

**DIGITAL ADDICTION ON TEENAGERS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THEIR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Monica TURTUREAN

Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava

monica.turturean@usm.ro

Abstract

For many families, smartphones, tablets and other devices are a normal part of everyday life. Children notice when adults are fascinated by their devices, they constantly check their email, write or read through them more than they interact with their children. Thus, the little ones end up feeling neglected and feel that they are fighting for the time and attention of their parents.

Given the fact that most adults are absorbed by the digital world, not having the energy to spend quality time with their children, those have only one chance: to follow the parental model and spend more and more time in the virtual reality.

Many families which are strongly absorbed by their own electronic devices during the meal not only cause their children to act to get the attention of their parents, but also respond harshly to the inappropriate behavior of the child.

This phenomenon is widespread and is becoming increasingly difficult to manage, For example, Deloitte research of 4,150 people reveals UK smartphone owners' device shows that:

-39% of respondents believe they use their phone too much. Of these, 83% would like to do something about it – representative of 14 million people in the UK;

-32% of phones in the UK are on a SIM-only contract, up from 19% in 2015;

-55-75-year-olds are among the fastest-growing adopters of voice-assisted speakers.

In this context, we intend to conduct a comparative study between parents and children to find out:

1. if these parents are aware of the negative implications of technology for their children;

2. if these children realize that they are dependent of electronic devices.

Keywords: addiction, electronic devices, parents-children relationship; future implications.

1. Digital addiction-a worldwide problem

We live in a world where each of us uses, more and more, electronic devices, which make our lives easier, help us to be competitive, high-performance, efficient, but, at the same time, we find that children allocate everything more time to these electronic devices, neglecting many aspects of daily life and, at the same time, developing various physical and mental problems.

1.1. Digital addiction-an international perspective

There are many medical studies that have analyzed the consequences of digital addiction, most of them affecting children in the short, medium and long term. We present some of these:

The journal Front Psychiatry published the article **Cell-Phone Addiction: A Review, oct. 2016**. The authors - José De-Sola Gutiérrez, Fernando Rodríguez de Fonseca and Gabriel Rubio discovered:

- young people under 20 are the ones who spend more time on mobile phones;
- children receive their first mobile phone at a younger age, and the younger they get, the more likely they are to abuse the phone in the future;
- **27%** of young people between **11 and 14 years old** admit that they do not turn off their cell phones, a behavior that increases with age, so that between **13 and 14 years old** one in three young people never turn off their phone.

A recent study by Deloitte shows that Americans collectively check their phones **9 billion times** a day;

- The average check of the phone is **47 times / day**, including during free time, while watching TV, when they are with friends or even at the table;
- Young people aged between **18 and 24** check their phone even more, up to **82 times / day**;
- Also, the time required to check their phones in the morning continues to decrease: **over 40%** of consumers check their phones within five minutes of waking up. First check chat or text messages (**35%**), followed by emails (**22%**);

- Once the day is over, over **30%** of consumers check their phones five minutes before going to bed and about **50%** in the middle of the night.

1.2. *Digital addiction-state of the art in Romania*

In **88%** of families with schoolchildren in Romania up to the 12th grade, there is at least one electronic device (desktop PC, laptop, tablet, mini-PC, 2 in 1 laptop, smartphone, iPod, Kindle).

- **61%** of children are using a computer.
- **81.5%** of schoolchildren use the computer only for games combined with movies, including XXX movies
- in Romania children **under 10 years old represent 22% of the visitors of pornographic sites; Children between 10-14 years 36% and those between 15-18 years, 42%;**
- the average electronic consumption in Romania of **children between 5-16 years old is around 5 and 7 hours a day**, and is growing from year to year (<https://www.scoala-familiei.ro/efectele-ecranelor-detoxifierea-digitala/>)

1.3. *Digital addiction-consequences*

Excessive consumption of digital media brings many disadvantages, such as:

- Brain volume decreases and areas of cortical lesions appear (dark spots on the brain which means that the neurons are dead)
- Decreases grades at school
- Children have problems with language, reading, memory, attention, logical-mathematical thinking, causal, impulse control because the left hemisphere is affected
- Children have trouble planning, organizing, completing homework on time, or motivating themselves in the long run because their prefrontal cortex is affected
- They have trouble sleeping, have a general state of irritation, anxiety, jump from one activity to another, are sometimes euphoric, sometimes depressed, tend to defy and offer unjustified resistance
- Their ability to interact socially decreases due to isolation, boys become shy and do not know how to behave with a girl and girls have unrealistic expectations of boys because of soap operas

