accuracy. (Ben Yamina, 2023)

Digitization is always a daily philosophy, even if it seems unreal, but it is the concern of every child. The child is immersed in downloading applications from the Play Store, and following the YouTube application to watch Netflix movies and other live TV programs, and leaves reality towards the metaverse, the 3D hologram, social media applications, and chat rooms, so he moves from the real to the meta-reality, and thus childhood disappears from life towards cyberspace, which is hostile to common sense. (Ben Yamina, 2023)

Researchers have referred in their discussion of the social challenges facing the Arab child in the digital world to what is known as the cultural rift, meaning the conflict between what digital media offers of an alien culture that conflicts with the original values in his Arab society, which pushes him into a state of alienation.

The danger of alienation for Arab children increases due to the weakness of the value-based culture provided to them through various means. (Abdul Halim, 2011)

It is strange that those around the child, especially parents, ignore the dangers of electronics addiction, and sometimes even view it as a financially costly matter rather than an unhealthy practice or the acquisition of a misleading culture or other dangers such as digital violence, which we will discuss in the next section.

## **2. The concept of violence against children in the digital environment:**

Digital violence refers to a range of hostile and harassing behaviors that occur online, such as cyberbullying, sexual harassment, and the unauthorized publication of personal information. These acts can be directed at a specific group, such as children, exposing them to psychological and social harm.

Al-Kaabi (2016) defines violence in the digital environment as one of the types of violence resulting from the use of modern technology, whether via the Internet. And smart devices (Xbox PlayStation) is one of the gaming devices that rely on the Internet, through which the child sees or hears violence through video scenes or written words that affect the child's intellectual side, so it becomes a behavior that he practices in various aspects of life. Among the most important influences are electronic games. (Fadel Al Kaabi, *The Child and Play: A Culture of Electronic Violence*, 2016), which is linked to the Internet (online) 3D technology 3D.

The most important feature of digital violence is that it does not require the use of force and physical beating. Rather, it is sufficient to have electronic media, in which people use violence against the child by assaulting his personality and morals and not respecting the characteristics of the stage he is living in and his needs, whether through digital material or applications directed at this group.

### **3- Forms of digital violence and its effects on the child and the family:**

This element will present the following forms of digital violence: cyberbullying, incitement to violence via the Internet, sexual exploitation and digital harassment, and the psychological and social effects of each form, in addition to the challenges facing the family.

#### **A. Cyberbullying, its effects and the challenges facing the family:**

Cyberbullying includes a set of hostile actions practiced against a child via the Internet and social media, such as offensive messages, rumours, mockery, threats, and publishing private information.

In a study conducted by Intisar Al-Sayed Muhammad Mahmoud Zayed on 300 secondary school students, it was concluded that the most common forms of cyberbullying that teenagers are exposed to through digital media are publishing personal secrets through digital media, then tempting them to engage in inappropriate behavior, then threatening to publish it, followed by threatening, then exploiting personal photos and videos available through digital media in a bad way and publishing them, followed by sharing an inappropriate video clip, then entering the personal account and publishing private matters through digital media, and finally receiving inappropriate text messages. The study also concluded that informing parents is the last resort that a teenager may resort to after blocking and reporting procedures on websites, surrendering to the blackmailer. (Mahmoud Zayed, 2020)

Its psychological effects are: The child is exposed to feelings of anxiety and depression. Low self-confidence: Repeated mockery and insults may weaken the child's self-confidence and lead to feelings of inferiority.

It can also affect their academic achievement, through a decline in their academic performance as a result of distraction and constant anxiety.

The social effects on the child may be represented by social isolation, as children exposed to cyberbullying may tend to isolate themselves from their peers to avoid harassment. In addition to the difficulty of building new relationships and maintaining existing ones.

While the challenges facing the family in this context are represented by the difficulty of identifying and detecting cyberbullying: Parents often find it difficult to know that their children are being cyberbullied, as children may hide it due to shame or fear. Another challenge that parents may face is the lack of cyber awareness through their lack of sufficient knowledge of technology and the means by which bullying can occur.

