

PAPER

The Use of New Media by Young People in Kosovo

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ABSTRACT

The great technological changes that have occurred during the end of the last century and the 21st century have also changed the way of obtaining and distributing information. Great technological progress has given a new dimension to communication and media in general. Today, in the time of new media, Marshall McLuhan's theory that "the medium is the message" is also changing. This maxim is turning into "the user is the message" and "the user's information becomes the content of the digital medium" [1]. The Internet and the media have involved almost all of society, especially young people. In the schools of Kosovo, the subject of media education that would help young people to use the new media correctly is still not taught. Therefore, this paper aims to show what the young people of Kosovo use the new media for the most. The research was carried out at the national level with 780 students (respondents) aged 15–18 years in 13 gymnasiums of 7 regions of Kosovo, selected through cluster-sample group analysis, developed in 1950 by Socal, Sneath, and others [2]. From this research, it can be seen that 12.8 percent of the students are all the time accessing these internet media and that more than half of the respondents (52.8 percent) access the internet more than ten times during the day. The new media offer incomparable possibilities compared to the old ones. But, at the same time, the experts in this field also raise the alarm about the violation of privacy, hijacking of the mind, killing of intellectual humility, misinformation, etc.

KEYWORDS

new media, young people (high school students), social networks, communication smartphone, internet, influence, etc

1 INTRODUCTION

Sci-fi films from more than 30 years ago can't seem like that at all today in the 21st century. The images that were once shown to us via video communication from a great distance in these films have become a reality today. The means of communication have changed with time. Together with humans, they have evolved, changing the giving and receiving of information and also the form of communication.

Without going further into history, if we take as an example only the period since the press began as a medium, we notice that media technologies have changed a lot.

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The television set does not look like it used to. Its appearance has changed, as has its physical weight and content. Also, the function that has been added to the phone is much greater than what it was in the beginning. Today, smartphones allow you to see your interlocutor directly. Multi-functionality has been added to this device. Besides the conversation, the smartphone also serves as a camera for photo and video recording, as well as TV, radio, etc.

Today, there is no need for Philippides to break the news about the end of the war by running. Nowadays, it takes seconds for the news to reach the other end of the planet. Even directly, Francis Balle considers that the mutual relations between the media and society have never been as perceptible as they were after the appearance of television and especially after the fall of the Soviet system [3].

The use of media begins in the first years of life. From this time, the first preferences also begin, such as cartoons, drawing shows, advertisements for different foods and toys, etc. For those a little older, preferences for children's films with heroes and other series increase. They also begin to be influenced by the style of clothing, choosing clothes similar to their "heroes" from these films. They even start talking like them. Many of the young people of Kosovo have also learned foreign languages by staying for a long time in front of television screens or new media in general.

According to Dominick, today we live in the golden age of communication. Modern communication technology keeps everyone busy 24 hours a day, making information available immediately, anytime and anywhere [4].

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased the use of new media, whether for information, communication, or selling products, but also in other areas. The same thing happened in Kosovo. During these two years, almost all life was moved "inside them", when the health and government institutions of Kosovo made decisions for a partial or complete lockdown of the country due to the Sars Cov-2 virus. Many of the employees in public and private institutions have completed their work schedule from home for work that could be done even without being physically at the workplace. In this way, lessons were developed in primary schools, secondary, and even university education. In higher education, exams were held and graduation theses were defended through 'online' platforms. Also, in addition to keeping classes remote, the students received the learning tasks they had to perform and returned them to the teachers online through various platforms after they had completed them...

However, if the new media did not exist, education during 2020 and 2021 in Kosovo could even fail. Although most of the time without physical presence, thanks to the new media, the communication between the school (teachers) and students was not interrupted.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 How is new media conceived – then and today?

Language is as old as humanity itself, whatever it may have been, whether communication was done through sounds or signs. Human beings always had the need to communicate and be informed about what is happening in the area where they lived and beyond. According to Dominick, our prehistoric ancestors may have had non-verbal communication, perhaps used gestures and body movements, and then developed verbal communication using spoken language [4]. Meanwhile, Balle says that at the beginning of the adventure of people, culture, and language, drawing on

rocks was the first illustration (before writing) to express thought [3]. So, whether through non-verbal or verbal communication, symbolic or alphabetic writing (which we use today), human beings have always found ways to communicate with others and used different tools to carry out this process (communication and information).

Today, nothing in the world of media communication is like it used to be. A return in time brings us the communication difficulties that were once in Kosovo. It is enough to make a comparison only before 1999, when in Kosovo the majority of the population did not even have corded phones. Not even the journalists who lived in the outskirts of the cities. Journalists are forced to find “any relative” who owns a phone to read the news and on the other end of the phone line (in the few newsrooms in the capital of Kosovo, Pristina) the typist will type the text on a typewriter or on any of the few computers of that time. Even, there were cases when they brought the news by car (vehicle) to Pristina.

This is enough to see how quickly the changes in the field of communication and media have occurred during this period. Today, not only journalists, but almost every adult in Kosovo, including a large part of children, possess any of the latest communication technologies, have access to the Internet and each of them can receive and distribute information simultaneously. Based on a 2019 Eurostat report, published by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 93 percent of families in Kosovo have internet access at home, which is higher than in the countries of the region, but also the EU countries (89%) [5].

According to Shahini-Hoxhaj, in 2020, there were more than 100 radio stations and television channels and 300 internet portals that produced news from a wide spectrum of political, social, and economic issues. The mediatization of politics and society has happened mostly through the competition between television and media based on the Internet [6]. The arrival of online communication through the Internet practically transformed the forms and ways of doing journalism, the techniques of finding and administration of news, and also has opened a new era in the relationship between the journalist and what used to be called the audience [7]. That we are living in a phase of technological, economic, and cultural change, according to theorists, is already undeniable, and that this media revolution was more intense than the previous ones. Just as the printing press in the 14th century and photography in the 19th century had a revolutionary impact on the development of society and modern culture, today we are in the middle of a new media revolution – the entire culture change in relation to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution and communication. This new revolution is arguably more profound than the previous ones, and we are just beginning to register its initial effects [8].

There are different opinions about what old media is and what new media is, as well. The term “new media” was in use in the late 1960s to signal the entry of telecommunications and computing (Parker, 1970), and a benchmark edited collection called “The New Media” appeared in the mid-1980s. (Rice and Associates, 1984) [9]. According to Lievrouw (2023), it may seem inappropriate to call digital media technologies “new” as they have become increasingly stabilized, have become routine, even banal features of everyday life. She questions whether there is a clear dividing line between “old” and “new” media or a particular historical moment of technological rupture that demarcates then from now [9].

Joe Cote, a public relations web manager at Southern New Hampshire University gives this definition of new media: New media is any media – from newspaper articles and blogs to music and podcasts – that are delivered digitally. From a website or email to mobile phones and streaming applications, any internet-related form of communication falls under its umbrella [10].

The authors of the book “Research Methods and The New Media” say that by “new media” we mainly mean those media technologies, mostly electronic and digital, that are undergoing expansion in our times. A medium might be as singularly “new” as the interactive videodisc (CD), yet there are many examples where the “new” represents an extension of an older medium. These new opportunities allow for changes in human communication behaviors on intra and interpersonal levels, in groups, organizations, and in mass audience contexts [11].