- They can become addicted to computer games, porn movies, Facebook or TV (<https://www.scoala-familiei.ro/efectele-ecranelor-detoxifierea-digitala/>)

2. Comparative study regarding using electronically devices in Romania

2.1. Purpose and objectives

The **purpose** of this study is to identify the perception / opinion of 4th grade students and their parents regarding the effects of electronically devices in children 'life (but not only)

The objectives of the study:

- to identify the parents and the children opinion regarding electronical devices;
- to find out situations in which spending too much on the phone or PC can really harm
- to discover if the electronically devices improves or not the child' life;
- To find out how many hours children and their parents spent on a phone or a laptop

Hypothesis:

1. The children are using too much time electronical devices because their parents are using them too;
2. The parents don't realize that these electronical devices are harmful for the children's life and for them too;

2.2. Participants

The sampling survey was applied to a non-probability sampling group. The students were selected randomly from a group present to a conference:

- 4th grade students: 36
- parents: 36

2.3. Instrument

We used a sampling survey with predefined answers that allowed participants to complete it more easily and not feel pressured because they do not know how to answer various questions.

Procedure

The statistical method used is identifying 4th grade students and parents' opinion about the electronic devices.

The study is based on the data yielded following a sampling survey which investigates the opinion of students and parents about the electronically devices

The investigative technique used was the auto-questionnaire survey consisting in 6 questions administered in group.

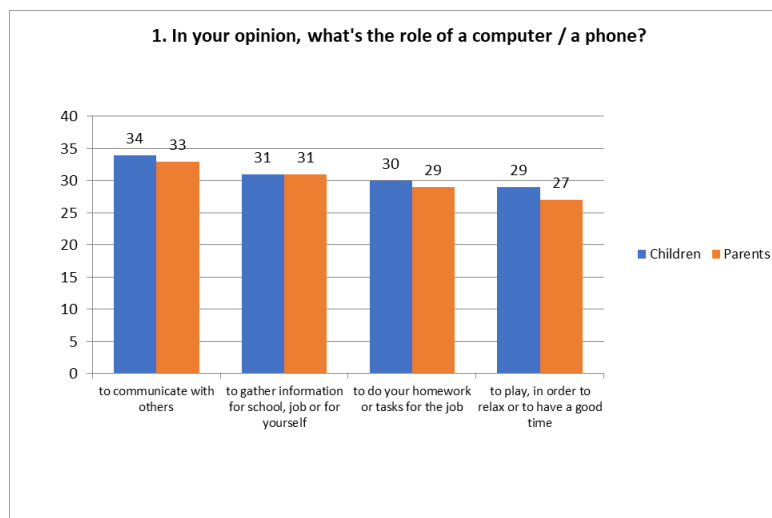
2.4. Data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science Program (SPSS) was used to summarize and run correlation on data obtained from the survey. Frequency distribution used to mention demographics of the children and parents. Correlation technique was utilized to discuss relationship between children, parents and their need of using electronically devices.

The favored surveying technique was the individual filling in of the questionnaire in a group. (Rotariu T., Iluț P, 1997, p. 54). This surveying technique was chosen because it is the easiest and the less expensive.

3. Results

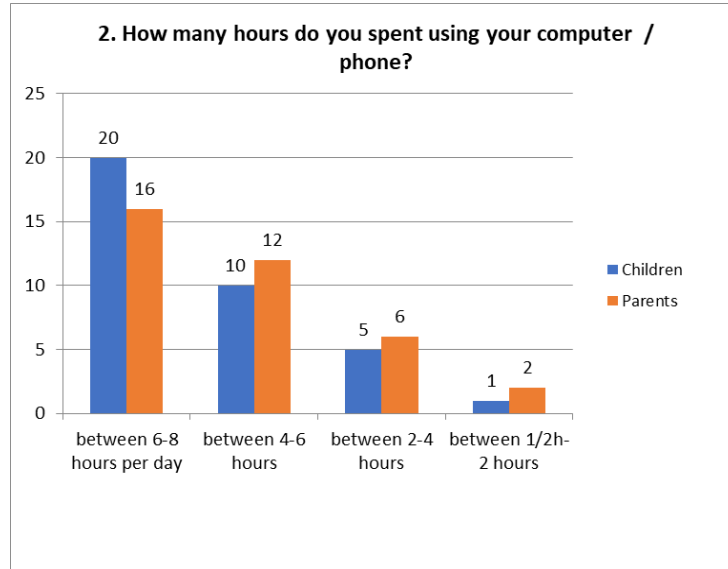
Figure 1: the structure of answers at question Q1



