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EXPERIENCES WITH AND RISKS OF INTERNET USE AMONG CHILDREN IN KOSOVO

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Abstract/Izvleček

This paper aims to explore the use of, experiences with, and risks of internet among children in Kosovo. This country has never been involved in the European project called Kids Online. Through a survey based on the Kids Online questionnaire, 437 children aged 11-16 were surveyed in 34 schools across the country. The results show that over 90% of children of this age stay online from one to six hours; YouTube and Instagram are the most preferred platforms; over 90% of them own smartphones. Conversely, many parents have admitted to being less knowledgeable about technology than their children. Parental mediation and schooling remain important, and the paper recommends the introduction of Media Literacy as a separate subject in pre-university education in Kosovo.

Raba spleta, spletne izkušnje in tveganja otrok s Kosova Članek preučuje rabo spleta, spletne izkušnje in s tem povezana tveganja otrok s Kosova. Gre za državo, ki ni bila vključena v evropski projekt Kids Online, zato smo v raziskavi izvedli anketo na temelju vprašalnika Kids Online. V raziskavi je sodelovalo 437 otrok, starih od 11 do 16 let, iz 34 kosovskih šol. Rezultati kažejo, da več kot 90 odstotkov otrok te starosti na spletu preživi dnevno od ene ure do šest ur, med najbolj priljubljenimi spletnimi okolji pa sta YouTube in Instagram. Iz rezultatov raziskave tudi razberemo, da ima preko 90 odstotkov otrok v lasti pametni telefon. Pomemben rezultat je tudi, da so številni starši priznali, da imajo manj znanja o tehnologiji kot njihovi otroci. Avtorji poudarjajo pomen starševske mediacije in izobraževanja na tem področju ter predlagajo uvedbo posebnega predmeta o medijski pismenosti na preduniverzitetni ravni na Kosovem.

Keywords:
children, adolescents, internet use, social media, cyberbullying

Ključne besede:
otroci, najstniki, raba interneta, družbeni mediji, spletno ustrahovanje

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Introduction

The ever-increasing use of new technologies and the internet by children has transformed their social lives compared to previous decades. Today the internet, the virtual life, constantly influences our communication, while influencing and promoting innovation and education. Today, the internet and social networks are a space of endless freedom of action, where young people communicate, make friends, and create online identities through them. According to Couldry (2012), the internet is a steady institutional space of interaction and storage of information, of showing and being shown, and that has made time and space as one. This implies that the internet is a place that exposes members of society, while social media has reached its highest peak. The importance of the internet for work, education, community, public policy, family life and social relationships raises new questions for researchers, policymakers, and the public, and especially for young people, who are the biggest users of these technologies.

Current studies in European countries, especially those by Kids Online, have shown that in recent years there has been an increase in internet use by children aged 9 to 16 years. Since 2006, the EU Kids Online Network has been a focal point for new research findings on children using the internet and online technologies (Ólafsson, Livingstone and Haddon, 2014). "EU Kids Online is a multinational research network. It seeks to enhance the knowledge of European children's online opportunities, risks and safety" (Smahel et al., 2020). Between 2006 and 2014, the network was funded by the European Commission. Subsequently, the members of the network decided to continue their cooperation and develop new collaborative projects, such as that of 2019 in the framework of Horizon 2020. In the years 2020 to 2022, this project would conceive, implement and disseminate a comprehensive knowledge base on the impact of technological transformation on children and young people (Smahel et al., 2020). These projects are the main source of high quality, independent and comprehensive evidence supporting a better and safer internet for children in Europe (Ponte, 2019).

However, when this project started, it included the year 2006, and at that time the internet was generally done through quite expensive landline connections through computers; a division was made between the unreal (virtual) life for internet communication and real life for offline communication, and social networks were still in their early stages (Livingstone, Mascheroni and Staksrud, 2015).

These studies show that in addition to increasing internet use by children and adolescents, parents are proving ineffective in exercising parental control when it comes to the presence of abuse and pornographic products on the internet. About 15% of households in 25 European countries are considered "incapable families" when it comes to exercising the necessary control over their children against harmful online phenomena (Hasebrink and Hasebrink, 2013). Parents are not always a source of support. Nowadays the results show that parents do not often use restrictive mediation; only some children are forbidden to use webcams, download content, or surf social networking sites (Smahel et al., 2020).

