Use of technology in childhood and its impact on interpersonal relationships

Uso de la tecnología en la niñez y su impacto en las relaciones interpersonales

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Abstract

Resumen

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Introduction

Many of the scenarios of the reality in which we live would probably be diametrically different if information and communication technologies had not burst onto the international agenda in such a substantive way at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century (Cobo, 2009).

Claros (2013), analyses and argues the impact of the first mobile devices on the market, which he refers to as the parents of the digital devices that are currently known, i.e. the laptop and the mobile phone, which at the time were objects of study on the economic and social impact of technology on society.

Fombona, Pascual, and Madeira (2012) interpret the rapid evolution of computer technologies that goes hand in hand with the universalisation of their use, and the case of mobile devices, which were incorporated into the lives of citizens as an indispensable tool in all daily activities, is noteworthy. Malave and Beauperthuy (2011), analysed that years ago, the world welcomed mobile phones as an innovative medium that appeared to improve communications between human beings. For Speckman (2008), one of the most important functions that characterises a mobile device is connectivity and interactions with data networks, such as the internet, which has become a fundamental element for communications.

Aguaded (2011), studied in detail the use and valuation of screens among children and adolescents aged 6 to 18, as well as their impact on the family and school environment. The diagnosis was carried out by means of an online questionnaire that students answered from their own school computers, previously assigned a code to be identified, for which there are two different questionnaires adapted according to age ranges: from 6 to 9 years and from 10 to 18 years, the survey is anonymous and its content is previously reviewed by educators.

According to Zayas (2010), interpersonal communication is known as face-to-face conversation and some authors define interpersonal communication as: "An interaction that involves verbal and non-verbal information exchange between two or more participants in a face-to-face context".

Man has always had the need to communicate with others, to express thoughts, ideas, emotions, to investigate, to know, to obtain information created, expressed and transmitted by others. The creation, search and obtaining of information are essential actions inherent to human nature, culture being the macro phenomenon par excellence of the socialisation of knowledge (Cornejo and Tapia, 2011).

The problem is the lack of interpersonal communication due to the use of mobile technology, as Malo (2006) states that the mobile phone is used as an instrument to accompany the daily activities of young people, as many of them use it almost all day long, and television is a meeting place for family members.

Children ask their parents to buy them a mobile phone at an increasingly younger age, ranging from 11 to 12 years old, but there have been cases of children aged 6 to 7 years old with a mobile phone at school. It is confirmed that 34.5% of children between 10 and 14 years of age already have a device (Ḍryāgan, 2010).

Rodríguez (2006), points out the following negative effects that technology has on children and that harm interpersonal relationships:

- Social isolation: Social isolation refers to the lack of personal contact, which can be achieved through the abuse of technologies. Due to the impact of technologies on children, there is a social fragmentation, which leads to more individualism.

- Replacement: in many cases, people replace human relationships with a cyber substitute, which fosters social isolation.

- Lack of emotional contact: due to individualism and social isolation, there is a lack of personal contact, which leads to a decrease in emotional contact.

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- Saturation of information: technologies often contribute to making it easier to obtain information, although instead of facilitating it, on many occasions it generates a saturation that makes communicative interaction difficult and leads to confusion.

- Repetitive routines: more often children become accustomed to automated routines in the use of technologies, a fact that promotes a lower capacity for creativity and spontaneity.

- Difficulties in speaking and communicating: with the current trend towards less social contact, this leads, at the same time, to an increase in difficulties in speaking and communicating.

- Absence or reduction of symbolic play: the fact that more time is spent on technology than on strengthening social relationships means that children do not spend as much time playing symbolic games.

- Distraction: Parents often use technology to distract their children from situations where they may not know how to channel their frustration. In this way, children do not deal with situations as they should. This is one of the most worrying consequences of technology on children.

- Absence of boredom: children should learn to entertain themselves, without the need to resort to technology. However, nowadays, it is common for children to be distracted by mobile phones, tablets and other technological objects.

Therefore, the main objective is to determine the influence of mobile devices on interpersonal relationships in 6th grade children in Justo Sierra, Benito Juárez, Gabriel Leyva and Francisco I. Madero elementary schools, all of them in the city of Tepic, Nayarit.

Methodology

This research sought to determine the influence of the use of mobile devices on the interpersonal relationships of sixth grade children in Justo Sierra, Benito Juárez, Gabriel Leyva and Francisco I. Madero elementary schools, all of them in the city of Tepic, Nayarit; this research was conducted with a quantitative approach.

Design: non-experimental, cross-sectional and descriptive.

This research is non-experimental as argued by Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2014), it is carried out without deliberately manipulating variables. In other words, it is a study in which the independent variables are not intentionally varied to see their effect on other variables. It is to observe phenomena as they occur in their natural context, in order to subsequently analyse them. It is cross-sectional research in which data are collected at a single point in time, at a single point in time. Its purpose is to describe variables and analyse their incidence and interrelation at a given time. Descriptive, which aims to investigate the independence of the modalities or levels of one or more variables in a population, which consists of locating a group of people or other living beings, objects, situations, contexts, phenomena, communities in one or several variables, and thus provide their description.