Meanwhile, Hassan & Thomas say that the popular understanding of new media identifies it with the use of a computer for distribution and exhibition rather than production. Accordingly, texts distributed on a computer (Web sites and electronic books) are considered to be new media, whereas texts distributed on paper are not. Similarly, photographs that are put on a CD-ROM and require a computer to be viewed are considered new media; the same photographs printed in a book are not [8]. Eric Scherer considers that new media are henceforth under the power of three forces: digitization, mobility, and personalization [12].

It is interesting that after any invention of a new technology, it is thought that the peak has been reached. Even the telegraph, radio, telephone, television, etc., at the time of their invention were seen as such. This is how it has always continued. But today, a single device, such as a smartphone (or computer, laptop, or tablet), enables them all in one place. In addition to communication, with this device you can play games, watch TV, listen to the radio, read the newspaper online, read books, browse laws and other materials, use it for social networks, watch movies, take photos, shoot videos, even editing TV newscasts, managing credit cards, paying bills, do online shopping, applying for jobs, studies, etc.

In fact, says Rembert, computers are helping us today with literally everything. By implementing machine learning, we get assistance from market forecasting and electronic trading to anticipating when a walkway is likely to crash [13]. This exchange of information, this giant ear-to-ear transmission that goes to the other end of the planet in a second, according to Scherer, is the new Planetary Commerce Cafe. According to the owner of Google, Eric Schmidt, at this moment, every two days, as much information and data is created as between the beginning of civilization and the year 2003! How? From millions of small contributions that count! From millions of online newspapers created through blogs, millions of TV channels to YouTube, millions of tweets and Facebook statuses, endless possibilities to show the world your photos through Flickr, your music on MySpace, your knowledge on Wikipedia, etc. [12].

There are different reasons why people use new media. Robert K. Logan of the Department of Physics at St. Michael, University of Toronto (Toronto-Canada), in digital media notes that: “1. Digital new media enhance interactivity, access to information, and two-way communication. 2. They obsolesce mass media, such as television and newspapers. 3. They retrieve community. 4. And pushed far enough, they flip or reverse into hyperreality or the loss of contact with nature and our bodies” [1].

Experts in the field of media and communication, when they talk about the use of new media by young people, mention the theory “Uses and gratification” that focuses on why and what the audience does with the tools of mass communication (Katz, 1959; Klapper, 1963) [14]. There are those who think that the aspect of socialization and interaction with their peers prevails in relation to other aspects regarding the use of new media and that also the use of media by young people varies by social context [15] that young people use the media, mainly for entertainment, communication, and knowledge about the issues they want to know [16].

Physiologically, man in the normal use of technology (or his variously extended body) is perpetually modified by it and in turn finds ever new ways of modifying his technology [17]. These changes in the human being's behavior are even greater in the digital and new media age. If before the 21st century, shopping could only be done in a store, now it can be done from home and not only in the place where you live. Orders can be done 'online' in any country up to the other side of the world. Many jobs today are also done from home. There are many cases of information technology-skilled young people who work for giant American companies or in other Western countries while sitting in front of a computer or laptop at home (in Kosovo). Currently, many postgraduate studies are even conducted 'online', while the university is located in another country or continent.

People of the digital age coordinate their work with mobile phones, what researchers call "mobile office assembly" and "nomad workers" [8]. In the age of digitalization, even traditional media are not the same. This has also changed the press (now in most cases they are "online"), but also radio and television. All three of these media can be read, heard, and watched almost anywhere, without the need to carry a physical copy of a newspaper, or a radio and without being "forced" to watch television only in a static place. It is enough to have a laptop, tablet, or smartphone and have access to the Internet and you will have everything everywhere. Today the world looks even smaller than "a global village" as McLuhan saw it more than 40 years ago. Everything everywhere is the phrase currently being spread by the media [4]. Each of the laptops, tablets, and smartphones already contains more informative power than the newsrooms of twenty years ago [12].

This has been proven to us, as never before, by the war in Ukraine that started in February (2022) after the invasion by Russia. The world has received real-time information, photos, and videos of the fighting between the Russian and Ukrainian forces, the downing of airplanes, and the destruction of military artillery. This way of reporting by almost anyone with a smartphone, almost directly from the war, has never been so widespread before.

So, today everyone can become a news receiver and distributor at the same time. It has never been so easy and free to produce, edit, and distribute informational content. Now everyone has the opportunity to express themselves and be heard without going through traditional media, their resonance box, and their filtering capacity. People have their printing press (blog), their radio (podcast), their television (YouTube) and are connected to each other [12]. Today, an ordinary person has the opportunity to transmit messages through the web as powerful as a written press (newspaper), as a television, as a radio [7].

Technologies and media have shortened time and reduced space, what McLuhan knew as a human extension, which he divided into three stages: During the mechanical age we managed to extend our body in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned [17]. McLuhan warned that there will come "the final phase of the extensions of man—the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society" [17].

Is this the last stage of the extension of man we are living in, this is not accurately said even by media and communication connoisseurs. They agree that new media provide opportunities that were once not possible without them, such as double communication [16]. There are thoughts that in the future the technology will be evolved so that it will be able to change our personality, consciousness, or the "installation" of

a new language in the human brain [18] and that this is a never-ending process [15]. Researchers consider that in digital media, the system itself is also interpreting. In this way, we become an extension of that medium and it somehow seems to fulfill a feeling that McLuhan [8] (64) prophesied when he wrote ‘In this electric age, we see ourselves being translated more and more into the form of information, moving toward the technological extension of consciousness’ [1].

Referring to the maxim that “the medium is the message”, McLuhan considers that the message carried by the media is not important, but according to him, it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action. The content or uses of such media are as diverse as they are ineffectual in shaping the form of human association; the media themselves influence human consciousness and society [17].

To argue this, he takes the example of light, which he says is a medium without a message, “unless it is used to spell out some verbal ad or name” and that “the content of any medium is always another medium” [17].

There are other theories about media and technological changes in humanity that have similarities and crucial differences with McLuhan’s theory. Raymond Williams, a Britain media theorist, academic, and writer has another point of view on media and technologies.

Williams came into direct conflict with the influential arguments of Marshall McLuhan that mass media provide a sensory extension of the human body. Williams acknowledged the appeal of McLuhan’s discussion of specific media forms but accused him of a formalism that erased all social and historical context from discussions of technology.

According to Des Freedman’s research, published online on December 2010, Williams was certainly wrong when he suggested that McLuhan’s ideas would have only a limited shelf-life. But Williams also pointed out that McLuhan’s thesis, as an example of seeing technology as the driver of history, would be constantly renewed [19]. And this is exactly happening in some of the new media. For example, in Facebook, if you once searched for any information, product, or whatever, that medium will “suggest you” similar things in succession. And the display of such things will stop only if you have never clicked or opened the same information again. And the same procedure will be repeated for every other search. So, in this case, the user determines the message and not the medium, as McLuhan once said.

Even researchers and media connoisseurs have different opinions regarding this issue when it comes to digital media because they are also changing McLuhan’s expression “the medium is the message”, which is turning into “the user is the message” and “the user’s information becomes the content of the digital medium” [1].