Recently, Kids Online emphasized the value of systematic research-based documentation and laid out the role that the internet, mobile phones, and computer games play in children's lives (Smahel et al., 2020). Kids Online 2020 states that watching videos, listening to music, communicating with friends and family, visiting a social networking site, and playing online games top the list of activities that children do every day, while smartphones are their favourite tool to "access the internet" (Smahel et al., 2020).

However, what is the situation in Kosovo? While there are no studies on the level of social network use in Kosovo, some reliable sources (alexa.com) do confirm that in Kosovo there is wider use of social networks compared to other European countries. For these reasons, the main purpose of this paper is to identify the time children spend online, their experiences and risks, and to make some comparisons between the main findings of this study and those of studies conducted with children in other European countries.

Literature Review

Internet use and experiences

Recently, new technologies and the internet have been offered as an opportunity for a child to have fun, spend time, socialize, or even to gather information. Based on the perspectives of identity, purpose and relationship with others, young people use the internet to create and increase their communication links; they also use it to pass considerable amounts of time and to expend their energy (Livingstone, 2010, p. 156). It often happens that their identity encounters different identities from around the globe. "Meanwhile, of course, the media play a crucial role in these changing relationships between the global and the local.

Young people are now growing up with significantly greater access to globalized media…" (Buckingham, Bragg and Kehily, 2014, pp. 8-9).

However, the use of global resources to deal with local matters (Wise, 2008, p. 63) shows that people in society, especially children, given the cultural context, do not interpret the messages on the internet in the same way as others do, nor do they make the same selection of online information and communication. Instagram seems to be simultaneously a useful platform for personal communication (e.g., breastfeeding or maternity documentation) and a space where users can document and share new let us say breastfeeding information that goes beyond the private moment of breastfeeding a newborn (Locatelli, 2017). This social network of photographs is often used for autobiographical purposes (Fallon, 2014), for digital self-portrayal (Shah and Tewari, 2016), but also for aesthetic visual communication (Manovich, 2016). "Individuals who publish self-portraits on social media networks such as Instagram (usually) do not have to fulfil commercial targets" (Veum and Moland Undrum, 2018, p. 100). "Selfying" (selfie-taking) is a form of communication that creates a social construction of the self (Gergen, 2011; Stochetti, 2020). For teenagers today, photos on Instagram and Facebook are the main tool for creating their identities on social networks (Pavlin, Dumančić and Sužnjević, 2020).

The growing interest in these studies and reports signifies that researchers believe that before children are exposed to the internet, they must learn how to use it, just as they learned to read and write, which also served as a prerequisite in the past for learning other things (Livingstone, 2010). Sonia Livingstone of LSE conducted the largest study undertaken in Europe, titled EU Kids Online since 2006, financed by the European Commission. According to this study, in the 27 European countries, 84% of children aged 11 to14 who were included in this study, use the internet (Livingstone and Haddon, 2009). In 2005, 70% of 6- to 17-year-olds in the 25 European countries used the internet. By 2008, this percentage increased to 75%, on average, although there was little or no increase in use among teenagers. The most striking increase has been among younger children: by 2008, 60% of 6- to10-year-olds were online users (Livingstone and Haddon, 2009, p. 20).

Nowadays, the number of internet users is enormous, considering that internet access now happens by smartphone. Recent studies in 19 European countries (Smahel et al., 2020) show that over 80% of children aged 9 to 16 use a smartphone to connect to the Internet at least once a day.

"The EU Kids Online survey 2010 demonstrated that the percentage of children using a phone or smartphone to access the internet in all comparable countries has increased substantially, rising from 31% to 86% in Norway and from 2% to 86% in Romania" (Smahel et al., 2020, p. 18).