Cyberbullying is a major challenge for parents in raising their children, as it requires awareness and the acquisition of correct guidance methods to provide a safe and supportive environment for their children that helps them overcome the negative effects of cyberbullying. Promoting open communication and awareness of digital safety can contribute to protecting children and enabling them to deal effectively with the challenges they face in the digital world.

**B. Spreading ideas that incite violence:** Like fighting games, violence and war, racial discrimination by making the victims of a certain color, ethnicity and religion and offering a reward as a result of killing and destruction, as the American Psychological Association confirmed that fighting games increase the aggressive tendency in the behavior and thoughts of young people.

Researcher Hussein Zidane (2018) confirmed in a study on electronic violence directed against children and its psychological and social effects on the child's personality, a descriptive study, that males are more vulnerable to electronic violence than females, and that the child who uses electronic games excessively and for long hours is affected by them in an interactive, sensory, and behavioral way, and transfers this effect to his social environment in which he lives, and that the communityMAbout us, the Arab gives males more space to learn new behaviors, try them out, and gain new experiences, whether negative or positive.(Hussein, 2018)

One of the psychological effects that can result from a child's exposure to materials that incite violence is psychological stress. Children who are exposed to repeated scenes of violence may suffer from anxiety and chronic stress. In addition to fear and dread, a feeling of constant fear of being exposed to

violence in the social environment can develop. Sleep disturbances through insomnia and nightmares.

Behaviourally: It can cause them to acquire aggressive behaviour. Children who are exposed to violence to incite violence can adopt aggressive behaviour towards others, including peers, and this is what was confirmed by the social learning theory.

From the effects of Social isolation Najd Social with Children may become bullies themselves. These children may also acquire antisocial behaviors in the future, such as theft and vandalism. In addition, these children are exposed to rejection by society, which reinforces their feeling of isolation.

One of the challenges facing the AB is the difficulty of recognizing the signs and effects resulting from exposure to these digital media materials because these behaviors develop slowly. On the other hand, some families may lack awareness of the harms of exposure to violent content and how it affects children and the correct ways to deal with it, so many of them resort to blaming or punishing their children. While it requires a balance between control and freedom and strategies to deal with the situation: such as educating children, reinforcing positive behaviors, encouraging positive activities. In addition to seeking specialized support such as psychological counseling, behavioral and social therapy.

**C. Sexual exploitation and digital harassment:** By directing the child's attention towards sexual and pornographic aspects, sexual harassment, and sexual deviation such as homosexuality: through various electronic programs and applications. In addition to sexual blackmail.

Sexual crimes have arisen on the Internet, represented by pornographic sites, incitement to prostitution, and propaganda for homosexuality. Sexual exploitation of children: Some international reports indicate that about 2 million children, most of whom are boys, are exposed to sexual exploitation. 21st century technology, including computers and the Internet, is responsible for this, especially since 100,000 pornographic sites display images of the exploitation of minors. (Ibrahim, 2013)

Among the psychological effects that children may be exposed to this type of material in the digital environment are psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression. Post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from exposure to exploitative situations such as being forced to participate in live shows of a sexual nature via cameras. In addition to feeling guilty and ashamed.

As for the effects of Social isolation is represented in Social: Sexual exploitation may lead to Children withdraw from social life and avoid interacting with others. Others. In addition to the difficulty of building and maintaining existing relationships.

The challenges that families may face while raising their children are similar to what we mentioned previously regarding cyberbullying and exposure to materials that incite violence. In addition, there is the need to raise children with a healthy sexual **socialisation** that will be a strong fortress for them against falling victim to sexual exploitation as a preventive measure. However, if children fall victim to this type of violence, it is necessary to protect them from the immediate and distant effects that may result from it, such as homosexuality and others.

### **Social factors related to digital violence:**

Among the theories explaining electronic violence, we find the theory of social change by George Homans (1910-1989). Taking the daily interactions between individuals as a main analytical unit through which the social processes that govern the complex structures of groups and societies can be explained, reciprocity in its interpretation of electronic violence presents two trends. The first emphasizes consistency and equivalence in the type of reciprocal behavior, and accordingly violence is a form of reciprocal behavior according to this rule.

