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# Online Risks and Opportunities for The Children Of Balochistan

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## Abstract

In today's digital era, the internet has emerged as a crucial and vital aspect of daily life, not only accessible to adults but also heavily consumed by teenagers and children alike for a multitude of purposes. This study seeks to investigate the diverse usage of the internet and mobile technologies by children from Baluchistan, aged from 9 to 17 years. It incorporates a quantitative approach, whereby the objective is to examine and explore online activities, their potential benefits, risks, and possible protective measures to be employed for young netizens. Around 103 children, ranging in age from 9 to 17, hailing from Baluchistan, the underdeveloped province of Pakistan were randomly sampled based on their access to the Internet and mobile phones. They were investigated for their day-to-day net usage and social media engagement. The findings of the study reveal that a significant majority of the children residing in the province have easy access to online platforms via mobile phones. Social media applications and online games are the major attractions that constitute most of their online activity, despite adults' concerns about its current and potential impact on their physical, social, and mental well-being. A carefully designed UNESCO questionnaire was utilized as a tool to survey the sampled children, which was divided into 10 broad sections and consisted of around 100 questions. From each section, 16 questions were carefully identified and included in the current study, covering compelling aspects of digital media usage and its implications for young internet users.

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Keywords: Internet, Digital technology, Social media platforms, Balochistan. Education

## Introduction

In this interconnected world, the use of digital technology has transformed the way we socialize, interact, and consume data (Hafeez, 2021).The fast-paced penetration of digital and mobile technologies in recent years has posed a serious challenge to developing countries like Pakistan. In the 21st century, the world has shifted its gears digitally. While most developed countries have successfully switched to the modern digital age, developing countries like Pakistan are struggling to follow suit, despite realizing its importance, due to poor networking facilities and a lack of relevant expertise and formal training.

Currently, the internet holds its control over every field of life including communication, education, information, and entertainment, to name a few (Bashir et al., 2008). Irrespective of the diverse socio-cultural and geographical contexts, a large number of children are now using digital and online platforms as part and parcel of their daily lives. The focus of this research is, however, children's online activities, their rights as young netizens and the multiple challenges, risks, and opportunities they face in this realm. (154)

According to the 6th Population and Housing Census of Pakistan, which was conducted in 2017, the total population of children in Balochistan between the age of 10 and 19 was 2914805. As Balochistan is considered one of the deprived provinces of Pakistan, the maximum numbers of children don't have electronic devices through which they can have access to online social media platforms. Majority of the participants were from Quetta as it is the only metropolitan city of the province where the majority of the children do have access and knowledge to use social media platforms.

Internet Usage Among Kids: (Popularity of Internet Among Children)

There are many reasons that make the online media attractive to children. Most of them say that they often use online platforms for games, fun, and leisurely activities. Besides, digital media also provides easy and free access to a world of knowledge with just one click. Perhaps, it is one of the core reasons most parents give open net access to their children. It is observed that frequent young net users develop a better understanding of the digital environment. They seem to be more confident and articulate about online protocols than those kids who rarely use them, either due to parental surveillance or limited access to the internet. According to Johnson (2010) "Kids who use the internet develop a natural urge to research and explore diverse topics introduced to them in schools and at home, which is certainly beneficial for their intellectual growth."(141)

**Advantages of Internet Use:**

Like any other platform, the Internet has its own advantages and disadvantages. It enables children to communicate with the world in no time. Kids often use it for multiple constructive activities such as information gathering, research, gaming, and networking. According to Chen, Liu and Wang (2013) "Kids who are pleased in accessing the Internet tend to have constructive regard. Their behavior and daily activities show that Internet access is nurturing positivity in them."

Online platforms are the sole medium for easy and economical access to the vast world of digitized knowledge in the modern age. Children often utilize these resources for their school and college assignments, which contributes to their research skills and cognitive growth as well. As Johnson (2010) established, "In recent times, online surfing has raised the diverse capabilities among children such as the ability to strategy building, visual observation, hearing memory and language appearance to name a few." However, it is crucial that parents should closely guide and monitor the day-to-day online activities of their children. (164)

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**Risk of Internet Usage:**

The fact remains constant that the internet has some potential negative effects too. There are many sites loaded with sensitive content that is meant for adults only. Such videos and websites are likely to hamper children's cognitive development and can also adversely affect their mental and emotional health. Certain social media platforms are growing more accessible to the general public. Facebook's rising popularity can be credited to its numerous 'fun' elements and as a result, many of its negative side effects are often neglected. For example, be it issues such as Facebook Depression and Addiction or the cyberspace problems like security breaches viz., hacking and stalking Facebook users (Hafeez, 2013).

Besides, in Pakistan, most of the children and even adults are digitally-illiterate. With limited knowledge about safe internet usage, unguided access to adult sites and inappropriate content can lead to dangerous situations and cause irreparable damage to their lives, security, health, and psyche.

Moreover, excessive screen time can damage children's eyesight. A study highlighted that laptops, smartphones, and computer screens rays, if used for a longer period without protective screens, can adversely affect children's vision (Bener, Al-Mahdi, Vachhani, Al-Nufal, and Ali, 2010). Abusive online conduct encompassing cyber bullying and harassment can cause severe damage. It is reported that almost one in four teenagers experience cyber bullying and approximately sixty-five percent of children are acquainted with someone who has been subject to cyber-bullying (Hafeez, 2014).

According to Young(1999) "Net addiction and social media obsession often affect academic performance of children badly. Hence, it is essential for parents and guardians to keep a close check on their kids' online activities and usage patterns". (175)

**Internet Safety Laws:**

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), a federal law, provides privacy protection for children under the age of 13. The Act was passed in 1998 by the Congress in the US. It is managed by the Federal Trade Commission and applies to every social media application. Its task is to prevent a child's personal information from being breached by a third party without parental consent. In accordance with COPPA, websites must obtain parental approval and provide a clear explanation of their privacy rules. Additionally, it is against the law for any website to request more personal information from a child than is necessary in order for them to participate in a contest or play a game (Hanna, 2023).