Online risks

So far, internet risks have been conceived within the framework of media and technological innovation (Staksrud, 2013). They are generally considered a heterogeneous set of intentional and unintentional experiences that include coping with pornographic, violent, racist, or hateful online content, hate speech, cyber-bullying, and so on (Staksrud and Livingstone, 2009). Meanwhile, Hasebrink, Livingstone and Haddon (2008) in their classification for online risks to children, identify the following categories of risk: a. commercial (advertising, spam, harvesting personal info); b. aggressive (violent, being bullied, bullying, or harassing another); c. sexual (pornographic or sexual content, meeting strangers, creating and uploading porn material); d. Values (racism, biased or misleading information, self-harm).

These risks are mainly related to the communications that children make online, but later they may also face them physically in everyday life. Hate speech from school meetings has now spread online and is becoming more widespread through social media. "Online risky content is interwoven into a youthful peer culture of sharing and daring as links are passed from child to child, discussed ritualistically the following day, and used in social judgments about group belonging or exclusion" (Livingstone et al., 2014). Seeing pornography online is the second most common risk, with around 4 in 10 teenagers across Europe. This risk is widely regarded with ambivalence by both adults and children, with considerable disagreement over the potential harm involved (Livingstone and Haddon, 2009, p. 20).

Bullying is another risk. Bullying has moved from school or face-to-face to online communications. Olweus (1978) defined bullying as when a boy or girl is repeatedly and over a period of time exposed to intentional aggressive actions by one or more others who have more power than the victim. Furthermore, bullying is direct or indirect aggressive behaviour by one child against another child who is unable to defend himself effectively (McWilliams et al., 2014). Today we need to understand more about bullying from the perspective of the victim, what the victim considers bullying. DeLara (2016) estimates that, "the definition of bullying is important for its cessation and reduction" (p. 4).

For this reason, she addresses the victims to explain what they consider 'bullying', i.e., what bothers or annoys them. "When I have investigated this phenomenon with children and adolescents, they say bullying is 'anytime someone is mean to you"' (DeLara, 2016, p. 40). This means that the bully does not have to be stronger than the victim, or that bullying must be constant; meanwhile, sexual harassment is when someone starts a rumour about you; when someone follows you; when someone touches you' (DeLara, 2016, p. 5).

Moreover, cyber-bullying is a new tool, having appeared in the last decade, especially because of the widespread use of social networks. For this reason, the concerns of researchers, parents, and educators about the dangers to children from online bullying have increased (Navarro et al., 2013). Cyber-bullying occurs when a person uses IT to embarrass, harass, intimidate, threaten, or cause harm to individuals targeted for such abuse (McQuade, Colt and Meyer, 2009, p. 2). Cyber-bullying means, "any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicate hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others" (Tokunaga 2010, p. 278). Unlike bullying at school, bullying online is more widespread. In school bullying, the public can be a limited group of children; on the internet this group can be bigger, harder to avoid, and the bullying can happen at any time; the bullying message can also be easily spread compared to bullying in school. The increase in cases of disclosure of personal information also increases risks on the internet such as cyber-bullying (Livingstone and Brake, 2009). Online bullying studies identify a wide range of victimization statistics, ranging from a minimum of 5% bullying to over 70% of all children and adolescents spending time on any form of social media (DeLara, 2016, p. 3).

Parental control

Understanding the role that the media and the internet play in the development of children as individuals means understanding the internal relationships in the child's family and the management of daily life (Paus-Hasebrink, Kulterer and Sinner, 2019). Here, the role of parents is fundamental, as they are the first mediators; it is with them that children usually have their first digital experiences, and children regard them as examples, tending to replicate their practices and preferences (Kucirkova and Sakr, 2015). The role of parents should be included here.

The relationship between the children and others who look after them has changed lately.

However, what has really changed between the childhoods of today's parents or grandparents and those of children growing up now? What aspects of change or continuity really matter, and over what timescale should changes be gauged? (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016, p. 20). In terms of risks, parents have different perceptions of the dangers to children staying online. Only the media that reports on the dangers of children exposed to the internet increases the level of sensitivity. In countries where the press expresses considerable concern about the risks of online content, there will be more parental concern about these issues compared to countries where that type of reporting is scarce (Hasebrink, Olafsson and Stetka, 2010).

