

## The Most Influential Digital Environment Tools on the Proliferation of Digital Misconduct - A Field Study with a Sample of Digital Media Users

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### **Abstract:**

This study aims to investigate the impact of digital environmental factors, including mobile phones, electronic games, and social media platforms, on digital deviance. The research community was identified among a group of electronic game players and social media users. A sample of 20 participants was selected purposively. The descriptive analytical method was employed, and a questionnaire was used as the study tool. Findings indicate that the digital environment serves as a nurturing ground for digital deviance, and there is a significant correlation between digital environmental factors and digital deviance among participants.

**Keywords:** Digital environment, Digital media, Events, Digital deviance.

### **Research Problem:**

The phenomenon of digital deviance is considered one of the most significant social issues that researchers have been concerned with for years, if not one of the most dangerous, due to its negative aspects and risks to society. This phenomenon cannot be addressed in isolation from the technological changes and advancements that society is undergoing. These changes manifest in digital environmental factors that have entered Algerian households without permission, posing a significant threat when misused, especially concerning young individuals. Currently, digital environmental factors such as mobile phones, electronic games, and social media platforms play a role akin to socialization institutions. They provide individuals with digital culture and ideas that foster a mentality of digital deviance. Devices like iPads, computers, and smartphones with all their applications are now readily accessible to them, replacing traditional toys and games. This easy access has facilitated their entry into

the online space, where they can browse social media platforms and view various types of content, opening the door to cyberbullying, online defamation, fraud, identity theft, and digital threats.

Based on the above, we pose the following research problem: What is the extent of the impact of digital environmental factors on digital deviance among individuals?

Subsequently, the following sub-questions have been derived:

- To what extent does mobile phone usage contribute to digital deviance among individuals?
- To what extent do electronic games contribute to digital deviance among individuals?
- To what extent does engagement with social media platforms contribute to digital deviance among individuals?

### **Study Objectives:**

The study aims to assess the impact of digital environmental factors on digital deviance as perceived by a sample of individuals who use these digital environmental factors, through the following:

1. To determine the influence of mobile phone ownership on digital deviance among individuals.
2. To ascertain the impact of electronic games on digital deviance among individuals.
3. To identify the effect of following social media platforms on digital deviance among individuals.

### **Study Concepts:**

#### **1. Digital Environment Definition:**

The digital environment is defined as the environment in which information is consumed in digital form through new communication channels, allowing direct and complete access to information. Therefore, it is the information environment in its digital form available through the internet (Bouflaka, 2023, p. 04).

#### **2. Operational Definition of Digital Environment:**

The digital environment can be operationally defined as the environment that encompasses the internet, various social media platforms, and includes all information and communication technologies.

### **Concept of Digital Deviance:**

#### **1. Definition of Deviance:**

**Linguistically:** The term "deviance" is derived from the verb "deviate", meaning the ship leaned or tilted, indicating it reached shallow water and did not proceed further. also means inclination or deviation (Al-Akayla, 2006, p. 54).

**Terminologically:** It refers to criminal behavior committed by an individual, contrary to the laws of Algerian society. Deviance varies according to social standards; what may be considered deviant in one society may not be so in another (Bekada, 2007-2008, p. 22).

#### **2. Definition of Event:**

**In sociology,** an event generally refers to a person from birth until they reach social maturity and acquire the elements of growth. This stage varies from one society to another and from one culture to another. In Algerian society, the end of the stage of "hadatha" is defined by reaching the age of eighteen (Samia, 2009-2010, p. 12).

#### **Definition of Digital Deviance:**

Some define it as "Behavior that is not in line with social norms or is contrary to accepted values and customary practices" (Amin, 2015-2016, p. 111). Digital deviance is a social phenomenon present in all human societies.

**Operationally,** digital deviance refers to the collection of actions that are anti-social, carried out by teenagers under the age of 18, and punishable by law.

**Operationally,** digital deviance is the deviance that individuals can commit through mobile devices, often via social media platforms or other electronic media, with the intent to harm others, whether individuals or institutions.