As we can see, 34 children (94% of students) and 33 parents (91% of parents) consider that the main role of a computer or a phone is: to communicate with others; instead, 31 students (86%)

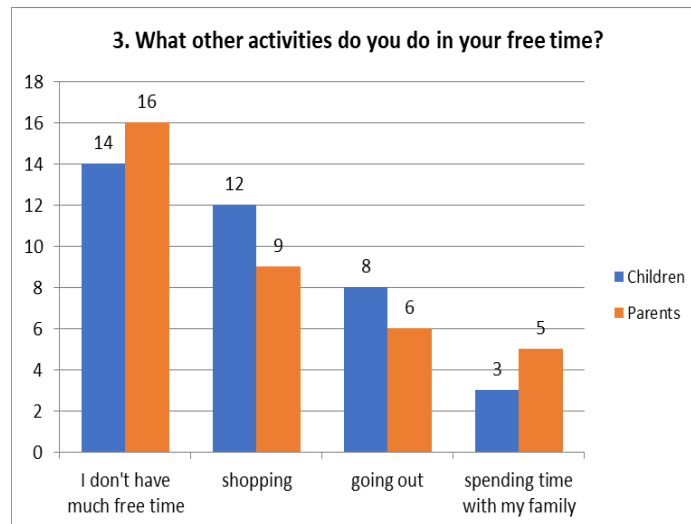
and 31 parents (86%) put on the second place the role of gathering information for school and for job. There are no differences between students and parents regarding the same subject.

Figure 2: the structure of answers at question Q2



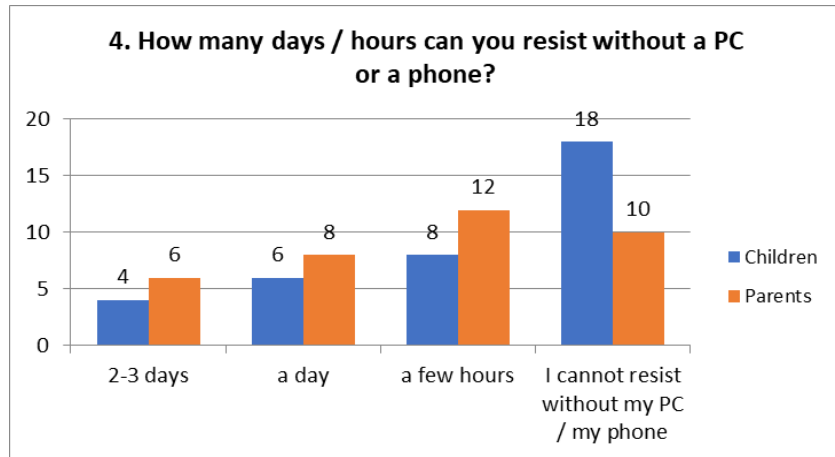
Looking on the numbers, we can see that 55 % from parents (20 parents) consider that they spend between 6-8 hours per day, using a computer, 44% from students (16 students) consider that they spend the same number of hours. If we look closely, we can see that 88% of parents and 77% of students spend more than 4 hours per day, using a computer, which is a big number.