The notion of parental mediation indicates the varied practices that parents adopt to manage and regulate their children's engagement with the media (Mascheroni, Ponte and Jorge, 2018), whereas mediation means the management of the relation between child and media (Livingstone and Helsper, 2008, p. 581). Parental mediation can be done actively, by talking to children about how to use the internet, what activities the internet contains, what are the pros and cons of the internet and through technical monitoring, i.e., through parental control software (Smahel et al., 2020). Active mediation of internet use consists mainly of discussions with children regarding the use of the internet and its content; both parents do it, although mothers play a greater role in this mediation (Duek and Moguillansky, 2020). However, nowadays, the role of parental control software has declined because children are increasingly proving to be better acquainted with new technologies than their parents are.

Research methodology

The aim and the method used

This study aimed to identify how much time Kosovo children and adolescents spend online, the products they consume and their online experiences, as well as the role of parents in educating children to save time and prevent risks.

The study focuses on these three main research questions:

- RQ1: How long do children aged 11 to16 stay online and what do they consume?

- RQ2: What are their experiences with and risks from consuming products online?
- RQ3: What is the role of parental control?
- What are the main differences and similarities among Kosovar children and those of other European countries in terms of access, consumption, and online experiences?

Quantitative studies on internet use try to measure how often children access the internet and how much time they spend on digital activities (Livingstone et al., 2011). This survey was conducted in 34 schools, of which 32 were public schools, and the other two schools were the largest private schools in Kosovo (The British School of Kosovo and MAC); the survey was conducted following the proportion of attendance by Kosovo pupils in the public and private pre-university sector. The questionnaire used in this study is the one used in studies by Kids Online (by Livingstone et al. 2011), translated into Albanian by the research team, but slightly shortened, removing from this questionnaire some questions that were not relevant to this study.

Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was distributed during 2019 to schools in Kosovo's major cities by an extended team of AAB College researchers, with prior permission from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST). Less than half the questionnaire samples were distributed in rural schools to maintain the ratio of urban and rural population in Kosovo. The questionnaire was distributed to all pupils in the classrooms during the lessons, and the research team waited until the pupils had completed it. A total of 437 pupils aged 11 to 16 were included in the survey with completed questionnaires, of which 240 (55%) were female and 197 (45%) were male.

Table 1: Pupils who completed the questionnaire based on their age n = 437)

Age	11	12	13	14	15	16
Number of students	49	111	73	71	57	76

After each pupil completed the questionnaire, about 20 percent of them received questionnaire forms for parents, also standardised by Kids Online, (by Livingstone et al. 2011); however, the team received only 68 parent-completed responses.

Given that there have been no studies of this nature in Kosovo, some of the main findings on the risk and use categories will be compared (Hasebrink et al. 2009; Livingstone and Helsper, 2013) with some of the core findings about the situation in European countries from the EU Kids Online research project published in 2020 by Smahel et al., based on findings from surveys conducted in 19 European countries and focusing on internet users aged 9 to17, with a total of 25,101 participants.
The findings presented in this paper are from the core questions only.

Research limitations
The following issues can be considered as research limitations:
- lack of previous studies on this topic in Kosovo;
- lack of previous measurements of internet use by children in Kosovo;
- exclusion of Kosovo from previous studies by the European project Kids Online;
- data are reported by pupils aged 11 to16, who may have errors or bias due to social desirability;
- in the collection of family data, parents returned a limited number of completed questionnaires

Findings

Internet use
About 97% of Kosovar children use the internet for 1 to 6 hours per day. There are some users within this interval who are online less than 1 hour per day; this group makes up about 20%, while about 20% are major users, i.e., those who are online 5 to 6 hours per day. In other words, about 30% of children at this age are online 2 to 4 hours per day, as can be seen in the table below.
Mobile phones are the most frequently used technology compared to all other technologies, such as computer, laptop, or tablet / iPod in children of this age group. Ninety-three percent of Kosovo children and adolescents own a smartphone. Additionally, 89.2 % of respondents said they connected to the internet from home, via Wi-Fi or 3-4G smartphone.