**Online Protection Tools:**

With the use of online resources, children's exposure to mature content can be eradicated, thus preventing them from falling prey at the hands of cyber predators. Numerous Internet service providers (ISPs) offer solutions for parental control. Besides, parents and guardians can also get soft wares that help block access to websites and restricts personal information from being accessed online. There are several other apps (Norton, Google Family Link, mSpy, NetNanny..etc) that enable parents to monitor and track online activities of their children if used smartly.

Objective of Study:

The core reason for conducting this study is to investigate the impact of digital and online technologies on children in Balochistan. Most kids and even adults don’t realize that using social media and online games can bring about gradual yet obvious changes in their lives. This study examines the day-to-day usage of the Internet and mobile platforms by children in Balochistan and their reliance on digital media for various purposes.

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It aims to ensure that children's online activities are smartly and consistently monitored by parents/guardians to curb the potential risks and threats while identifying the possible opportunities for their intellectual growth. In a nutshell, this research intends to maximize the optimum utilization of online platforms for the overall development and well-being of Baloch children.

## Literature Review:

This section reviewed some relevant research conducted in this area of study, along with findings and recommendations. Studying the influence of the internet on children is not a new trend in educational discourse and as such, there is no shortage of literature on the theme. Several scholars from almost every region of the world have tried to examine the influence of digital and mobile technologies on children.

The current study is also an attempt to understand how kids are affected by different social media platforms that highlight issues of privacy, screen time, and online security concerns. Thereby, it is expected that the researcher will be able to determine and understand the underlying reasons for the adverse effects of the internet on children.

Sunil et al. (2021), for example, researched to find out the influence of Player Unknown's Battleground (PUBG) on the mental health of children. Adapting to the PRISMA model, they studied around 100 children, including both boys and girls, aged between 11 to 24 years. The findings revealed that the excessive use of gaming platforms such as PUBG can be the root cause of several psychological disorders, including anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) ,and suicidal ideation.

Likewise, another study on gaming addiction and its effects on mental and physical health was conducted by Tandon et al (2020). The research was conducted on 1047 Indian teenagers, and the result shows that there is a direct association between physical and mental health issues and PC games addictions. Taking part in pc games raises the risk of gaining fat due to the absence of physical activities. Online games have become the root cause of isolation, anxiety, and depression in children across the world.

On the other hand, to investigate the effects of online pornography, Martellozzo et al, (2020) researched 1100 UK teenagers, aged from 11 to 16 years. The study employed a Delphi style methodology among the three stages. The findings of the survey indicated that around 48% of teenagers had seen pornography, and 52% had not. The older the participant's group, the more likely they were to have seen pornography, i.e. (65% of 15-16, 46% of 13-14, and 28 % of 11-12).

Furthermore, Restrepo et al (2020) researched the relationship between problematic Internet Use (PIU) and psychiatric disorders. Participants within the age range of 5 to 21, from New York City, were included in this study. The results revealed that out of the 564 respondents, 440 (i.e., 78.01%) and 124 (21.99%) scored lower and above the PIU cut-off, respectively. PIU seemed to be more common in males than females, among the 10–12 age group, and often found in children hailing from high socio-economic classes.

Some studies evidently established PIU relations with diverse mental health issues including depressive disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), to name a few. Significantly, PIU independently leads to impairment among youth if left unchecked.

On the contrary, Eunhee and Misol (2018) in their research titled “The Phenomena of Teenagers and Youth Health-related Internet Use” stated that children utilize the internet for gaining information regarding health-related issues, cultural values, and complicated social and religious matters.

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However, Puspitaand Rohedi (2018) mentioned that children mostly waste their time on the Internet in watching videos, playing games, and using social media for random interaction with strangers and virtual friends. It often adversely affects their outdoor activities, keeping them distant from family and friends and leading them to adopt a sedentary lifestyle.

Further, a cross-sectional study in Madhya Pradesh, India by Richa Sharma et al. (2018) highlighted a close connection between internet addiction and poor psychological well-being. Around 461 college students were surveyed under the research, which concluded that it is crucial to develop substantial strategies for the prevention of internet addiction to improve the mental health of youth in India.

Likewise, a study conducted in two Kenyan universities, which engaged with 400 students, adapted the Beck Depression Inventory to assess pathological Internet use and resultant depression. Findings suggested that around 23.6 % of students were subjected to depression and 16.8% to compulsive Internet use. Female Internet users were reported to be more obsessive net users compared to male students. The study also suggested that it is important to help youth be aware of constructive net usage in order to achieve their academic and career goals.(Ogachi et al,. 2018).

Parents and youngsters are having marked differences of opinion when it comes to sharing personal information online. Children's release of information to the Web could well become a new arena for family discord in many countries. According to Turrow (2000), "American, 10 to17 year-olds are more likely to give their sensitive personal and family information to commercial websites just for a gift, contrary to their parents. Around 41% of online parents with kids aged 8-17 and 36% of youngsters aged 10-17 reportedly experienced incidents of disagreement, worry, or anger over kids' release of information online in the family."

Despite the flip side of the internet and the risks involved, it has its benefits too. Certainly, it has been a part and parcel of children's lives. Kids use the internet for educational purposes such as daily class assignments, projects, and information. They often use it for fun activities like playing games, chatting with friends, and leisurely activities to fill their free time. Using the internet enhances children's social and communication skills as well (Rachmayani, 2017).

Rikker, et al (2016) also tried to investigate the link "between excessive online activity outside the educational realm and enlarged stages of psychological distress in young people. Those engaging with a range of risk factors reported a higher frequency of problem behavior than others. Youth who were subjected to emotional issues or high levels of psychological distress consumed the most time on the internet and playing games."

Multivariate analysis revealed links between the behavioural disorders including alcoholism, suicidal tendencies, and excessive net consumption if combined with other contributing factors such as dysfunctional family set-up and a hostile environment. Girls were reported to exhibit higher psychological distress and problem behaviors than boys. The data found the ratio to be twice as much for girls than boys.