#### **Definition of Mobile Phone:**

A mobile phone is defined as: "A communication tool that relies on wireless communication through a network of broadcasting towers distributed within specific areas, primarily featuring a touch screen, serving as a display and data input device" (Al-Mubarak, 2017, p. 33).

**Operationally**, a mobile phone is a small handheld communication device connected to the internet, typically equipped with chat and communication platforms, some electronic games, and often a camera.

#### **Definition of Social Media Platforms:**

Social media platforms are defined as: "Online platforms that facilitate the creation and sharing of content, enabling users to connect and interact with others electronically, based on shared interests and preferences" (Al-Saqr, 2015, p. 47).

**Operationally**, social media platforms are electronic websites or applications used by individuals to communicate and interact with various people from around the world electronically. Users can chat, exchange photos and videos, and send messages, facilitating the exchange of ideas, information, emotions, and cultures.

#### **Definition of Electronic Games:**

Electronic games are defined as: "Recreational activities that emerged in the late sixties, primarily mental activities, encompassing all games with electronic formats. They can be played collectively via the internet or individually, and may be organized or spontaneous, directed or automatic" (Blirdouh, 2021, p. 99).

**Operationally**, electronic games are primarily mental activities, including mobile phone games, internet games, video games, and others. They help individuals create a relaxing atmosphere and relieve study pressures. Moreover, they aid in the development of mental capabilities and introduce individuals to various types of digital deviance.

#### **Previous Studies:**

##### **Study 1: Electronic Games Addiction and its Relation to Deviant Behaviors among Adolescent Students in the School Environment - Using Free Fire Game as a Model -**

This study aims to explore electronic games addiction and its relation to deviant behaviors among adolescent students, conducted by researcher Miloud Farah. The researcher's main

concern was to investigate the relationship between addiction to electronic games (specifically Free Fire game) and the emergence of deviant behaviors among adolescent students. The study employed a descriptive approach, with the research tool being a questionnaire developed by the researcher.

The study yielded several results, indicating that the majority of participants prefer using mobile phones to play electronic games due to the unique features it offers compared to other devices. Additionally, it was found that most participants engage in various inappropriate behaviors when they lose the game, often imitating the behavior of the game's protagonist (Merah, 2022, p. 392).

### **Second Study: Social Media Platforms and their Role in Producing Deviant Behavior among Youth (TikTok as a Model)**

This study aimed to investigate the role of social media platforms, specifically the TikTok application, in producing deviant behavior among youth. Conducted by researcher Shimaa Bakhoush, the study developed a questionnaire distributed electronically to a sample of 67 participants who are users of the TikTok application. The study employed a descriptive methodology.

The main overarching question posed by the researcher was: "Is there a statistically significant relationship between using the TikTok application and the production of deviant behavior among youth?"

The study concluded the following results:

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between TikTok usage and the production of deviant behavior among youth.
2. There is a statistically significant relationship between the absence of parental supervision over TikTok usage and the production of deviant behavior among youth.
3. There is a statistically significant relationship between the desire for fame through TikTok and the production of deviant behavior among youth (Bakhoush, 2022, p. 202).

### **Methodological Procedures**

#### **Study Fields:**

**Temporal Scope:** This study was conducted in June 2023.

**Human Domain:** The study targeted a group of Algerian individuals who are users of digital environments.

**Study Sample:** The purposive sample consisted of 20 individuals who engage in electronic gaming and use social media platforms. They were contacted electronically, and 30 questionnaires were distributed within the study community, with 20 questionnaires retrieved.

**Study Method: Analytical Descriptive Method.**

**Study Tools:** The researcher utilized a single data collection tool, which was a questionnaire distributed electronically (via social media platforms). The questionnaire was sent to the accounts of a group of individuals after creating a personal account on social media platforms.