Table 2: Time spent online on a normal school day and during the weekend

Use of the internet	On a normal school day %	During the weekend %	Average during the week %
Less than an hour per day	28.7	12.7%	20.7
An hour or more, but less than 2 hours per day	14.3%	20.9%	17.6
Two hours or more, but less than 3 hours per day	12.3%	19.9%	16.1
Three hours or more, but less than 4 hours per day	15.4%	12.1%	13.75
Four hours or more, but less than 5 hours per day	7.9%	10.7%	9.3
Five hours or more, but less than 6 hours per day	17.9%	21.8%	19.85
None at all	3.5%	1.9%	2.7

Source: own elaboration.

They also connect to the internet via laptop (71.1%), tablet or iPod (43.7%), family computer (33.3%) and family laptop (26.1%).

Table 3: Connecting to the internet via different technologies

Having a smartphone and internet connection	%
I have a smartphone	93
I connect to the internet via smartphone, Wi-Fi or 4G	89.2
I connect to the internet via laptop	71.1
I connect to the internet via tablet or iPad	43.7
I connect to the internet from the family computer	33.3

Source: own elaboration.

Online entertainment is the most frequently used category for the 11 to 16 age group of Kosovar children and adolescents (Table 4). Ninety-two percent of respondents said they used the internet to watch video clips and listen to music from YouTube. Then they use it for homework (85.1%) and immediately after that comes the use of Instagram with 83.7%; Instagram is the most frequently used social media, while Facebook has only 35.3% usage. This age group is also obsessed with movies, which they watch online: 78.2% state that they download movies from the internet.

About 80% of children and adolescents aged 11-16 have a profile on social media: Instagram, Facebook, or other social media. The table below shows that younger ages are less present on social networks, versus older ones. 66% of 11-year-olds and 89% of 15- and 16-year-olds said they have a profile on social media.

Table 4: The frequency distribution for the online platforms used

Use the internet for:	Every day or almost every day %	1-2 times per week %	More than twice per week %	Total %
School work	36.1	42.2	6.8	85.1
Watching video clips (Music in YouTube)	67.4	15.2	9.4	92
Downloading films	21.9	43.6	12.7	78.2
Reading something on the internet	26.5	24.1	18.5	69.1
Facebook	13.4	14.6	7.3	35.3
Instagram	69.6	6.5	7.6	83.7

Source: own elaboration.

Table 5: Profiles in social media by age

Profiles on Facebook, Instagram, or any other social media		
Age	**Have a profile %**	**Don't have a profile %**
11	66.3	33.7
12	71.1	28.9
13	82.2	17.8
14	81.7	18.3
15	89.3	10.7
16	88.8	11.2
Average	79.9	20.10%

Source: own elaboration.

Girls are more present than boys on Instagram, while boys are more present on Facebook. About 48% of girls have an Instagram profile, while 36.5% of boys have such a profile (Table 6). On Facebook, 28.3% of boys say they have a profile, while 19.1% of girls use that platform. Twelve percent of each gender have more than one profile on Instagram, and about 10% have profiles on other social networks as well.

Table 6: Having profiles on social media, Facebook, and Twitter, by gender

Social network profiles	Male %	Female %	Average %
A Facebook profile	28.3	19.1	23.7
More than one Facebook profile	3.2	2.7	2.95
An Instagram profile	36.5	47.9	42.2
More than one Instagram profile	13.2	10.8	12
I also have a profile on another social media	9.1	11.3	10.2
I prefer not to say	9.7	8.2	8.95

Source: own elaboration.

Some children and adolescents find it easier to be themselves online than offline. For example, 22.7% reported finding it easier to talk about things online about which they would not otherwise talk face-to- face. Internet communication often facilitates the individual more in such communication compared to face-to-face conversation. About 35% said they talked about private things from their daily lives more freely online than they could in direct contact. However, 38 % do not have this confidence in online chats and prefer private, face-to-face conversations, as can be seen in the table below.

Table 7: Online and offline freedom of speech

Online identity and speech	**%**
I find it easier to be myself online	27.2
On the internet I talk about private things that I do not share with anyone in everyday life	34.8
On the internet I do not talk about the same things as in everyday life with people face to face	38.0

Source: own elaboration.