Some indigenous studies were conducted to assess the usage pattern of online platforms by youth and its impact on their lives. Razaque et al (2013) surveyed around 200 students, including both boys and girls. The result revealed that 36.5% of the students accepted that they often used the internet for entertainment purposes. Further, 42.2% of the participants reportedly preferred Facebook and Instagram over other platforms. Whereas, 65.5% said that they often used Google for searching articles, reports and other relevant material for their class assignments.

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Abrar Noor Akramin et al (2015) highlighted that despite the fact that the Internet is free and accessible to everyone regardless of age, class, and status, no one would disagree that it offers a large amount of inappropriate content that could cause irreparable damage to children. However, it is now possible to filter the internet access for the kids to appropriate, quality websites only. This research suggested the Naïve Bayes algorithm to create a web page classifier as a starting point. Although the risk of over-blocking exists, it is advisable to filter the inappropriate sites and content for optimum utilization of online platforms for the overall intellectual growth and mental well-being of our youth.

Considering the above studies, it is evident that the internet has strengthened its roots in today's world. It is highly popular among children and youth who are engaging themselves in online gaming, besides utilizing it for information gathering, social networking, and assignment completion. However, it remains a challenge to protect children from inappropriate content, online risks, and threats, including harassment and other serious crimes.

In Pakistan, as such, there is no effective regulatory authority that could monitor and curb the negative impact of online platforms on children.

Formally, there are no clear cut guidelines or formal training to equip the children to protect themselves in case of online harassment or threat. Creating relevant regulatory bodies and making them effective with public representation and a progressive approach are the only ways to promote productive utilization of digital and online media among youth. While identifying such threats and making it known to the children is perhaps the first step in this direction.

**Theoretical Framework:**

This study followed the Uses and Gratification theory, which was developed by Blumler and Katz in 1974. It explains the dynamic effects of the diverse usage of media by the public.

This theory describes how people use media to satisfy their own needs and get pleasures when their desires are satisfied. In other words, the theory discusses what people do to the media rather than what the media does to the public. For example, people often use media to strengthen their social status, and boost their self-esteem. Further, people use media as consumers such as television, mobile, and social media platforms, to fulfill their emotional and psychological needs.In the current digital age, smartphones are frequently used by youth for entertainment, educational, and information purposes. Though excessive use of the internet and cell phones have made people dependent on apps gradually, they hardly resist and even realize it due to its massive appeal and capacity to fulfill their multiple needs and wants.

**Research Questions:**

RQ-1 How do kids and young people utilize the internet and online technologies?

RQ-2 How often are kids involved on the internet daily?

RQ-3 How often do children use online and social networking sites for communication purposes?

RQ-4 How often do they use filters or soft wares to protect themselves from unwanted contacts or inappropriate content?

RQ5: How can children possibly get benefits and avail opportunities through the internet and digital technologies?

**Research Methodology:** The research comprised a quantitative approach to collect data. An online survey was conducted using a strategically designed questionnaire to examine how children use the Internet and other digital devices in their day-to-day lives. The reason for opting for this method is to strengthen the study and extract measurable, quantifiable data that can be utilized for further research down the road To achieve this objective, the questionnaire

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was divided into ten detailed comprehensive sections. The first section covered questions related to sample demographics, including gender, age, socioeconomic status, and educational qualifications. The second section contained queries regarding Internet accessibility, whilst the third section included questions about online well-being. The fourth section investigated children's online activities, while the fifth section covered their emotional connectivity with family, relatives, peers, and strangers. Section six focused on respondent's digital media skills, while sections seven and eight questioned about the possible threats and risks of social media platforms for children. Section nine shed light on online bullying threats for kids, and section ten covered the imminent privacy issues faced by children on the internet.

Sampling: A random sampling technique was constructed to conduct a survey of 103 young people, encompassing children between the ages of 9 and 17 years old in Balochistan, Pakistan. Respondents were selected based on two prerequisites: they should have used the internet or owned a mobile phone. The survey aimed to determine how children and young people engage with the Internet and digital technologies in their daily lives. The sample included both the northern and southern regions of Balochistan and comprised 47% males and 53% females. The 6th population and housing census in Pakistan estimated Balochistan's children population to be around 2914805 Majority of the participants in the survey were children from Quetta,

as the city is the only metropolitan city of the province and a significant portion of its inhabitants have access to the Internet, unlike other cities where Internet accessibility is not possible. Thus, the sample size of 103 serves as a good case study for children in Balochistan.The insights from this survey aim to understand how to best support and educate children to use technology safely and effectively.

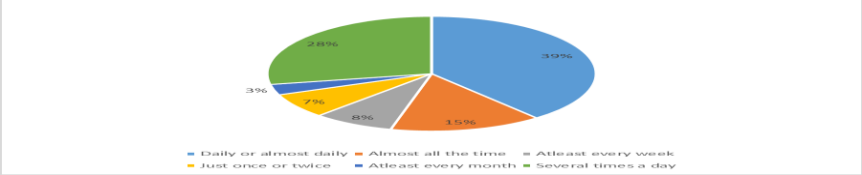
Finding and Analysis:

The Internet has become a crucial part of our everyday lives. It serves as a hub for entertainment, education, news, research, e-commerce and has woven itself into the fabric of other countless mundane daily activities. Surprisingly, children have now become keen users of the online world. To understand this emerging phenomenon, a detailed survey was conducted to determine the frequency of internet usage among children aged between 9 to 17 years in Balochistan.

The survey consisted of 10 sections with a total of 16 key questions for the respondents to answer. After an in-depth analysis of the responses gathered, we have discovered that there is a critical for parental vigilance on children's internet usage. Our study indicates that parents should play a more active role in imparting wisdom and guiding their children regarding the pros and cons of internet usage and should monitor their usage closely. By restricting screen time and encouraging children to partake in physical activities, parents can protect their kids from the harmful effects of excessive internet consumption. The inclusion of such proactive measures by parents can shield children from addiction and also safeguard their mental and physical health.

Following is the analysis of our key research questions with graphic representation:

Figure 1. How Often Do You Use the Internet?