**Presentation and Analysis of Data:**

**Table No. 01: Sample Individuals' Opinion on the Contribution of Mobile Phone Ownership to Digital Misconduct**

Statement		Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Order of Statements
Mobile phones help individuals manipulate credit cards	F	08	09	03	1
	%	40	45	15	
Mobile phones help individuals penetrate and steal personal websites	F	09	10	01	2
	%	45	50	05	
Mobile phone ownership helps in sending threatening and blackmailing messages	F	15	04	01	3
	%	75	20	05	
Mobile phone ownership helps in recording and photographing others for unethical purposes	F	17	02	01	4
	%	85	10	05	

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher

Mobile phones are at the forefront of preferred electronic devices among adolescents for engaging in various forms of digital deviance. This is evident from the results of the table and figure above, where the majority of respondents believe that owning a mobile phone

significantly aids adolescents in digital deviance. Primarily, it facilitates recording and filming others for illegitimate purposes, with 85% of respondents agreeing. Following closely is sending threatening and blackmailing messages, with a percentage of 75%.

As for hacking personal websites and credit card fraud, respondents are not inclined to confirm these behaviors (answers tend to be sometimes between 45% and 50%). These results can be interpreted as follows:

- Most adolescents record calls and chats, in addition to taking photos with their mobile phones and using them as threats, especially in blackmailing girls. Some spyware applications capable of recording voice calls and using the phone's camera to record videos without the victim's knowledge have been released. These applications are characterized by their ease of downloading and use.

- Credit card fraud is associated with e-commerce, which is experiencing a decline in Algerian society. This explains the scarcity of these fraudulent operations in Algerian society.

Rates of digital deviance committed through mobile phones are increasing significantly and have significant psychological and social effects on the victims, especially female victims.

**Table No. 02: Sample Individuals' Opinion on the Contribution of Electronic Games to Digital Misconduct**

Statement		Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Order of Statements
Electronic games help individuals become addicted to digital drugs	F	17	02	01	1
	%	85	10	05	
Electronic games encourage individuals to commit electronic theft	F	14	04	02	2
	%	70	20	10	
Electronic games encourage individuals to disseminate pornographic images	F	16	03	01	3
	%	80	15	05	

Electronic games help individuals penetrate institutional information systems for unlawful purposes	F	09	06	05	4
	%	45	30	25	

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher

**Figure 02:** Bar chart representing the opinion of the sample on the extent of electronic games' contribution to digital delinquency.

It is evident from the table and the above figure, as well as from the respondents' answers, that electronic games help individuals in digital drug addiction, with a percentage of 85%. Digital drugs are defined as sound files downloaded through various internet sites, containing tones and audio waves that the individual hears at different frequencies in each ear. These digital drugs leave psychological and social effects equivalent to those of traditional drugs. An excellent example of digital drug addiction through electronic games is the Blue Whale game, primarily targeting teenage individuals and affecting those facing psychological and social problems. The game supervisor assigns a series of challenges and commands over a specified period based on the game's impact on the individual. Initially, these challenges seem normal and harmless, but over time, with the individual's addiction to the game, the commands become difficult and strange. They include instructions to listen to strange musical tones that affect the individual's psyche. With continuous exposure, the individual becomes mentally depressed, predisposing them to engage in various forms of digital delinquency while being in an unconscious state. From here, we conclude that electronic games directly lead to addiction to digital drugs. Individuals addicted to this type of digital drugs are more susceptible and prepared to engage in various types of digital delinquency.

While 80% of the respondents believe that electronic games encourage individuals to engage in sexual delinquency by disseminating pornographic images, for example, the Blue Whale game presents some harmful and unethical challenges, such as taking photos of a family member while sleeping or naked, or secretly capturing images of people engaging in unethical activities. This creates audacity and habituation for the individual to commit this type of digital delinquency, especially since adolescence is a stage of heightened sexual activity.

On the other hand, the table's results confirm that electronic games do not significantly encourage individuals to penetrate institutional information systems for illegitimate purposes, with a percentage of 45%.

Electronic games contribute significantly to digital delinquency, as they serve as incentives to develop the individual's mental capacities, facilitate and encourage their entry into the digital environment, and provide them with a significant technological culture. Through this culture, individuals can engage in digital delinquency for entertainment or financial gain without leaving any trace.

