The Influence of the Internet on Children's Education

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Abstract: Children's education has always been a hot topic in the education area. With the development of technology, the internet has become one of the most attractive education tools in children's education. This study aims to analyze the impact of Internet use on children's education and make some recommendations for improving the efficiency and safety of children's educational use of the Internet. Analysis of previous studies shows that using the internet can have positive effects, such as broadening horizons, facilitating the development of digital skills, and increasing learning efficiency at home. However, improper use of the Internet can trigger problems in children's education, such as Internet addiction and Internet-induced violence. Based on this, this paper makes some recommendations, including fostering communication awareness among children, families, and schools about how these children use the Internet, creating a global organization, and unifying Internet regulations around the world. The paper points out that there is still room for improvement in the use of the Internet as a tool for children's education, and that families and education systems should pay more attention to this area of education.

Keywords: Internet, education, children

1.   Introduction

Children's education has been considered to be a trend in the area of education through history changes. With the development of technology, internet influence was considered to be one of the most popular tools used in children's education with many scientists investigating this phenomenon. Bremer investigated how the internet is involved in Children's living environment with its potential pros and cons, she pointed out that how children use the internet can influence their characteristics and development demands [1]. Livingstone reveals the complex dynamic between online opportunities and online risks combined with discussions like digital exclusion and student learning [2]. Valke et al mainly focused on the use of the Internet in the family education of primary school students, the researchers pointed out that how parents treat the Internet as a tool is important for the efficiency of children's studies [3]. These previous studies all emphasized the importance of the connection between the Internet and children's education. This article aims to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of how the internet influences children's education.

2.   The Current Situation of the Internet Environment around Children

2.1.   Reason for Using the Internet in Children's Education

Children have inherent curiosity. The reason children always ask why is because of the motivation of their desire for explanations. Researchers indicated that this explanation-seeking curiosity can be satisfied once children receive cues by asking questions or independent inquiry. They also emphasized that explanation-seeking curiosity is an important driver of children's learning because it combines active learning and intrinsic motivation with the value of explanatory content. This means that children will independently absorb and explore the knowledge around them. Therefore, the internet can have a huge impact on children's learning since it contains a large amount of knowledge and can be used to satisfy children's curiosity.

2.2.   The Positive Influence of Using the Internet in Children's Education

With the development of technology, children find it seemingly easier to get internet access. This convenience can benefit their education in many ways.

2.2.1. Broaden Children's Horizon

The first one is it can widen children's vision. In the report, the researchers said that online activities (including entertainment) are crucial for building digital skills. This report also pointed out that children who participated in a wider range of online abilities are more experienced with using the internet, while those who used the internet infrequently have weaker digital skills. Researchers found that online entertainment like watching videos or playing games can develop children's interests in education, information, and online societies. The report proposed that encouraging children to use the internet beyond entertainment can also develop digital skills and abilities in different areas. Livingstone et al elaborated on the importance of digital skills, which further proves how the Internet can benefit children in education [4]. The findings of these studies showed a positive association between digital skills and online opportunities, information benefits, and technology orientation, which proves that gaining digital skills increased children's positive outcomes. On this occasion, the digital skills brought by the internet proved useful for children's education.

2.2.2. Convenience Brought by the Internet

Another advantage of using the internet in student's education is the convenience of the internet. In recent years, the internet has become a global tool with people from all over the world using it. By using the internet, students can absorb knowledge from the world and meet people from different places online. The internet made online education accessible, children can absorb knowledge and have classes they want online, they can also communicate and share ideas with children from other countries by using social networks. The article pointed out that such uses of the Internet encourage cognitive and social development among children.

2.2.3. The Educational Value of the Internet at Home

The Internet also has an educational value in the home for children. Daoud et al showed that 86% of the participants in the study believed there is a positive relationship between children accessing the internet at home and the improvement in study or skills [5]. It also indicated that children having internet at home can be positively correlated with their self-esteem and self-efficacy. McElvain found that Mexican immigrant children felt more confident and responsible after being provided with home internet access, which proved the conclusion brought by Daoud et al [6].

2.3. The Disadvantages of Using the Internet in Children's Education

With those advantages being said, there are many problems with using the internet in students' education with incorrect uses.