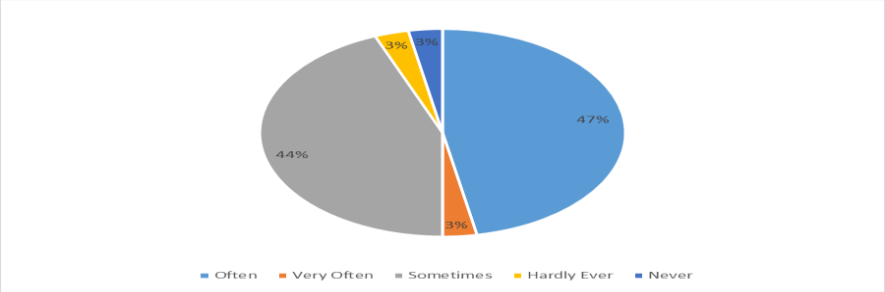



The results in Figure 1 revealed that 39% respondents use the Internet daily, or almost every day. It also indicates that children have easy access to the Internet. Furthermore, the survey showed that 28% of young respondents use the internet several times per day, which is an alarming situation the survey showed that 28% of young respondents use the internet several times per day, which is an alarming situation

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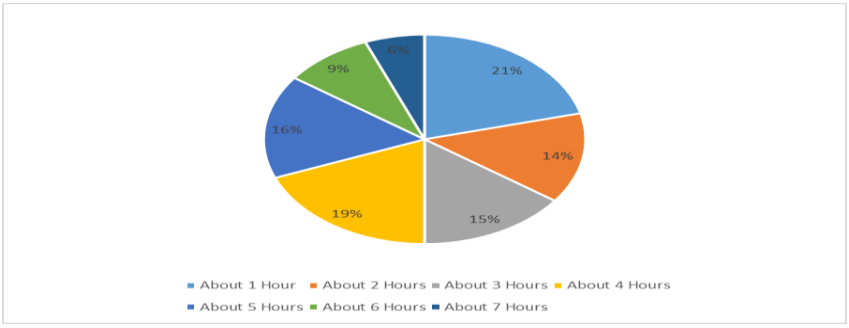
. Around 15% of respondents answered "almost all the time", another 8% respondents answered "at least every week", 7% respondents answered "just once or twice", and only 3% respondents answered "at least every month". These figures are worrying and suggest that we need to take action to ensure that children are using the Internet in a responsive manner.

Figure 2. Can you access the internet when you need or want to?



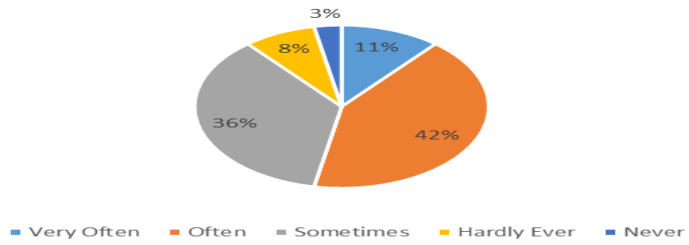

The young respondents were asked whether they could access the Internet at their discretion. Out of 103 children surveyed in Balochistan, 47% responded with "often," indicating that they have easy access to the Internet and can use it when they want or need to. Around 44% of the respondents answered with "sometimes," citing occasional obstacles that prevented them from accessing the Internet freely. Only a few respondents (3%) reported "very often," when asked whether they could access the Internet, while 3% answered with "hardly ever" and another 3% said "never." This indicates that a small proportion of the surveyed children have yet to gain access to the internet.

Figure 3. About how much time do you spend on the internet on a weekend?



Children were asked about the amount of time they spend on the Internet during their weekends. The majority of the respondents, about 19%, answered that they spend 4 hours on the Internet. Other respondents, which make up 15% of the total, answered that they spend about 3 hours on internet,. Around 9% of the kids responded that they spend 6 hours on the internet, while 14% said they spend only 2 hours. A small percentage of children, around 6%, spend 7 hours online, while about 16% answered that they spend about an hour. Majority percentage of around 21% children uses internet for only 1 hour.The graph shows that kids tend to use the internet excessively during the weekend, which is not a good sign for their health. Furthermore, it may hinder them from participating in other extracurricular activities on the weekend.

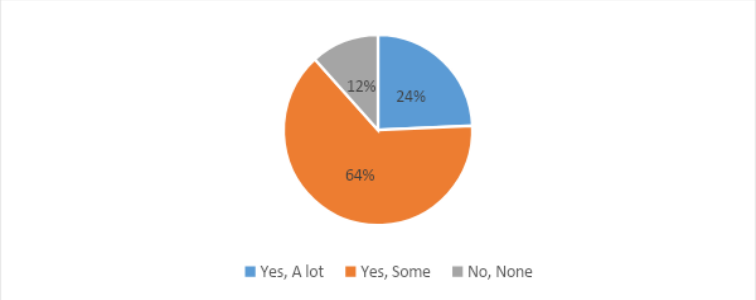
Figure 4. Do you have a good time when you go online? (e.g, you enjoy yourself or get something out of it)




The survey asked respondents about their experiences while using the Internet and whether they derived enjoyment or benefit from their online activity. The majority of children surveyed, 42% reported feeling a sense of pleasure or reward "often" when using the internet. A further 36% of the respondents answered "sometimes", whereas 11% answered that they enjoyed it "very often." A minority of respondents, 8% and 3%, respectively, claimed that they "hardly ever" enjoyed the Internet or "never" did. The inquiry aimed to elicit respondents' sentiments regarding their Internet usage.

Figure 5. Do you think there are things on the internet that are good for children of your age?