Starting from the fact that the Internet and new media are offering incomparable opportunities than before, today the dilemma of the manipulation of the human mind by digital media, what is known as “captology”—the study of how computers and interfaces (devices or programs that enable human-computer communication) can influence human behavior. The field of captology has the direct aim of manipulating our behavior by making use of what they learn about us [1].

In the age of new media, children do not grow up like their parents. Instead of their socialization with other children playing in kindergartens, urban neighborhoods and villages, today their “socialization” takes place mainly in social networks and games that are done ‘online’. By continuously embracing technologies, we relate ourselves to them as servo-mechanisms [17].

As soon as children have access to the Internet, they become part of different platforms by opening accounts in social networks to follow the society trends.

This certainly facilitates their communication, they can get information about whatever they want and have fun, as well. But this also has its own cost. The influence is caused by the belief we have about media and technology, researchers say. They call obedience to technology even communicating with loved ones through Facebook, or withdrawing money from an ATM, buying gifts for a birthday, carrying a mobile phone, etc.

The reality, and the danger, is that we are becoming extensions of our digital technologies controlled by the internet monopolies that dominate this medium of media. There is always a danger when control of the dominant technology of a culture is in the hands of a small number of agents [1].

These days, not only children but also older generations are pretty much new media users. Someone uses them to be informed about daily activities; someone also uses them to browse school literature, others for entertainment, someone just to spend the free time, etc. But everyone somehow is part of these media. However, the most sensitive age are children, therefore researchers are paying more and more attention to the changes that may occur due to their use. Research shows that children are often the pioneers in exploring and experimenting with new digital devices, services, and contents – they are encountering the risks before many adults become aware of them or are able to develop strategies to mitigate them [20].

This research that talks about “Children’s data and online privacy—Growing up in the digital age”, carried out in April 2018–July 2019 in schools in several English-speaking countries (London, Midlands, Essex, Scotland, and Wales) with children aged 5–17 years, draws attention, especially for the violation of children’s privacy. Technologies are increasingly important as a means through which children can exercise their rights and meet basic needs—they provide much-needed access to education, socializing, participation, well-being, and entertainment.

But as technologies become more sophisticated, networked, and commercially viable, children’s privacy is threatened by new forms of data collection and surveillance enacted by businesses, parents, and the state (including schools, health and welfare systems, and law enforcement) [20]. The research also highlights the unpreparedness of parents to guide their children when they ask them about the issue of privacy and also teachers admit that children are sometimes smarter with the use of technology [20].

The British professor, Sonia Livingstone, in an interview for the newspaper “El Pais”, dated July 16, 2022, says that there is a lot of evidence that children have worse health. However, Livingstone says it is not known whether this is due to the great use of technology and media, or because these problems are now being talked about more openly (Livingstone, “El Pais” 2022) [21].

Young people on social networks also look for “perfection”, which is why in many cases children can even be bullied for their appearance. Livingstone says that she would be much more worried about her daughter if she thought that everyone was thin and beautiful than for a pedophile who would try to seduce her through the Internet. There’s lots of good for kids. But we need to stand back from the screen and think about the balance of kids’ lives. What I argue is that we’ve been getting over-focused on screens. There’s a lot of other stuff. There’s a lot of social inequality. There’s a really unclear future in so many ways. A lot of problems are not resolved. So, we focus on screens because we think we can control that. It seems like the controllable bit of our lives [21].

There are different opinions regarding the impact of new media on young people. One opinion is that young people are more content with visuals and less information, so it makes them vulnerable to propaganda, then they also see the anonymity of

social networks as negative, but also bullying on the Internet [15]. The other opinion is that the advantage of new media gives a voice to everyone or the negative aspect that produces polarizing language [18].

Media connoisseurs are quite critical of the way media work today in the digital age and the great influence they have on users. Technology and media are using the weaknesses of the human mind, otherwise known as mind hijacking [22], and they are killing intellectual humility [23]. Even McLuhan said that in the electric age, when our central nervous system is technologically extended to whole of mankind and to incorporate the whole of mankind in us, we necessarily participate, in depth, in the consequences of our every action [17].

The inventor of the first mobile phone, Martin Cooper, in an interview on BBC Breakfast, in June 2022, said that people should have a life and stop using mobile phones so much [24].

In the survey and research published in August 2023 conducted with 160 adolescents, pupils from a large school in Nederland, Teun Siebers, Ine Beyens, and Patti M. Valkenburg measured for three weeks the use of smartphones by these students. The authors concluded that participants of the survey had distractions and delays on tasks when they used their smartphones fragmentarily and stickily.

We found that three out of four adolescents experienced more distraction when their smartphone use was more fragmented, and more than half of them experienced more distraction when their smartphone use was sticky. In addition, fragmented use was associated with task delay among one in five adolescents, while sticky use was associated with task delay among two in five adolescents [25].

The potential for their abuse is great. When our technologies were only extensions of us, they enhanced our capabilities, and we were in command of them in the sense that they did our bidding as our servomechanisms. The tools no doubt affected us, but they were not used by others to control us [1].

Magicians start by looking for blind spots, edges, vulnerabilities, and limits of people's perception, so they can influence what people do without them even realizing it. Once you know how to push people's buttons, you can play them like a piano. And this is exactly what product designers do to your mind. They play your psychological vulnerabilities (conscious or unconscious) against you in the race to grab your attention [22].

Researchers are raising the concern that crowds who think they know it all are being created on social networks. The internet encourages epistemic arrogance—the belief that one knows much more than one does. The internet's tailored social media feeds and algorithms have herded us into echo chambers where our own views are cheered and opposing views are mocked. Sheltered from serious challenge, celebrated by our chosen mob, we gradually lose the capacity for accurate self-assessment and begin to believe ourselves [23] vastly more knowledgeable than we actually are.

In recent years, it has happened that the new media are often used for propaganda for various political interests and other interest groups. Their great power to penetrate each of their users (of which there are many), has made the new media quite successful in this "business". Yeatman adds that it is not just the social reinforcement mechanism of like-minded crowds that is killing intellectual humility.

This is being done, according to her, also by our own digital trails—the permanent records of our previous opinions. Because of this, it often happens that in social networks, different people are "nailed" by these crowds, attacked with the most negative comments, bullied and even asked for lynching, just because they have a different opinion from them. Social networks often become a battleground of individuals

or different groups for certain issues. With its currency of shares, retweets, likes, and ratios, the social media economy picks losers and winners. It rewards alpha-boys and pile-ons; memes and humiliations; short, brutal interactions where a winner “crushes” a loser [23].

Another concern expressed by researchers is the excessive use of the Internet and exposure to misinformation. The use of the Internet increases in times of crisis, as people want to be more informed, have more time for it, but at the same time, misinformation also increases, as certain groups use the opportunity to “sell” it, we have the case with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war. In both cases, a lot of disinformation and conspiracy theories have been spread, but also, we have had an increase in the use of the Internet and new media.

The Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the Science and Knowledge Service of the European Commission have published a report that presents the findings from a survey of children aged 10–18 from 11 European countries. Data was collected between June and August 2020 from 6,195 children and 6,195 parents from national teams participating in the International Research Project “Kids Digital Lives in COVID-19 Times (KiDiCoTi)” coordinated by the JRC.