The risks online

Online bullying is similar to offline bullying when children leave a friend out of the group, without involving him or her in a game or activity, or even when texting or distributing denigrating messages to an individual. About 25% of respondents stated that during the last 12 months someone had acted in a harmful or insulting way on the internet. These actions include sending or distributing offensive messages in the form of words, photos, or videos. About 6% stated that they were kept online without being involved in group activities; online threats were received in about 3% of cases, regardless of gender.

There are no differences between boys and girls, except that girls are more reluctant to admit exactly what happened to them online. About 28 percent of them said that something unpleasant happened to them online, without specifying what, while only 18% of boys failed to specify what had happened to them online

Table 8: Cyberbullying categorised by gender

Cyberbullying during the last 12 months	**Male %**	**Female %**	**Total %**
They sent me offensive or harmful messages on the internet (words, pictures, or videos)	25.88	23.75	24.82
Offensive or harmful messages have been spread about me on the internet (words, pictures, videos)	5.58	6.25	5.92
I was left out during a group activity online	5.58	6.66	6.12
I was threatened online	3.08	2.96	3.02
Other offensive or harmful things	10.15	9.58	9.86
Something else	17.76	27.9	22.83
I prefer not to say	31.97	22.9	27.43

Source: own elaboration.

Several respondents in this age group (11-16 years old) are considered daily consumers of online sexual content. Over 20% of this age group consume online products with sexual content every week, such as photos, drawings, or videos with sexual images. Of these, 7.8% said they viewed these images every day or almost every day, and 13.7% saw them once or twice a week. Nevertheless, almost half this age group are reluctant to give an answer to these questions. About 47% stated that they preferred not to respond to whether they watched sexually explicit media products online. The internet is also used for making new acquaintances, followed by face-to-face meetings. In fact, 19.2% did meet someone face-to-face after meeting them online (Table 9). Most such meetings did not go well. Twenty-two percent of children and adolescents admitted that the person they met face-to-face said things that hurt them; 2.1% admitted that "the person I met face-to-face, whom I had known from online communications, abused me sexually". 1.8% of these face-to-face meetings with the people they had met online resulted in physical injuries.

Table 9: Online sexual content consumption and the risks of meeting face-to-face after online acquaintance

Online acquaintance and risks *Source: own elaboration.*		**%**
Consumption of online sexual content	Every day or almost every day	7.8
	Once or twice a week	13.7
	Once or twice a month	7.6
	Rarely	23.1
	I prefer not to say	47.6
After online acquaintance and offline meeting	After online acquaintance, I meet that person face to face	19.2
	The person I met said things that hurt me	22.2
	The person I met sexually abused me	2.1
	The person I met hurt me physically	1.8
	Nothing bad	73.9
	After this meeting, I talked to my parents or friends about this negative experience	29

Parental control and mediation

Generally, the age group of 11- to 16-year-olds proves more capable than their parents in terms of information technology, Wi-Fi or fixing any mishap on cell phones. Thus, 46.5% of respondents said they know more about technology than their parents did. About 25% of students this age said their parents would ask them for help with technology, that they knew more than their parents about technology, compared to 28.6% who said they were less prepared in this area and sought help from their parents.

Table 10: Who is more proficient in using technology, children, or parents?

Parents' and children's perspectives on technology problems		**%**
Children's perspective on technology problems (internet, phone, Wi-Fi, software)	I know more than my parents	46. 5
	My parents ask me for help	25.2
	I ask my parents for help	28.3
Parents' perspective on technology problems (internet, telephone, Wi-Fi, software)	Kids know more than I do	36.2
	The children ask me for help	31.4
	I cannot limit the use of software and often seek help from children	32.4

Source: own elaboration.

On the other hand, 36 percent of parents admit that their children are more capable in online technology because they ask for help from their children oftener than vice versa, and 32.4 say that they are not capable of undertaking software measures to restrict the child navigating pages with age-harmful content.