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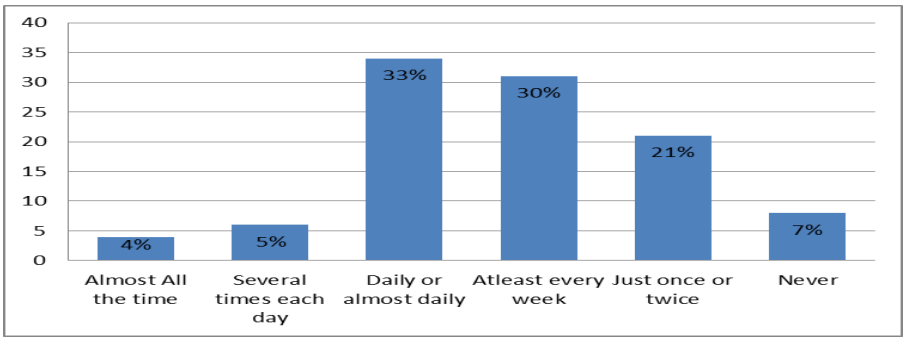



Additionally, the respondents were asked to evaluate the appropriateness of online content for children of their age. Of the total 103 participants, 64% reported that some content was suitable for children of their age, implying an ability to assess both the advantages and disadvantages of online content. For 24% of respondents, the Internet contained an abundance of good content for children, with little attention paid to potential negative aspects. Conversely, 12% of respondents held the opinion that the internet had no good content for children.

6. How often have you done these things online or on a phone in the past month?

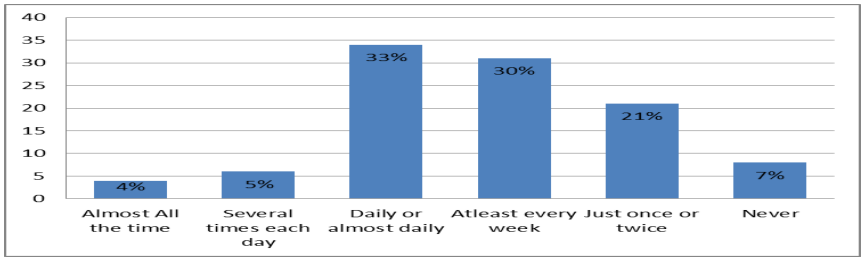
The kids were asked about their online activities in the past month. The survey asked them about the frequency of their online activities, including searches for information, school work, and learning something new. The following text sheds light on the kids' online habits and how they have utilized the internet for learning and educational purposes in the last month.

Figure 6-a. I learned something new by searching online



According to the data collected, a significant proportion of children have learned something new by searching online. Daily, or almost daily, 33% of the respondents learned something new by searching online, while 30% answered that they learned something new at least every week. Around 21% answered that they learned something new just once or twice, 7% answered that they didn't learn anything new in the past month, and 5% answered that they learned something new several times each day. Only 4% answered that they learned something new almost all the time by searching online.

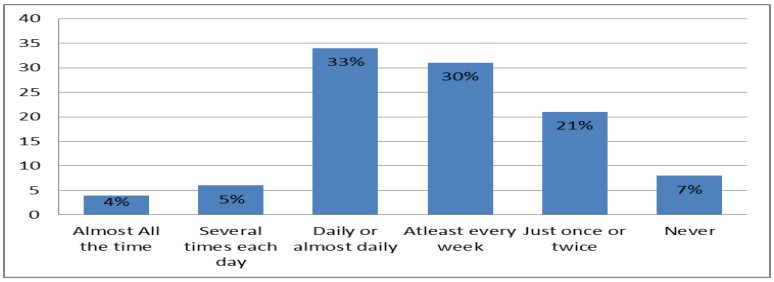
6-b. I used the Internet for Schoolwork.




The survey also asked the kids if they used the Internet for school work in the past month. In response, 33% of the respondents confirmed that they used the Internet for school work daily or almost daily, whereas 30% answered that they used it at least once every week. Around 21% answered that they used the Internet for school work just once or twice, 7% answered that they didn't use the internet for school work, and 5% answered that they used the Internet for school work several times each day. Only 4% answered that they used the Internet for school work almost all the time. This indicates that children are making the most of online resources for academic purposes.

6-c. I looked for information about work or study opportunities.

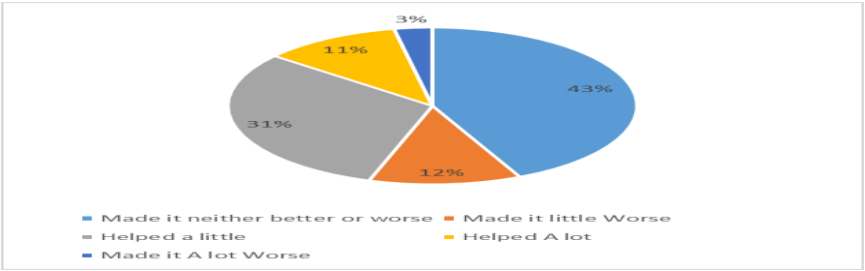
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Furthermore, the survey shows that children are taking the initiative to look for information about work or study opportunities online. Around 33% of the respondents answered that they looked for such information daily or almost daily, while 30% answered that they searched for it at least once every week. Another 21% answered that they searched for information just once or twice, about 7% answered that they didn't search for any information, and 5% answered that they searched for information several times each day. Only 4% answered that they searched for information almost all the time.

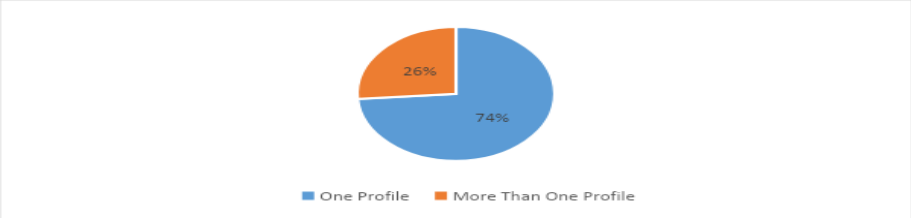
These findings demonstrate that children are not only using the internet to enhance their education but also to plan and prepare for their future.