This report focuses on changes in the dynamics of dealing with dangerous online situations experienced by children (10–18 years old) from 11 countries during the COVID-19 lockdown (spring 2020) and the reactions or steps taken by children or their parents to mitigate these dangerous situations. It presents the main findings on the course of the use of digital technology by children during the COVID-19 lockdown in terms of (1) Time spent online; (2) Online risky situations at a general level and specifically regarding screen overuse, cyberbullying, cyber hate, disinformation, misuses of personal data, cyber security; and (3) Parents and children’s reactions to mitigate online risks [25].

The report states that nearly one parent out of two worries more about their children’s online time during the lockdown. At the same time, nearly half of the children felt an online overuse, with variability at national level from 38% declaring such a statement in Germany to 59% in Ireland and Romania. Effectively, children reported spending between 6 hours to 7.5 hours online a day in weekdays during lockdown and that more than half of this time was dedicated to school activities [26].

One quarter reported an increase of bothering/upsetting online experiences during the Covid-19 spring lockdown. At country level, this share spans from 14% in Slovenia to 28% in Ireland [25]. Almost half of the respondents have experienced a moment of bullying during this period. At the national level, this percentage is the highest in Italy (59%), Ireland (59%), Germany (58%) and Romania (57%) and the lowest in Slovenia (32%). In all countries, among children who have already been victims of cyberbullying, almost half (44%) reported an increase in the phenomenon during the COVID-19 spring lockdown. At the national level, this percentage is highest in Germany (51%), Italy (50%), Spain (50%) and Ireland (48%) and lowest in Slovenia (24%) [26].

The report highlights that user-generated content risks – negative content (e.g., inappropriate content, violence, drugs, self-harms) created and published by users for users, typically via social media – have been growing steadily since one of their first observances in 2010 by the EU Kids Online research.

The report also shows that three-quarter of children have reported encountering disinformation. Norway is the country with the most children prone to denounce disinformation (only 12% saying they have never encountered information online that they suspect is untrue), whereas France is at the opposite pole (40% of children saying it never happened). The results also show an increase in self-assessed

disinformation during the lockdown period for at least a third of the surveyed children. At national level, an increase of disinformation experiences during the lockdown in spring 2020 was reported by children the most in Ireland (48%) and Portugal (45%), and the least in France (28%) and Germany (29%) [26].

In this report, it is stated that some of the children have experienced hate on the Internet, then at least half of the children have seen gory images [25]. The vast majority of parents do talk to youngsters about what they do with digital technology, suggest ways to use internet safely (90% or more for all countries, except Norway where 86% of parents only reported to talk with their child about their use of digital technology). Most of them also (at least 85%) limit or forbid access to certain types of content (e.g. violent, gory or sexual content) [26].

Parents (95% overall) are used to taking steps towards protecting devices more than their children (85% overall). Overall, one-third of users in the surveyed families took additional steps to protect their devices during the lockdown [26]. In this difficult time, the use of learning platforms was increased, and students of all educational grades felt the need to communicate more with each other. A survey conducted in Albania with 130 university students revealed several important findings.

First, 72% of the students contacted their colleagues more than four times a day, particularly during exam periods. Second, 66% of the students felt that they needed a mentor to support them during their university studies. Third, 80% of the students shared their notes and explanations with their colleagues. Fourth, 100% of the students preferred to study in groups, indicating a need for collaborative learning environments. Fifth, all the students believed they could perform better if they received help from their university peers [27].

These online platforms for learning were very helpful also in Brazil giving the students equal opportunities.

Distance Education (DE) has transformed over the past ten years, and consequently, virtual course offerings have increased in order to make education available throughout Brazil. But we used to learn in classrooms with physical presence.

This modality brings the flexibility of time and place to study but makes physical interaction between the parties involved in the teaching and learning process more difficult [28].

Athanasios Drigas, Irene Chaidi and Chara Papoutsis in their research in August 2023 stated that teachers and learning methods should be the subject of changes to reach the educational goal in the digital era. Today's children are tech-savvy from a very young age, and the educational system should try to follow and transform itself according to the trends of new technologies.

They portrayed the teacher of the future. The school teachers of 2050 will no longer write on blackboards or use white paper for notes but will engage in meaningful discussion, and teaching will be a profession of choice among quality candidates [29].

However, for teachers, it is not easy to deal with online teaching technologies, think the authors of the research entitled "Secondary School Teachers' Attitudes Towards Online Learning Tools: Teachers' Behaviour in Distance Education".

The study done in the Czech Republic highlights a persistent problem in education, the so-called technostress. That is, that teachers have failed to cope with the challenges of using technology to support online learning.

The authors suggest courses on technology for teachers. Workshops and other courses on useful technologies should be offered to teachers, taking into account their needs, in order to avoid the occurrence of burnout and to achieve a sustainable mental health balance [30].

Another teaching challenge is keeping students focused and motivated for learning. In the survey conducted with 665 students of secondary technical schools in the Czech Republic, respondents listed the dominant demotivators.

Risk 1 (The study materials are outdated and not applicable), Risk 7 (The topics of our lessons are not interesting, and I do not think about the issues), and Risk 8 (The lessons are not attractive, or they are boring) referred to the prevalent cognitive need frustration, as well as Risk 3 (Multiple poor grades decrease the self-confidence of the students) [31].

But do young people really trust the media? Or which do they trust more? Experts in the field of media and communication have different opinions about this, as well. The issue of trust has more to do with who is posting than the platform where information is distributed [16], or about credibility in new media is more important: who says it than where it is said [18]. There are others who think that despite the fact that young people mostly use new media, when it comes to which they trust the most, young people choose traditional media [15].

McLuhan says that education is ideally civil defense against media fallout [17]. Social media presents limitless possibilities for good, learning conversations like deep canvassing between strangers across the globe. If each social media user approached online interactions from a position of deep intellectual humility, recognizing that every other user represents an opportunity to fill knowledge gaps and grow, our social networks could become an unprecedented engine of human progress instead of the drag-down into tribalism they currently seem to be [23].

3 METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out through the quantitative-survey and the qualitative-interview method. The survey included young people aged 15–18, students of 13 high school in seven regional centers of Kosovo: Pristina (Gymnasiums: “Xhevdet Doda”, “Sami Frasheri”, Philological Gymnasium “Eqrem Çabej” and Mathematical Specialized Gymnasium); South Mitrovica: (“Frang Bardhi” Gymnasium), Peja (“Bedri Pejani” Gymnasium); Ferizaj (Gymnasiums: “Dr. Shaban Hashani” and “Kuvendi i Arbrit”); Gjilan (Gymnasiums: “Xhavit Ahmeti” and “Zenel Hajdini”); Prizren (Gymnasiums: “Gjon Buzuku” and “Remzi Ademaj”); and Gjakove (“Hajdar Dushi” Gymnasium).

The sample of this research is the students of classes 10, 11 and 12 of these seven regional centers, where, in each gymnasium were surveyed one class of 10th grade, one class of 11th grade and one class of 12th grade. In each class, 20 questionnaires were completed, which is 60 for a school, or 780 questionnaires at the country level. The research was conducted in March 2022 (except for the “Xhevdet Doda” Gymnasium in Pristina, which was conducted in April).

