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How Children Use the Internet?

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Abstract

The younger population, even children at pre-school age, spend most of their time on the Internet. It is the concept of a new generation – the generation Z. From the earliest age they spend time with IT devices (tablets, mobile phones, computers ...). How these kids actually use the Internet is something that parents are rarely concerned about. It is often the case that kids know more about IT devices than their parents. Moreover, parents are often confronted with children due to inconsistent use of the Internet. One way to properly use the Internet is education.

Keywords: ildren, internet, generation Z, problems, IT, tablets, mobile phones, education

Intro, generation Z, *homo interneticus*

In recent years, the younger population has completely been surrounded by the Internet as a means of communication, as information sharing platform and way of entertainment, fulfilling every second of their time. About a decade ago while internet speeds were at their early stage (broadband), as well as the mobile internet was taking its initial steps, the main concern was how often children used the internet (at that time over the PC). Nowadays, question has been raised **how to use** the internet!

The concept of unrestrained internet use is at the heart of understanding a new generation of children and teenagers, also called the generation Z. Social networks, internet identity, news forms, online announcements, role-players and vloggers and other similar forms, getting information exclusively through the Internet (if there is nothing on the Internet – then it does not exist?!) are the features that dominate this new generation of people. From the earliest age this generation has become acquainted with technology and the internet.

All this is included in the concept of a modern man or human being called *Homo Interneticus*. He is characterized by an association with the internet from

a societal perspective and identity. This new form does not require that someone knows how to write, or even how to read. It's enough to have a permanent connection to the internet world (Walat, 2018).

Children and Their Presence on the Internet

There have been a number of studies during the autumn of 2014 carried out by a group of researchers across Europe that observed families with pre-school children. They showed that digital media platforms and the internet have a big impact on families, and the research has proved that it was the tablet which was most frequently used by children. Today, this is of course a mobile phone device since many parents give a mobile phone to their children rather than a toy.

It is often the case that children know more about some things on the Internet than adults. This led to one of the crucial mistakes of the parents. The parent must never allow the child to know more about things and pages on the Internet than he himself. This issue is solved safely and efficiently by parental filters. Although social networks, such as Facebook®, are actually banned for minors, it's very often seen that even young children know how to make a profile and use it. That's something parents should pay attention to. Technical utilities (IT digital devices) are more and more accessible to children, and adults, unfortunately, are usually not aware of the problem. They are often unaware of what children are doing on various IT devices (what they say in messages, what they do with mobile phones, etc.) since they either lack time or do not want to disturb the privacy of their children. The consequence is that many parents feel insecure and helpless due to their own ignorance and inexperience in the field of computers, therefore they do not talk about it with their children. As a result they feel quite helpless because they do not know what to do (Graph 1).

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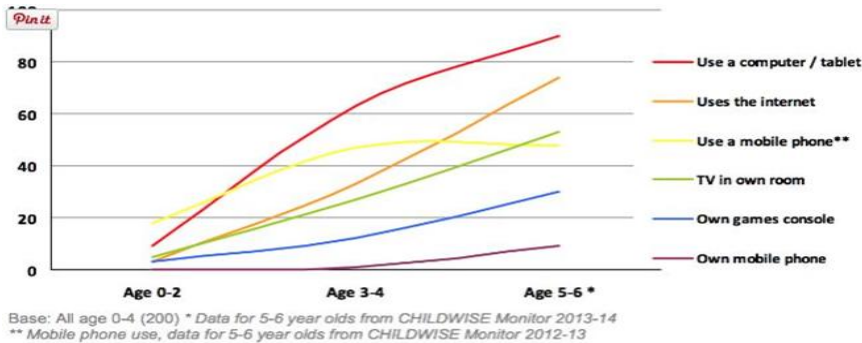
Graph 1

Due to ignorance, and more often unjustified pre-occupancy with work, many parents allow their children use IT devices too early (mobile phones, tablets, PC) in order to make them calmer and obedient. One major issue is that this is already happening to children who have not yet gone to preschool! Thereby, they do not think about possible consequences – they are making a mistake! (Hilčenko, 2008, 2011, 2012).

However, the major causes of the problems are time-uncontrolled intervals and inappropriate contents, which have been used/visited on these devices, which has unwanted impact on children's psycho-physical development such as: 1) wearing glasses at a very young age – these devices should be used from distance of 20-25 cm, at which, the eye is quickly accustomed, and dynamic accommodation of eye is developing slower at bigger distances – which causes reading problems; 2) due to long-term use of computer mouse, difficulties in learning to write occur later on – a child does not know to hold a pencil properly!; 3) obesity and poor posture cause spine problems, due to sitting for many hours. However, those are just some of the possible problems (Rajović, 2009).

According to recent research, every fourth child at pre-school age and more than half of the children at school age have at least one digital device. Attempting to limit time spent on the Internet in two-thirds of cases has caused a conflict between parents and children, while limiting the available content has caused a conflict in one-third of cases.

Conclusion

According to the recommendation of all experts, children under the age of two should not be given an IT device or Internet access. The boundary decrease every year. How can children be educated on the proper use of the Internet within the normal boundaries? Education should be all about the use of interesting applications that would spark creative work in children, etc. All tools are available,

only the parents themselves have to decide whether they will use them or not. Teachers, professors and other educators in IT career fields in various schools should also participate in the education of both children and parents within the curriculum and additional seminars.

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