As for the symbolic interaction theory of Herbert Blumer (1900-1986), it considers symbols, words and signs as its basic principles. Electronic violence against children, whether verbal, physical or symbolic, is one and the same, and the behaviour of individuals and groups is nothing but an embodiment of the symbols that the individual sees and is directly affected by, positively or negatively.

Among the social factors that cause children to fall victim to digital violence are the family environment through the absence of parental supervision, and the lack of awareness among children of how to deal with the dangers of the digital environment, including digital violence.

In addition to other factors, such as the school lacking awareness-raising programmes and curricula that provide children with a digital security preventive culture that protects them from becoming victims of digital violence. Lack of real community support for those affected by digital violence, especially in the community. TogetherT Arabic. Weak formal social control (legislation, legal and regulatory procedures).

**Thirdly:** Social and community challenges to protecting children from violence in the digital environment

Protecting children from violence in the digital environment is a social and societal challenge in Arab societies for several reasons, including:

1. **Lack of awareness and education** Parents and educators may lack awareness of the threats children face in the digital world and how to protect them from them.

2. **Challenges of digital education:**Controlling children's Internet use and access to appropriate content can be a challenge for parents and teachers.

3. **Rapid technological developments:**Arab parents and societies must keep pace with rapid technological developments to understand new threats and how to protect children from them.

4. **Legal challenges:**There may be difficulties in implementing laws and policies to protect children in the digital environment due to the complexities of legislation and the difficulty of monitoring the Internet.

5. **Lack of supervision:** The lack of effective oversight can expose children to harmful content, violence against them, sexual exploitation and cyberbullying.

6. **Digital culture:**The digital values and culture prevalent in society may influence children's behavior and expose them to digital risks.

**Third: Legal and legislative challenges:**Legal and legislative challenges to protecting children from violence in the environment

Digital includes:

1. **Complexities of international legislation:** Countries face challenges in developing and implementing uniform international laws to combat digital violence against children due to differences in legislation and cultures.

2. **Identifying digital crimes against children:** Identifying and prosecuting digital criminal activities against children can be difficult due to technical challenges.

3. **Cross-border enforcement:** National laws to protect children across digital borders can be difficult to enforce, requiring international cooperation and coordination between countries.

4. **Update laws quickly:** Legislation and policies related to protecting children in the digital environment must adapt to rapid technological developments and new threats.

5. **Protecting privacy and individual freedoms:**Laws must strike a balance between protecting children and the privacy rights and individual freedoms of other Internet users.

6. **Technical challenges:** Laws may struggle to deal with technical challenges such as data encryption and the use of circumvention techniques to bypass local laws.

**Fourth: International experiences:**

There are several international programmes and initiatives aimed at protecting children from violence in the digital environment, including:

1. International convergence to protect children online ICP This initiative aims to promote international cooperation to protect children from digital risks and to raise awareness and education about these issues.

2. United Nations Initiative for Child Online Protection: UNICEF works to promote legislation and policies to protect children online and to support governments and communities to achieve these goals.

3. International Alliance for the Protection of Children from Online Sexual Exploitation: INHOPE This coalition works to promote international cooperation and information exchange to combat online child sexual exploitation.

4. International Cybersecurity Alliance for Children ICSPA: Aims ICSPA aims to raise awareness of the risks of cybercrime targeting children and enhance international cooperation to combat it.

5. Global Cyber Security Alliance: GESI seeks to promote children's online safety by providing support and guidance to parents, educators and communities.

These are some of the international programmes and initiatives, and there are more efforts being made at the international and local levels to protect children in the digital environment.

**conclusion:**

In conclusion, we find that the social challenges of digital childhood and understanding violence against children in the digital environment require joint efforts from researchers, parents, educators, governments, and international organizations. Awareness and education about the dangers that children may be exposed to on the Internet must be enhanced, and legislation and policies that protect children's digital rights must be developed. International cooperation and information exchange must also be enhanced to combat cybercrimes targeting children. Through joint efforts, a safe and healthy digital environment can be

built for all children, contributing to their comprehensive development and happiness.

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