The survey was carried out through cluster analysis-group samples. The survey contained mostly closed questions, except for the last question which was open. As for the qualitative method, experts in the field of communication and media were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in August and September 2022 through Skype, Zoom and Viber platforms. In terms of form, the interview is standardized.

This research aims to highlight what the young people of Kosovo (high school students) use the new media for the most. What first comes to mind when they access them? Is it communication, information, entertainment or something else that intrigues them more? Which of them do they mostly trust? Which devices do they use more to access new media? How much time do they spend per day

in these media? What impact do new media have on these young people, etc.? This research aims to draw a conclusion on these issues related to new media and young people in Kosovo, the results of which could be used in the future by schools in Kosovo, municipal directorates of education and by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, but also by parents, so that their children use these media in a more controlled way and for the things that are most useful for them.

Through this research, it is also intended to see if the high school students of the seven regional centers of Kosovo have “evolved” in terms of using new media from the time they were elementary school students. Therefore, it is intended to make a finding if young people’s preferences change with their age regarding these media: what did the same students use new media for when they were in elementary school and what for do they use these media now when they attend classes in secondary schools? Additionally, it will address the issue of the influence that new media have, not only on communication, but also on the general social aspect. The hypothesis of this research is:

The young people of Kosovo (gymnasium pupils) use the new media mostly for communication.

3.1 The limitations of research

The survey results which produced this paper were conducted in 13 gymnasiums, the elite schools of Kosovo, in seven main regional centers. One of limitations of this paper is that the survey didn’t occur in high schools of small municipalities and in vocational education (mainly technical and economical high schools).

Also, a scientific opinion from Kosovan sociologists and psychologists about the impact of new media among youth people in Kosovo would enhance scholarly value of our research.

3.2 The ethical standards

The research has the approval of Information and Privacy Agency to be published in any scholarly journal. According to this agency, the survey and the research did not violate ethical rules.

4 RESEARCH RESULTS

The research included young people aged 15–18—students of 10th, 11th and 12th grades in thirteen high schools in seven regional centers of Kosovo (Pristina, Mitrovica, Peje, Gjilan, Ferizaj, Prizren and Gjakove). In each gymnasium, 20 students were surveyed on each class, i.e., 60 for each gymnasium, in total 780 questionnaires. 444 or 56.9 percent of respondents are girls and 336 or 43.1 percent are boys.

Respondents in most cases have chosen more than one alternative when answering the question. While some (in small numbers) did not answer a particular question, or gave immeasurable answers, i.e., on the question of how much time do they spend in new media, some answered a little, a lot, sometimes, etc. and therefore their responses are not included in the results.

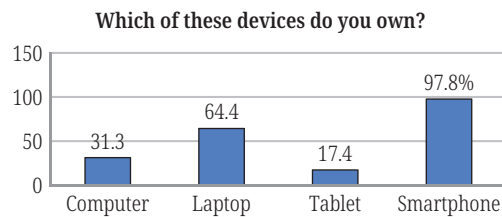


Fig. 1. Responses on owned devices

What stands out in terms of equipment ownership, according to Figure 1. Responses on owned devices, which is to be expected, is the smartphone, where 97.8 percent of respondents stated that they own such a phone. After that, the students have declared that they own a laptop with 64.4 percent, then 31.3 percent of respondents have a computer and the least they have is a tablet at 17.4 percent.

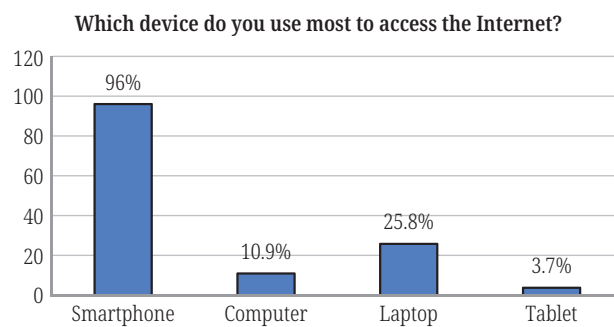


Fig. 2. Responses on most used devices

Some students use more than one device to access the Internet. As can be seen in the research, from Figure 2. Responses on most devices, the students of the thirteen gymnasiums mostly use the smartphone to access the Internet with 96 percent, followed by the laptop with 25.8 percent, the computer with 10.9 and finally the tablet with 3.7 percent.

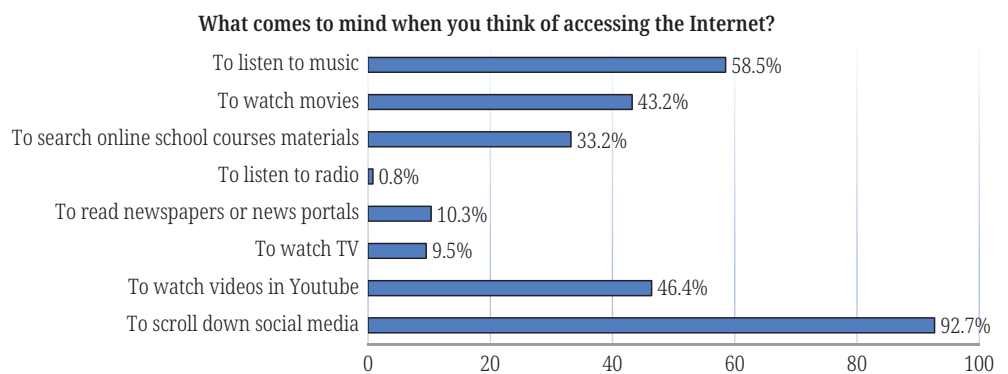


Fig. 3. Responses on what do you use internet for

The surveyed students are seen to think mostly about social networks when they access the Internet with 92.7 percent. Then, from Figure 3. Responses on what do you use internet for, they listen to music with 58.5 percent; YouTube follows with 46.4 percent, movies with 43.2 percent, research for educational subjects, 33.2 percent. And the students think to read newspapers and portals least (10.3%), watch TV (9.5%) and listen to the radio (0.8%).

Boys prefer YouTube (54.8%–40.1%), TV (9.8%–9.2%) and newspapers and portals (14.6%–7%) more than girls. Meanwhile, girls prefer more than boys social networks (94.1%–90.6%, music (60.4%–56%), movies (44.1%–42%), researching educational subjects (38.3%–26.5%) and radio (09%–0.6%).

As far as age groups are concerned, students of 12th grade lead in most of the alternatives.

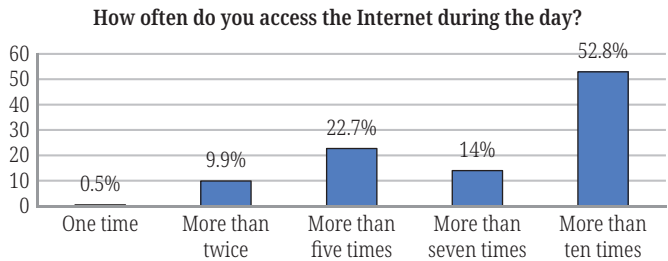


Fig. 4. Responses on daily usage of internet

According to Figure 4. Responses on daily usage of internet, more than half of the respondents (52.8 percent) access the Internet more than ten times during the day, 22.7 percent have chosen the alternative more than five times, followed by 14 percent of those who access more than seven times during the day on the Internet, 9.9 percent said that they access it more than twice and finally 0.5 percent access the Internet only once during the day.