Figure 7. In the past year, did the Internet help you deal more effectively with health problems



The study inquired whether children had used the Internet to manage their health problems during the past year. The findings revealed that a majority of participants, 43%, perceived that the Internet has neither improved nor worsened their health condition. Conversely, 31% of respondents reported that the Internet facilitated effective management of their health issues. Remarkably, 11% of participants acknowledged that the Internet had significantly improved their health, while the same percentage of respondents indicated that it had little impact or rather worsened their overall health condition. These respondents experienced increased complexity in managing their health problems. Only 3% of the participants perceived that the Internet had significantly worsened their condition whereas 12% considered that it made it little worse.

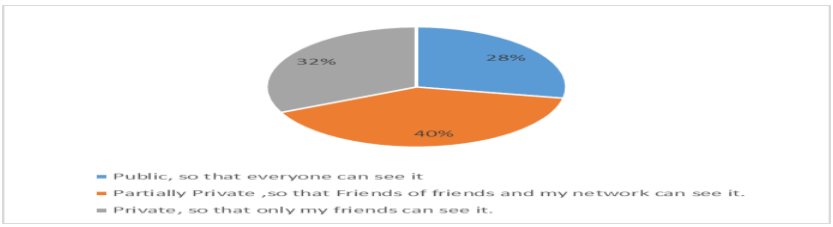
Figure 8. How many profiles do you have (on the same site or different sites)?




According to the data presented in Figure 8, 103 respondents were asked about the number of profiles they had on the Internet, whether on the same or different site. The results show that 74% of the respondents had only one profile, while 26% had more than one profile, indicating that they utilized a variety of online applications for gaming, communication, and obtaining information. It was also found that most of the respondents had a profile on gaming sites such as Minecraft, Roblox, and PUBG.

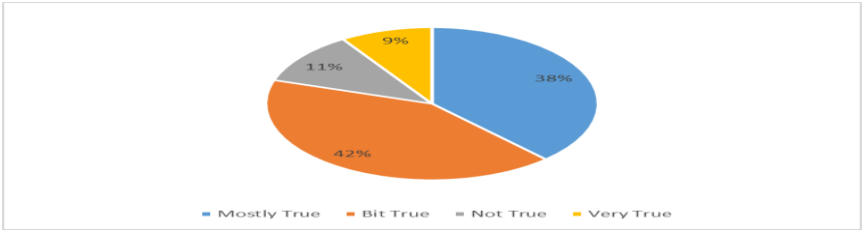
Figure 9. Is your profile public or private?

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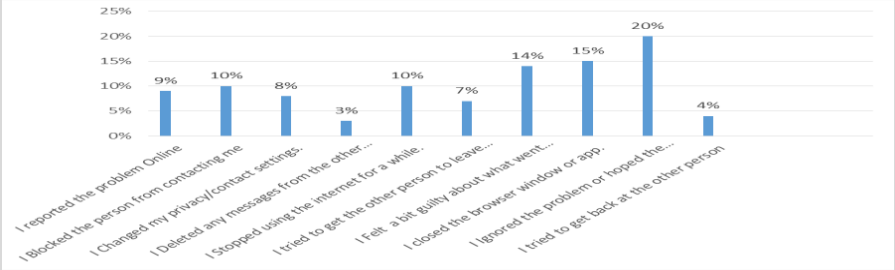

This question aimed to investigate the profile privacy settings of social media users. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate whether their profile was public, private, or partially private. The majority of respondents 40% reported that their profile was partially private, allowing friends of friends or their network to view their profile content. Meanwhile, 32% of the respondents stated that their profile was completely private, indicating that they value their social privacy. Finally, 28% of respondents reported that their profile was public, allowing everyone to view their profile with ease.

Figure 10. What do you think about this statement: there are things on the internet that bother or upset people of your age?



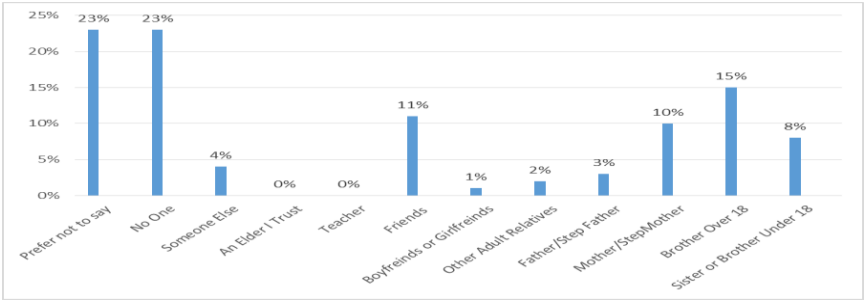

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to reflect on the nature of content on the internet and whether it has the potential to upset or bother individuals of their age. Of the participants, 42% reported that it was a bit true that some content or things on the internet bothered or upset them. Meanwhile, 38% stated that it was mostly true, suggesting that a significant amount of content on the internet has the potential to upset or bother them. In contrast, 11% reported that it was not true that there was content on the internet that bothered or upset them. Finally, only 9% reported that it was very true that content on the internet had the potential to upset or bother them.

Figure 11. The last time something happened online or on a phone that bothered or upset you in some way, did you do any of these things afterwards?




In the survey, respondents were asked about their reactions to an upsetting or bothersome online or phone-related incident. The majority of respondents 20% reported that they ignored the issue or hoped it would resolve itself, while 15% closed the application or browser window. About 14% felt guilty about what had happened, another 10% blocked the person responsible for the incident, 10% stopped using the internet for a while, 9% reported the problem online, 8% changed the privacy settings and 7% attempted to persuade the other person to leave them alone whereas 4% tried to get back to the other person and only 3% of children deleted the messages.

Figure 12. The last time you were upset by seeing this type of content, did you talk to any of these people about it?