Population and sample

The population consisted of students enrolled in the 2019-2020 school year, from Justo Sierra, Benito Juárez, Gabriel Lyva and Francisco I. Madero primary schools, all of them in the city of Tepic, Nayarit.

A non-probabilistic sample was selected, as defined by Hernández et al (2010), that non-probabilistic samples, also called directed samples, involve an informal selection procedure; from the quantitative viewpoint, their usefulness implies not so much a representativeness of elements of a population, but a careful and controlled selection of cases with certain characteristics previously specified in the problem statement. The participants in the present study were 50 students per primary school involved, giving a total of 200 students (girls and boys), all of them in the sixth grade.

Collection instrument

The enquiry instrument is the resource used by the researcher to record information or observable data that truly represent the concepts or variables he/she has in mind (Hernández, et al 2014). The instrument used in this study is composed of 31 items of closed questions, in the segments where the Likert scale is used, a separation was made for the reporting of the results.

Gender and age were collected, as well as frequency, influence and use of mobile devices in 6th grade girls and boys from four primary schools in the city of Tepic, Nayarit.

Results

1. The present research carried out with 200 girls and boys from Justo Sierra, Benito Juárez, Gabriel Leyva and Francisco I. Madero primary schools, all of them in the city of Tepic, Nayarit, to determine the influence of mobile devices on interpersonal relationships, the results are as follows:

2. of the 200 participants 116 are girls and 84 are boys.

3. 51% of children say they have their own bedroom.

4. Children start using the internet from the age of 5, but the largest number of participants (75%) say that they use the internet between the ages of 7 and 9.

5. The use of video games is used by children from a very early age, ranging from 3 to 11 years old.

6. Smartphone started to be used by children from the age of 7 to 11 years, the highest range of participants refers to the age of 9 and 10 years.

7. As for the use of the Tablet as opposed to the Smartphone, they started to use it at the age of 5 years.

8. The participants reported owning a mobile device.

9. When the students were asked about which device they have, the results showed that 12% said that they have both a Smartphone and a Tablet, 14% indicated that they only have a Tablet and 22% indicated that they only have a Smartphone.

10. When children were asked about the time they spent using the mobile device, 45% said they used it for 1 to 3 hours, 41% said less than an hour, 9% said 3 to 6 hours and only 5% said more than 6 hours.

11. Related to the previous question, students were asked if they need more time to use mobile devices to feel satisfied, the results show that 43% answered No and 57% answered Yes.

12. Currently there are a series of activities that boys and girls carry out daily with their mobile devices (Tablet and Smartphone), with regard to the activity of instant messaging (texts, WhatsApp), the results show 24% for both boys and girls, which shows that they use it equally.

13. When questioning pupils about the use they make of their devices for taking photographs, the results show that they use it only 25% from time to time, being the highest frequency.

14. Regarding the use of social networks, the results show that 61% indicated that they use them frequently and 39% said that they use them almost never.

15. On the question of whether they use their device to send emails, the results show that only 12% indicated that they do so very infrequently.

16. When students were asked whether they use their mobile devices for school work, the results showed that 28% occasionally, with equal percentages of 26% frequently and quite often, and 15% indicated that they do so occasionally.

17. Regarding whether children use their devices to search for information, the results show that 34% said Yes and 66% said No.

18. Regarding the activity of playing online, the results show that only 12% answered Yes and 88% No.

19. Regarding whether they use their device to keep in touch with friends, the results show that 32% do.

20. To help each other with friends, the results show that 45% do use it.

21. When asked about whether they feel happy at school, the results show that 82% answered yes and 18% no.

22. When asked if the child pays attention in class, the results show that 79% said yes and 21% no.

23. When asked if there is communication with teachers and classmates, the results showed that 87% said Yes.

24. Regarding the activity of watching television with the family, the results showed that 60% answered that they always do it.

25. Regarding listening to music with the family, the results show that only 21% do so.

26. When asked whether they do surfing or playing games on the Internet as a family, only 31% answered yes.

27. When asked whether they do the activity of studying as a family, the results show that 64% do.

28. When asked whether they do any sport as a family, 43% said that they do it with their family members.

29. As to whether they go on family outings, the answer was that 86% did.

30. As to whether they sit down to talk as a family, 56% said yes.

Conclusions

In the specific case of this research, where mobile devices and tablets are analysed, children begin to use technology at the age of 5, but this is not representative; the greatest frequency is between the ages of 9 and 10, which is the age at which the greatest use of technology is registered.

In this research, the results show that there is a constant series of activities that girls and boys carry out daily with their mobile devices, in which it stands out that most of them use them to connect to social networks, either to share photos, visits, etc. and interact with other people at a distance, as well as surfing the internet or searching for information to do their school work with their mobile phones, which is easier and more practical, from anywhere, as well as playing online games through their devices.

Once again in the present study, the results show that the use of mobile devices is very evident, which does not cause any negative changes in the interpersonal relationships of the children, as they are more in contact with their friends, and they also try to help and trust each other both inside and outside school, as well as having a good relationship with their teachers and classmates.

Boys reported needing to spend more time using technology in order to feel satisfied. Girls, on the other hand, have been in contact with technology from an early age, and report not having concentration problems because they pay more attention to their devices.

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