59.5 percent of those who stated that they access the Internet more than ten times during the day are boys compared to girls with 47.9 percent. Whereas, in the following three alternatives, girls are the ones who access more than boys (15.3% with 12.2%, 24.6% with 20.2% and 11.7% with 7.4%).

12th grade students access the Internet more (56.2%) than those of 11 (51.5%) and 10 (51%). When we compare the data across municipalities, it turns out that the students of Peja and Gjakova access the Internet the most (58.3%), while those of Mitrovica the least (48.3%).

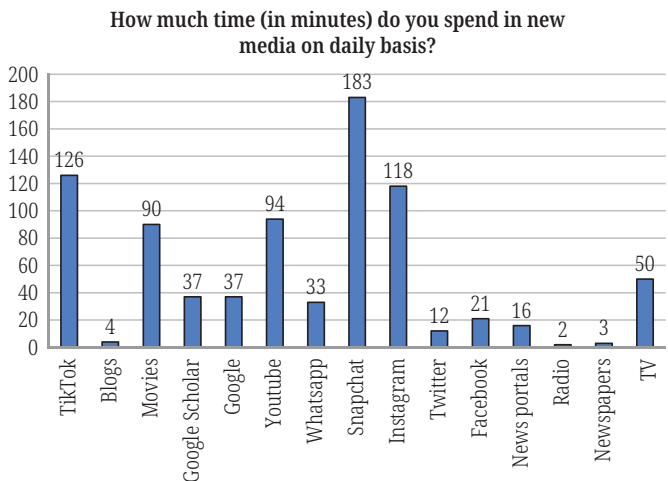


Fig. 5. Responses on time spent daily on new media

The next question shows how much time the high school students of the seven regional centers of Kosovo spend on new media on average during a day.

As can be seen in the Figure 5. Responses on time spent daily on the media, students spend most of the day on Snapchat, an average of 183 minutes or 3 hours. After it,

comes TikTok with 2 hours (126 min.), Instagram 2 hours (118 min.), from 1 hour and a half YouTube (94 min.) and Movies (90 min.), TV with 50 minutes, Google and Google Scholar with 37 minutes, WhatsApp 33 minutes, Facebook 21 minutes, Portals 16 minutes, Twitter 12, Blogs 4, Newspapers 3 and finally Radio with 2 minutes on average.

However, this is only the average of the students as a whole. Meanwhile, the research shows that 100 students, or 12.8 percent of the respondents, say that they stay all the time accessing new media. In this figure, girls lead with 14.6 percent against boys with 10.4 percent.

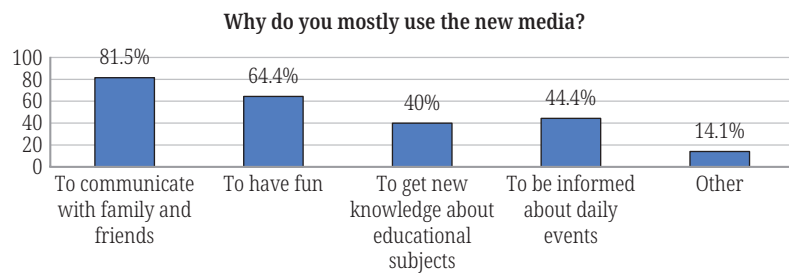


Fig. 6. Responses on media usage

As per Figure 6. Responses on media usage, young people in Kosovo mostly use new media “To communicate with family and friends” with 81.5 percent. After communication, the respondents as the second option have chosen “Entertainment” with 64.4 percent, then “To be informed about daily events” 44.4 percent, “To get new knowledge about teaching subjects” 40 percent and 14.1 percent of the respondents chose the alternative “Other”.

Girls prefer more than boys only “To communicate with family and friends” (86.3%–75.3%) and “For new knowledge” (44.4%–34.2%). In all other alternatives, boys lead.

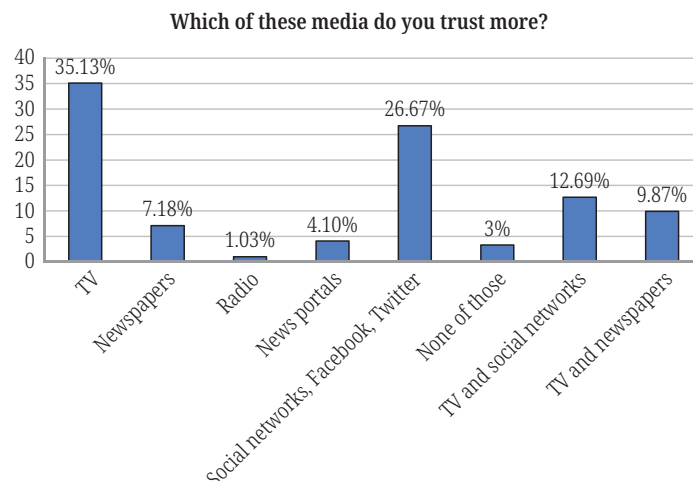


Fig. 7. Responses on trusted media

Regardless of the fact that the surveyed students stated that they mostly think of accessing social networks when they access the Internet, their most trusted media remains television.

According to Figure 7. Responses on trusted media, this medium leads with 35.13 percent. But if we add half of those who have chosen the alternatives “TV and social networks” and “TV and newspapers”, then 46.41 percent trust television.

After TV comes social networks with 26.7 percent, but if we add the remaining half from “TV and social networks”, then 33 percent of respondents trust social networks, 12.69 percent chose “TV and social networks”, 9.87 “TV and newspapers”, 7.18 percent “Newspapers” and 4.10 percent “Portals”. Students trust the radio the least at 1.03 percent.

Girls trust television more than boys (36.3% versus 33.6%), social networks (27.3% versus 25.9%) and the combination of “TV and newspaper” (11.5% versus 7.7%). While boys prefer the alternatives “TV and social networks” (14.3% vs. 11.5%), “Newspapers” (8.9% vs. 5.9%) and “Portals” (4.5% vs. 3.8%).

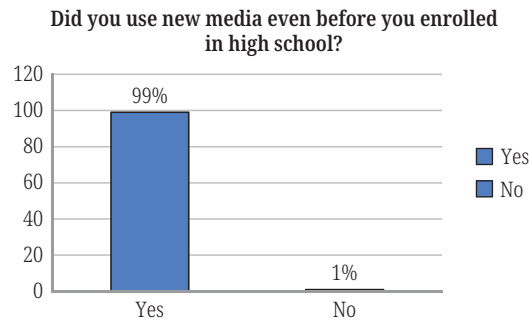


Fig. 8. Responses on new media usage before high school

The vast majority of the respondents, or all those who answered, 99% stated that they used new media even during primary school. This information is provided in Figure 8. Responses on new media usage before high school.