Figure 3: the structure of answers at question Q3



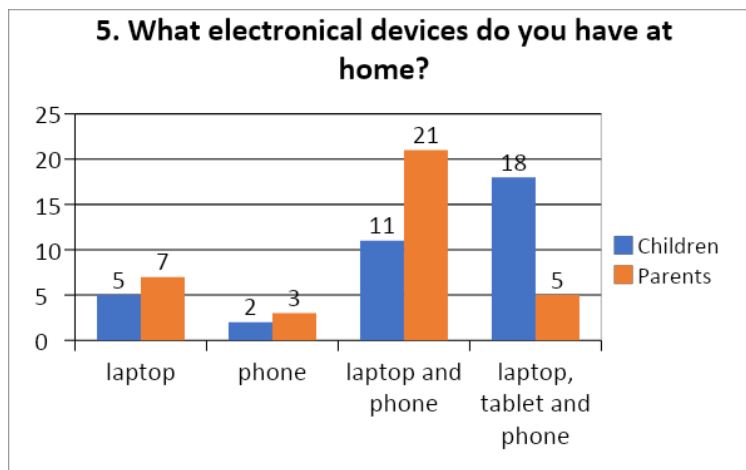
It is important to notice that, according to this questionnaire, 38% of the children (14 students) and 44 % of the parents (16 parents) declare that they don't have free time, but, more serious is that 33% of students (12 students) and 25% of parents (9 parents) prefer to do shopping in the free time and only 8% (3 students) and 13.8% of parents prefer to spend time with their families.

Figure 4: the structure of answers at question Q4



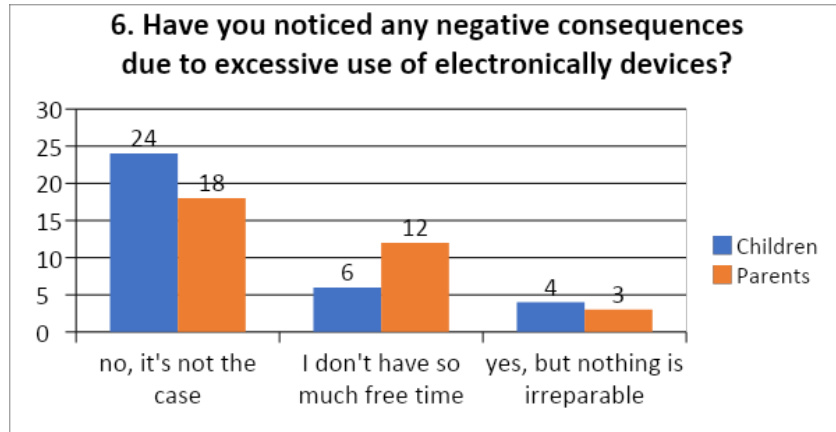
It is interesting to see that 50% of students (18 students) and 27.7 % of parents (10 parents) cannot resist at all, without a PC or a phone, not even a few hours and only 11% (4 students) and 16.6% of parents (6 parents) resist 2-3 days without an electrical device.

Figure 5: the structure of answers at question Q5



Looking on the figure 5, we can see that 50% of the students (18 students) have laptop, tablet and phone, comparing with parents which only 13.8% of them (5 parents) have these three electronical devices, so, there are significant differences regarding this topic.

Figure 6: the structure of answers at question Q6



It is quite interesting to see that 66% of students (24 students) and 50% of parents (18 parents) consider that they didn't notice any negative consequences due to excessive use of electronically devices.

4. Validation of the hypothesis

The first hypothesis „The children are using too much time electronical devices because their parents are using them too;” was validated by the answers offered by children and their parents to the item 2 (more than 88 % of 4th grade students spent between 4 and 8 hours per day on a laptop of phone and more than 77% of their parents spent between 4 and 8 hours per day on a laptop of phone).

The second hypothesis “The parents don't realize that these electronical devices are harmful for the children's life and for them too” was validated by the answers offered by children and their parents to the item 6 (more than 88 % of 4th grade students consider that these devices are harmful and more than 83 % of their parents considers the same thing.

5. The main limit of the study

Sample consists only of 4th grade students and their parents from Iasi County, so these results cannot be extended to the entire population of Romanian population. There will be no pre-testing the subjects, which means that we cannot obtain the accuracy of the results; There is no control group.

Discussions

Taking into account the frequencies of the sample' answers, we notice that both parts (parents and students) considers that the electronical devices are extremely important for them, because the main role is to communicate and, maybe this is why they have so many devices and this is why they cannot resist to much time without them.

It is sad to see that the same patern is present not only on the students, but on the parents too because they spend a lot of time in the front of a cumputer, without living their life, in tru true sens of it.

So, it is very important to make some sugesstions:

- The parents must spend more time with their children, in order to have a healty relationship and to live a normal life
- the parents must consult a psychologist in order to solve their problem and their children too: digital addiction.

References

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