Discussion and conclusions

Pupils in Kosovo use the internet to communicate, listen to music, watch videos, play fun games, read, or find school materials, post pictures, and expand their social circles. More specifically, 97 percent of them use the internet for 1 to 6 hours per day. Comparing some of the main results with those from other European countries from the Kids Online project of Smahel et al. (2020), one can clearly see a marked similarity of the results from Kosovo with those of other European countries.

Kosovar children spend most of their time listening to music on YouTube (92%), doing homework or searching for school materials (85%) and using Instagram (83.7%). About 89% of children connect to the internet via a smartphone, while the European average is 80%, 70% in Switzerland and Slovakia and 89% in Slovakia and Lithuania (Smahel et al., 2020). Posting photos and creating an online identity, as some of them (27%) stated, make it easier to express themselves online than in real life, a finding which is within the average of other European countries and ranges from 19% in Poland up to 38% in Romania and Lithuania (Smahel et al., 2020). For them, online identity is more manageable and more easily improved. Nevertheless, this also adds to the digital stress of adolescents (Weinstein and Selman, 2016).

The risks mentioned below are similar to those of children from other European countries. The results show that about 4 percent of child and adolescent respondents in Kosovo say they are daily consumers of online sex photos and videos. Meanwhile, 21.5% of respondents aged 11 to 16 in Kosovo, have admitted that during the last year, every week or more often, they have seen online images with sexual content. This percentage is the same as some other EU countries, such as France (21%), but half the figure from Serbia (50%); 18.5% have exchanged messages with sexual content online, which is also in line with the average of European countries, but which within countries varies from 8% to 39% (Smahel et al., 2020).

In 2019, at the time the survey was conducted, about 19% of children in Kosovo said that they had physically met the person from the online friendship. In EU countries in 2009, it was an average of 9% in most European countries, or about 20% in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Sweden (Staksrud and Livingstone, 2009), while in the 2019 survey, the European average was around 17% (Smahel et al., 2020). From these offline meetings with online acquaintances, 22% of Kosovar pupils were offended and emotionally hurt. Twenty-nine percent of youngsters have talked to their parents or friends about this negative experience while the "number of children who reported that they told no one about their negative experiences ranges between 4% (France) and 30% (Estonia)" (Smahel et al., 2020).

Parental mediation is also necessary because the phenomenon is disturbing: about 25% of respondent pupils are being disturbed online. However, mediation is often also related to the socio-economic status of the family, parenting styles and family composition. The educational and professional level of parents is directly related to the digital consumer culture that the child has and their critical thinking while on technological aids (Jiménez-Morales et al. 2020).

In Kosovo, one specific social trait is the large, traditional family, comprising three generations, where the middle generation includes two or three brothers with their children, who live in one rural household. The results show that in such large families, parental mediation is weaker, as children share experiences with their cousins living in the same house. The challenge is greater in developing countries, especially among rural households, where parents have less knowledge than their children about adopting and using technology, while children are more likely to teach their parents how to use technology and the internet (Correa, 2014). Therefore, active mediation is more beneficial when "talking with children about their internet use, sharing online activities, and explaining what is good and bad on the internet" (Smahel et al., 2020, p. 106).

In addition to parental mediation, the teacher and the school play important roles, too. "When teachers are addressing the fostering of competences established in a media literacy curriculum, they are likely to mediate their students' media use" (Berger, 2020, p. 53). However, it goes beyond that. The role of the teacher is also related to a study course that should be part of the curriculum, such as *Media Literacy*, which in Kosovo does not exist separately in pre-university education. Mendoza (2009) estimates that parental mediation and media literacy have so far acted separately and therefore suggests that better liaison with and interaction between parents as media educators for children, and media education would be more effective. In other words, the fact that the internet has already become a prominent daily occurrence for children should not be questioned. Similarly, one should not count much on the ability of parents to exert parental control. Children are now more tech savvy than their parents. Most parents have admitted that when they have problems with technology, they ask their children for help. Being in this situation, one should no longer insist on the possibility of parental control but must pass from risk avoidance to risk management.

Finally, Kosovo does not differ from some EU countries (i.e., Bulgaria and Romania) in terms of internet penetration, nor does it show any contrast regarding social status and cultural context with other Balkan countries; therefore, the results are generally congruent with the variations within EU countries.

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