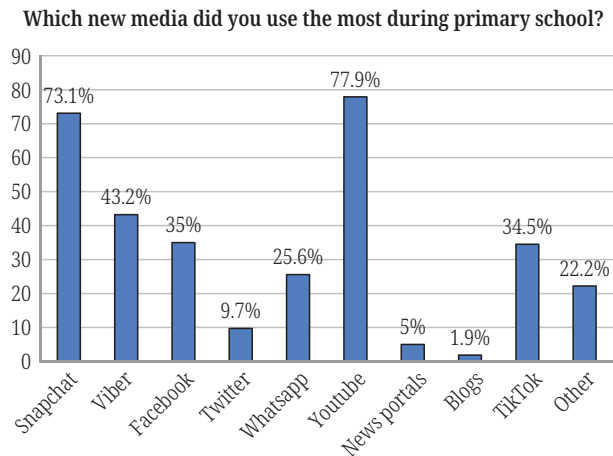


Fig. 9. Responses on media used mostly in primary school

YouTube was the most used media during primary school (11–14 years old) by respondents with 77.9 percent. After it, there is Snapchat with 73.1 percent, then Viber with 43.2 percent, Facebook with 35 percent, TikTok 34.5 percent, WhatsApp 25.6 percent, Other 22.2 percent, Twitter 9.7 percent, Portals 5 percent, while at least 1.9 percent used Blogs, is explained in Figure 9. Responses on media used mostly in primary school.

In most alternatives, girls dominate. During elementary school, they used Snapchat more than boys (56.8%–43.2%), Viber (57.3%–42.7%), WhatsApp (58%–45.5%), YouTube (54.6%–45.5%), Blogs (60%–40%) and TikTok (61.7%–38.3%). Meanwhile, boys used Facebook (62.3%–37.7%), Twitter (56.6%–43.4%), Portals (76.9%–23.1%) and Other (53.2%–46.8%) more than girls.

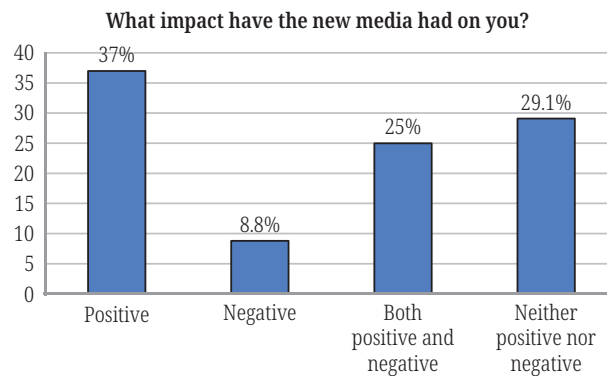


Fig. 10. Responses on the new media impact

Students have different opinions regarding the impact that new media has had, as it is shown in Figure 10. Responses on the new media impact. 37 percent of the respondents say that the new media have had a positive impact, 8.8 percent think that they have had a negative impact, 25 percent consider that they have had both a positive and negative impact, while 29.1 percent think that the new media have not had neither positive nor negative impact.

Boys are ahead of girls in terms of positive influence (53.1% vs. 46.9%), while they think the same about negative influence (50% vs. 50%). Meanwhile, when we talk about the options “Both positive and negative” and “Neither positive nor negative”, girls lead (73.6% with 26.4%) and (58.2% with 41.8%).

5 COMPARISON

In the following, we will make a comparison of the use of new media by the respondents when they were in primary school and now in high school.

As it was seen at the beginning of this chapter, high school students of the seven regional centers of Kosovo use Snapchat the most. They spend an average of 183 minutes or 3 hours during the day. After it, comes TikTok and Instagram with 2 hours each (126 min.–118 min.), from 1 hour and a half YouTube and Movies (94 min.–90 min.), TV with 50 minutes, Google and Google Scholar with 37 minutes, WhatsApp 33 minutes, Facebook 21 minutes, Portals 16 minutes, Twitter 12, Blogs 4, Newspapers 3 and finally Radio with 2 minutes on average.

But was this the case when these students were in primary school? Based on this research, it appears that the media or platform most liked by the same students when they were in elementary school was YouTube with 77.9 percent, and now this media is ranked fourth. After YouTube, students have used Snapchat and now it ranks first. Facebook, which was fourth, is now ranked tenth. Meanwhile, primary school pupils used TikTok less than now. This social network was the fifth, while now it is the second after Snapchat. WhatsApp is ranked ninth, while it has been the sixth most used, etc.

As can be seen, apart from Snapchat, which was the second and is now the first, in general, the preferences of students have changed with age. So, the four most used platforms by the pupils surveyed in Kosovo when they were in primary school are: YouTube with 77.9%, Snapchat 73.1%, Viber 43.2% and Facebook with 35%. While the four most popular platforms now in high schools are: Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram and YouTube.

6 THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ACCORDING TO STUDENTS

As it has been emphasized several times during this paper, the means of communication have influenced the social and cultural life of people. In the following, we will bring the answers of students of Kosovo about the impact of the new media.

The last question of the survey was open and at the same time there was a connection with the penultimate question. When they were asked what impact new media has had, in the follow-up question, they were asked to write down the reason why they think these media have had such an impact?

As seen in the previous chapter, students have different opinions regarding the impact of new media. 37 percent of the respondents say that the new media have had a positive impact, 8.8 percent think that they have a negative impact, 25 percent consider that they have both a positive and a negative impact, while 29.1 percent think that the new media have neither positive nor negative impact. The majority of those who have positively evaluated the use of new media, have mentioned the acquisition of new knowledge from these media, entertainment, communication with family and society, etc.

“If you know how to use new media, you can learn a lot from them, you can do different research and get important information that will serve you” – boy, class 11. “Because we are informed about the events of the day, we form a network with our peers inside and outside the country, and we also distribute calls for applications for various projects, etc.” – girl, class 10.

“Because I have learned English better...” – boy, class 11. “Because I learned more things than in school and other places. You can get the experiences of people in a real situation, not like on TV where they can make different propaganda” – girl, class 11.

“I think that the new media have had a positive impact because with their development we have learned many new things, we can grasp the school lessons faster, since they are more detailed and it seems easier to us because most of the time, we use internet devices more than books” – boy, class 11.

“Because it makes communication, information, games, various searches, etc. easier for us” – girl, class 12.

“I think the new media have had a positive impact because they have made it possible for us to have the whole world on the phone, for entertainment, for research, for obtaining information, for learning, etc.” – girl, class 11.

“Because it’s one step closer to the future and you’re always up to date with what’s happening for now even though we are not physically present” – boy, class 12.

“I learned everything from life, how to become a businessman, how to manage money. Social networks are not harmful, but it depends on how the person uses them” – boy, class 12.

“We learn about world events, we can create friendships with people from other countries, games, music, various things, looking at clothes, style, we make new trends in our country” – girl, class 11.

“We can also approach people around the world, see news from all over the globe, gain more knowledge than we have in textbooks that are not attractive at all” – girl, class 12.

“I think that the media have had a positive influence most of the time, because they have helped me find and form my identity and feel less alone. They are also very entertaining” – girl, class 12.

“I had opportunities to talk with wonderful people, but these media consume a large part of my time. The algorithm almost hypnotizes you and it is difficult to get out of the application” – boy, class 10.