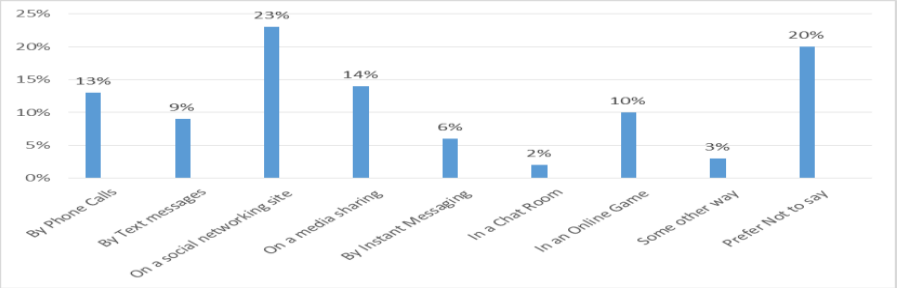


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The survey asked respondents whether they had discussed upsetting content seen online with anyone. while 15% talked to their brother over 18. Additionally, 11% of respondents talked to their friends, 10% to their mother or stepmother, 8% to their brother or sister under 18, 4% to someone else, 3 % to while 15% talked to their brother over 18. Additionally, 11% of respondents

talked to their friends, 10% to their mother or stepmother, 8% to their brother or sister under 18, 4% to someone else, 3 % to Father or Step father, and only 2% talked to adult relatives about it. Only the remaining 1% discussed it with their boyfriends or girlfriends.

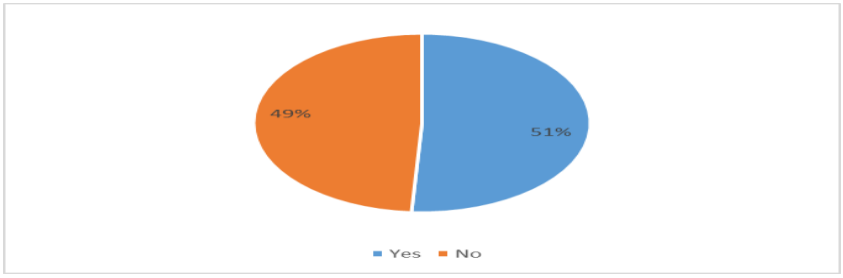
Figure 13. When you saw someone else treated in this way online or on a phone, has it happened through any of the following?




Further in figure 13, participants were surveyed on instances where they had observed someone being mistreated online or via phone. Respondents were asked to specify the platform or medium in which the wrongdoing had taken place, including social media sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), media sharing platforms (e.g, YouTube, Instagram), online games, phone calls, text messages (SMS/MMS), instant messaging (e.g, MSN, WhatsApp, Skype), chat rooms, and other channels. Among the participants, 23% had seen someone being mistreated on social media sites, while 14% observed it on media-sharing platforms, 10% in online games, 13% through phone calls, 9% via text message, 6% through instant messaging, 3% in chat rooms, and only 2% through other means. It is noteworthy that 20% of respondents preferred not to disclose the platforms or mediums on which they had witnessed mistreatment.

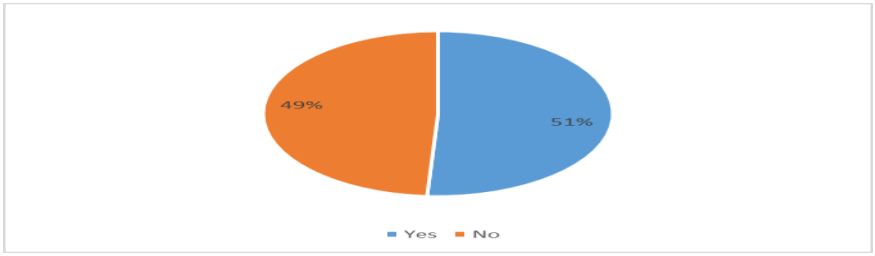
Figure 14. Have you ever done any of these things to protect your privacy?

14-a. Block messages from someone I don’t want to hear from




The survey participants were asked about their privacy protection practices, specifically in relation to four different methods. Firstly, they were asked if they ever blocked messages from someone they didn't want to hear from. The majority of respondents (51%) answered affirmatively, indicating that they have used this privacy protection method. In contrast, 49% of participants reported that they had not blocked messages from someone they didn't want to hear from.

14-b. Change the settings so fewer people can view my profile

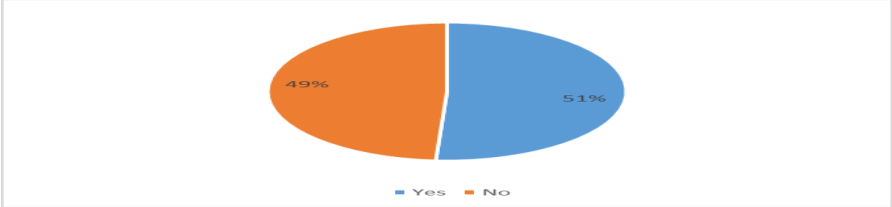



Secondly, the respondents were asked if they had changed their profile settings to limit the number of people who could view their profile. Again, the majority of respondents (51%) answered yes indicating that they were aware of their profile's privacy settings and had adjusted them accordingly to keep their profiles private

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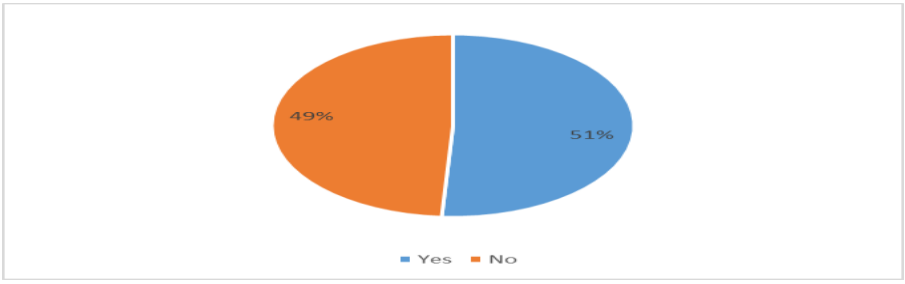
. The remaining 49% of respondents indicated that they did not change their profile settings and wanted their profiles to be public.