2.3.1. The Internet Addiction

Research showed that adolescents spent more time using media than they spent in school or bed-7 hours and 22 minutes a day [7]. Some of them suffer from what has been termed by some as internet addiction. Research by Young shows that many online users are addicted to the internet in the same way as others are addicted to drugs or alcohol [8]. Therefore, internet addiction can be a widespread problem for children's education because of its addiction and children's curiosity. Internet addictions (IA) can cause problematic internet use, which is a typical, independent, separate psychiatric disorder. The study emphasized that IA has a positive relationship with mental diseases like autism. The result also showed that smoking students may have a connection with IA. McDool et al also investigated the relationship between internet use and the mental health of children between 10 and 15 years old [9]. The analysis of the study proved that children are spending more time on the internet than beneficial activities. Also, there was a negative influence on children using social media. In another study, Chen and Gau emphasized that internet addiction has a deep consequence of causing sleeping problems [10]. The research found sleeping problems as another negative consequence of IA. Both sleeping problems and mental diseases can have a negative influence on children's education since children will put less time into studying when they have sleeping problems and start to lose concentration on studying when they have mental diseases.

2.3.2. Restriction on Capacity of Independent Thinking

Another disadvantage of using the internet in children's education is the restriction of capacity for independent thinking among children. In childhood, children are more likely to be influenced by external factors like the internet when they haven't developed an integrated view of the world, life, and values. Goldberg pointed out that technologies like the internet provided a potential complication in discussions and explanations about human free will [11]. The Internet may provide an ability to let individuals expand their autonomy, but it can also create a restriction on people's ability to think independently and deprive their capacity for meaningful self-reflection. This phenomenon can be much easier to happen in children. Pirozhenko et al emphasized that a person's worldview begins to be created in childhood when they absorb various knowledge and create their worldview [12]. Although the internet has a large amount of information, it is inundated with subjective perspectives provided by different kinds of people. By absorbing these subjective points, the procedure of moulding children's view of the world, life, and values may be influenced, which can cause a restricted and unchangeable way of thinking when they grow up.

2.3.3. Violent and Sexual Behaviors Caused by Internet

Another disadvantage of using the internet in children's education is violent video games. Donnerstein et al mentioned that playing violent games can increase children's physical, verbal, relational, and antisocial aggression, which can cause a negative in children's academic performance and an increase in violence and anxiety [13]. Violent games can influence the education system of children poorly and also increase problems like cyberbullying and sexual-related problems.

3.   Suggestion

With those negative influences of the internet on children's education being mentioned, the author raised some suggestions on the internet used in children's education. Valcke et al pointed out that there are currently three categories of existing approaches to preventing the negative influence of the internet: awareness campaigns, parental supervision strategies, and school-based approaches [14]. Based on this concept of three categories and the characteristics of children, this article raised some suggestions on how to deal with negative influences caused by the internet on children.

3.1.   Solution to Internet Addiction

There are a few examples of how to treat internet addiction. In one of them, Du used a controlled experiment on internet addiction among adolescents which involved parental and school-based factors [15]. The result of the study showed that teaching adolescents how to recognize and prevent the problems caused by their interaction with the internet and helping parents and teachers to recognize adolescents' emotions and communicate with these children about their annoyance. By using this strategy, parents and teachers can help children with their relationship with the internet and prevent them from being negatively influenced by the internet and causing addiction. The author suggests improving the awareness of communication between children, parents, and schools to help children face and solve the problems caused by the Internet. By increasing the quantity and quality of this kind of communication, children can be guided to the correct way of using the internet and get away from internet addiction.

3.2.   Suggestions for Preventing Sexual and Violent Behaviors Brought by Internet

The government can formulate an awareness program for teachers, children, and their families to prevent the negative influence of unhealthy information provided by the internet. The national governments can prevent unhealthy information by putting restrictions on the part of the information their citizens can attach to. These restrictions can prevent illegal information like sexual websites or violent games, which can create a satisfactory internet environment in their own countries. Valcke also mentioned the technological developments that help to limit the amount of unwanted and harmful content that Internet users receive [3]. The author suggests that governments can create a globalized organization to create internet regulations and prevent children from being harmed by the unpleasant side of the internet with united rules on using the internet all around the world.

4.   Conclusions

Overall, the internet has a huge influence on children's education these years. The large amount of information provided by the internet can satisfy children's curiosity, which caused the popularity of using the internet in children's education. Using the Internet in children's education has many benefits, including widening their vision, developing their skills, and providing them the convenience of communicating with people all over the world. However, using the internet in children's education may cause problems like internet addiction, restriction on the ability of children's independent thinking, and mental diseases like autism. Some extensions of the internet like violent games can also cause some bad tempers like violence and antisocial personalities. In terms of the questions, the author proposed some suggestions like developing an awareness program of the unpleasant side of the internet to families and schools and bringing restrictions to the sensitive and illegal information in the local internet environment. Through these weaknesses and suggestions, the article emphasized that there's still room for improvement when dealing with internet problems in children's education.

Families and education systems should build a more thorough plan for leading children to use the Internet properly.

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