“Because they made me understand that there is diversity in the world” – girl, class 10. And those who have assessed that these media have had a negative impact, as reasons have mentioned addiction, waste of time, health problems, etc.

“Because they are addictive to me and most of the time distract me from what I am doing. But I don’t say that they don’t have a positive influence, because when I have something unclear, the media help me to get information” – girl, class 10.

“By staying for hours on the phone, I didn’t gain any positive thing, because I wasted time and fell behind with school lessons” – girl, class 12.

“It constantly affects our lives, because we are getting addicted, and we are constantly depending on them. Access to social networks, the ‘fame’ that develops in social networks, is one of the most important issues in the society nowadays. Recognitions, likes, good comments and kindness in social networks are one of the greatest achievements that today’s generation can consider” – boy, class 11.

“Just constantly use the phone, I cannot concentrate, I got used to grab the phone even when I’m studying...” – girl, class 12.

“The daily need to be informed about events every second has increased the use of media and decreased the desire to socialize with each other, unfortunately” – girl, class 12.

“They take up a lot of time and just distract you from reality while you could be reading something or going for a walk in the fresh air” – girl, class 11.

“I think new media has had a negative impact on me because it has distracted me from real life” – boy, class 10.

“Because the degeneration of the new generations is done through false information about the current things happening in the world” – boy, class 11.

“Due to the addiction that has been created, I have been exposed to negative and inappropriate information for my age” – girl, class 11.

“Because we all know that social networks damage the mental health of children and especially our teenage years; not only mental health but also physical health, because excessive use of the phone worsens our health” – girl, class 11.

“Access to the network is a very good opportunity to learn and to be informed, which undoubtedly offers entertainment, which is the most attractive reason for using the media. The negative aspect is the time spent, which can be considered as a wasted time and unproductive since most new media are designed to take up users’ time” – girl, class 12

“Positive influence because when I felt bad, I talked to my classmates or family and it made me feel better. Negative influence because sometimes I fell behind in school” – girl, class 11.

“Positive impact because I get new information, either about learning units or events around me. Negative, because they have caused addiction, eye problems, feelings of insecurity with myself and creation of very high, unrealistic standards on certain topics” – girl, class 11.

“Positive because of new knowledge and negative about the way certain comments affect our psychological health”, girl, class 10.

“In my opinion, they have had a positive impact, since every day I learn new things about the world. And the negative impact is that there are different types of people and in some cases online bullying can happen, which I have experienced myself” – girl, class 10.

“Social networks are very useful because we are informed about many things we need in our daily lives, but they are also harmful because they create addiction for us. Maybe one of the reasons is that we are minors and we are not aware of the consequences. TikTok in particular, creates great dependence

in the life of a teenager and in most cases, it affects the change of character or personality” – girl, class 10.

“The impact has been neither positive nor negative, the reason is that we have benefited almost nothing from the new media” – boy, class 12.

“They have had no impact on me. I am and remain the same person regarding this matter. Therefore, I think that the new media have had neither a positive nor a negative impact” – boy, class 12.

“They didn’t have a big impact on me because my parents always made sure that I didn’t use the new media too much for either positive or negative reasons” – girl, class 11.

7 CONCLUSION

New media have changed the way of communication and the behavior of people in general. As Marshall McLuhan stated, man is constantly changing through the normal use of technology. The new media have also taken to another level what McLuhan called “human extension”.

If until a while ago you had to be present for everything you did, today through the new media, a single connected device on the Internet, (such as a smartphone, computer, laptop and tablet), enables everything ‘online’.

Besides communication, with this device you can play games, watch TV, listen to the radio, read the ‘online’ newspaper, read books, laws and other materials, use it for social networks, watch movies, take photos, shoot videos, even editing TV news, managing credit cards, paying bills, shopping ‘online’, applying for jobs, studying, doing a lot of work from home, etc. This has made new media widely used, especially by young people.

This is also proven in the research entitled “Use of new media by high school students of seven regional centers in Kosovo”. From this research, it can be seen that 12.8 percent of the students are all the time accessing these internet media and that more than half of the respondents (52.8 percent) access the internet more than ten times during a single day. Snapchat is mostly used by young people with an average of 183 minutes a day or 3 hours, followed by TikTok with 126 minutes and Instagram in third place with 118 minutes. Television takes sixth place with 50 minutes, even after YouTube with 94 minutes and movies with 90 minutes.

The results show that, despite the fact that young people in Kosovo mostly use new media (92.7 percent of the respondents stated that social networks are the first thing that comes to their mind when they access the Internet), television remains the most reliable media and social networks come in second place. The research also verifies the hypothesis that communication remains the main purpose of using these media by these young people, as opposed to entertainment and information about new daily events and educational subjects.

The majority of the respondents (99 percent), or all those who answered, stated that they used new media even during primary school. However, it can be seen that 77.9 percent respondents preferred YouTube the most when they were in primary school. Snapchat took second place with 73.1 percent, while Viber was in third place with 43.2 percent. TikTok, which is now ranked second, was in fifth place with 34.5 percent just behind Facebook with 35 percent. Regarding the influence, most young people think that the new media have a positive influence with 37 percent, as against 8.8 percent, who think they have a negative impact.

In the age of digitization, even traditional media are not the same. This has changed the press (now in most cases it is 'online'), but also radio and television. These days, the world has shrunk so much that it seems even smaller than "a global village", as it was seen from McLuhan more than 40 years ago. The Internet and new media have made it possible for each user to become a receiver and distributor of information at the same time. Thanks to the Internet and technology, access to an innumerable range of information in all fields is possible. "Everything everywhere" is the expression that more or less corresponds to the opportunity offered by the new media.

Researchers and lecturers of communication sciences have different attitudes, and in the era of new media, the Marshall McLuhan's theory that "the medium is the message" still stands. Some say that today the user himself is becoming the message.

In addition to the countless opportunities offered by the new media, experts in this field raise the alarm that they are killing intellectual humility, hijacking the human mind, infringing on the privacy of children, and that there is an increase in cases of stress among young people, but not necessarily connected with excessive use of the Internet.

However, what is required of young people is that the use of media does not exceed the permitted limits. As McLuhan points out, education has to be seen as a form of ideally civil defense against media fallout. For this it would be good, based on the results of the student survey, educational and health institutions along with psychologists, sociologists, and other experts in technology and new media to analyze the benefits and weaknesses of these media, the advantages and disadvantages of them, the possibilities and limitations of new media and the Internet.

They should come up with recommendations for school institutions and for parents, to what extent these media should be used, for what they should be used more and for what they should not be used at all. What are the opportunities they give students for the subjects, for science, the future, etc.? How not fall prey to various propaganda? How to protect their data from being exposed to misuse? How to distinguish fake news, etc.? Then the health specialists to understand what are the health risks if their use is exceeded.

For all this, it would be good if the subject "Media Education" was included in the curriculum in primary and secondary education, even as an optional subject initially, so that young people are prepared for these media which are now very widespread.

This paper has exactly this purpose, to know what young people use the new media for, how much time they spend on them, etc., then this data could help the responsible institutions to make proper policies. Today is the time of new media and it is not known if these last "inventions" will be enough for us. Tomorrow perhaps even these media can remain only a part of history!

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