**Table 03: Respondents' Views on the Contribution of Social Media Usage to Digital Delinquency**

Statement		Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Rank
Social media platforms help individuals impersonate others	F	16	03	01	1
	%	80%	15%	05%	
Social media platforms assist individuals in cyberbullying	F	15	03	02	2
	%	75%	15%	10%	
Social media platforms encourage individuals in fake online trading	F	11	05	04	3
	%	55%	25%	20%	
Social media platforms aid in electronic defamation and threats with images	F	17	02	01	4
	%	85%	10%	05%	

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher

From the table and figure above, it is evident that respondents' answers predominantly centered around "often" for the fourth and first statements (85% and 80%, respectively), with the second statement ranking third at 75% for "often."

According to the respondents, this can be attributed to the significant role that social media platforms play in electronic defamation and threats with images. This is due to the absence of deterrent laws and the difficulty in detecting this type of digital delinquency. Most individuals engaged in this type of digital delinquency hide behind virtual identities.

Defamation and tarnishing reputation are considered more prevalent forms of digital delinquency spread through social media platforms. This is attributed to its ease of execution, and most victims of this delinquency are females who refrain from filing complaints due to societal norms in Algeria.

The proliferation and diversity of social media platforms have contributed to a variety of methods for committing digital delinquency, explaining the prevalence of various forms such as fake online trading and cyberbullying. According to this study, electronic defamation

(especially defamation of influencers and well-known personalities) is the most prevalent form of digital delinquency spread through social media platforms.

Social media platforms are considered the breeding ground for digital delinquency, as they attract and significantly influence individuals, serving as an outlet for them. This explains the existence of various types of digital delinquency such as cyberbullying and electronic defamation.

Answering the main question: "To what extent do digital environments (mobile phones, electronic games, social media platforms) contribute to digital delinquency among individuals?"

**Table 04: Contribution of digital environments (mobile phones, electronic games, social media platforms) to digital delinquency.**

Axis		Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Statement Ranking
<b>Mobile Phone Ownership</b>	F	49	25	06	1
	%	61.25	31.25	7.5	
<b>Electronic Games</b>	F	56	15	09	2
	%	70	18.75	11.25	
<b>Social Media Platforms</b>	F	59	13	08	3
	%	73.75	16.25	10	

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher

## Study Results

The main question of the study revolves around the extent to which digital environments (mobile phones, electronic games, social media platforms) contribute to digital delinquency among individuals. From the previous tables, it is evident that social media platforms rank first in terms of significant impact, with 73.75% of respondents considering them to have a significant influence. Electronic games come in second place with a 70% impact, while mobile phones rank third with 61.25%.

This can be interpreted through the study as despite the numerous positive aspects of social media platforms, they have a dark side represented by the spread of various forms of digital delinquency, such as defamation, cyberbullying, and identity theft, which become more dangerous over time due to the difficulty of detection and proof. This digital delinquency poses many ethical, social, and economic risks and crises in society.

It can also be said that electronic games develop the mental abilities of individuals and facilitate their learning of the various arts and tricks of digital delinquency. Through these games, individuals acquire different methods and ideas that help and encourage them in their digital delinquency without leaving any trace. Through electronic games, especially the Blue Whale game, individuals become addicted to digital drugs and other forms of digital delinquency.

### **Conclusion**

From this scientific paper, we can conclude that the digital environment has become the most important environment in the lives of individuals. There is a strong connection between individuals and the digital environment, which has become an integral part of the culture of this generation. This has made individuals in the digital society susceptible to both the positive and negative aspects of this digital environment. Individuals who use digital media extensively (mobile phones, social media platforms, and electronic games) are prone to addiction and withdrawal from family, school, and society. Consequently, they fall into a pathological isolation that opens the door to various forms of digital delinquency.

### **Recommendations and Suggestions**

1. Creating recreational spaces for individuals, such as sports clubs, theaters, and schools specializing in fine arts, to channel their excess energy positively.
2. Educating parents about the dangers of social media platforms and electronic games.
3. There should be strict supervision by parents, and they should not overlook the situation until it worsens to a point where it becomes more challenging to address.
4. Implementing diverse programs for individuals including sports, reading, and educational activities.

5. Involving individuals in various events and avoiding leaving them alone with their devices for extended periods.

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