14-c. Use child-friendly search engines (e.g, Kidrex, Google Safe Search Kids, and Junior Safe Search)



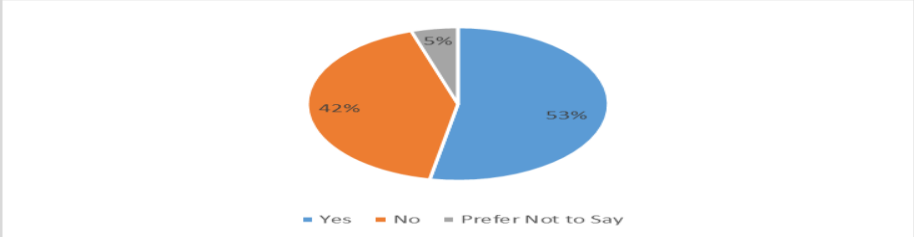

The third privacy protection method concerned the use of child-friendly search engines or safe search sites. The respondents were asked if they were aware of these sites and whether they used them. The majority of respondents (51%) answered yes, indicating that they were aware of and used child-friendly search engines. On the other hand, 49% of respondents reported that they were not using such search engines, which could potentially expose them to inappropriate content.

14-d Used filters or software that protect me from unwanted contacts or content (e.g, ad block)



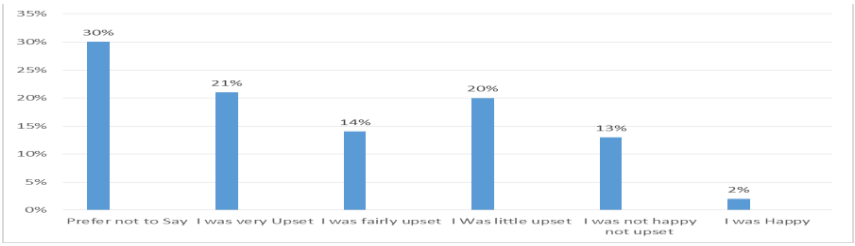

Lastly, the respondents were asked if they used filters or software to protect themselves from unwanted contacts or content, such as ad-blockers. The majority of young respondents (51%) reported using such filters, while 49% of participants indicated that they did not use filters to avoid unwanted and potentially harmful content for children.

Figure 15. In the past year, have you ever met anyone face-to-face that you first got to know through online or on the phone?




The survey asked the children if they had met anyone face-to-face in the past year whom they first got to know online or on their phone. The results showed that the majority of respondents, 53%, answered "No",meaning they had not met anyone. In contrast, 42% of respondents answered "Yes", indicating that they had met someone. Only 5% preferred not to say and chose not to answer the question.

Figure 16. Thinking of the last time you saw someone treated in a hurtful or nasty way online or on their phone, how did you feel?




In another question, the respondents were asked about their emotional response to witnessing someone being treated hurtfully or nastily online or on their phone. The majority 30% preferred not to answer. Approximately 21% answered that they were "very upset", 20 % said they were "a little upset", 14% reported being "fairly upset", and 13% felt neither happy nor upset. Only 2% answered that they were "happy", suggesting that they enjoyed such behavior.

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Discussion:

The Internet is globally utilized for a variety of purposes encompassing office work, communication, entertainment, games, and school homework. Despite its drawbacks, the Internet provides numerous benefits in different fields, such as business, education, and medicine.

Children also benefit from the Internet as they use it for educational purposes, such as school projects. They can access a wide range of lectures and online tuition classes that can help them gain insight and a better understanding of various topics. For instance, students pursuing arts can get direction in their work.

The internet also provides health-related information, fitness guidance, and nutrition utilization. Additionally, there are many online psychological therapies, stress relaxation techniques, and cognitive behavior therapy that can benefit students. However, despite the numerous advantages, there are growing concerns regarding internet dependency among children.

Overconsumption of the internet can lead to anxiety, depression, aggressive behavior, and other mental disorders. It can also increase the risk of fatal diseases such as heart attack, diabetes, obesity, and damage to eyesight. Additionally, children become socially isolated from their peers and family due to excessive use of the internet. They also spend most of their time playing games or browsing social media, which can lead to a sedentary lifestyle and affect their physical fitness.

Furthermore, exposure to inappropriate content online poses a significant emotional risk to children's mental well-being and there is also a looming threat to public privacy and confidentiality being breached. Young children are particularly vulnerable to privacy breaches online as they are often unaware of the risks.

Therefore, it is essential to have proper checks and balances to prevent negative impacts on children's physical and psychological health, privacy, and overall well-being.

Conclusion:

The research gives a unique insight into understanding the perks and consequences associated with overconsumption of Internet usage among children. While several studies have been conducted on this particular topic in the past, it is of paramount importance to shed light on the intricate experiences of children living in Balochistan.

Undoubtedly, the Internet has revolutionized different domains of life, from technology to information, communication to business, and education to research. Children are now reaping the fruits of these vast resources through various electronic devices. However, despite policies to control harmful content and privacy-related issues, there is a lack of proper enforcement. Thus, it is crucial to establish regulations that can help combat digital crimes, as well as set up an appropriate mechanism for monitoring Internet content. In addition, laws should be modified to resonate with the evolving digital landscape and web-based education should be included in school curricula. Furthermore, children should be educated about the internet and its appropriate use so that they can limit their access and be cognizant of its potential risks.

With proper guidance and supervision, parents and educators can help children utilize the internet to its full potential. The current study shows that children are keen to learn and explore, and the Internet can provide them with the resources they need to succeed.

Limitations and Recommendations: Due to the COVID pandemic, our data collection had to be conducted online, which affected our ability to have smoother conversations with the children. Furthermore, the time given us for data collection was limited, which resulted in a small sample size. Also,

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data was only collected from certain areas of Balochistan due to the unavailability of internet facilities.

It is important to note that this study only covers certain aspects of the internet, while there are still various areas that need to be explored. Additionally, some questions in our questionnaire regarding sexuality and harassment were considered taboo to discuss in areas like Balochistan.

Despite these limitations, our research will be useful for future researchers who are interested in studying the internet usage of children in Balochistan. Lastly, we hope that our research will inspire more people to conduct research on Balochistan in the context of the Internet, as it highlights the enthusiasm of children and their interest in modern forms of communication.

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