



Net Children Go Mobile: UK Qualitative Research Results

Aims

This report aims to identify the perceptions and perspectives of parents, teachers and children regarding children's use of smartphones and tablets.

Key Findings

- Both parents and children do not see smartphones and tablets as in themselves creating new online risks – if there are risks, they relate to the internet in general.

Parents

- Parents are more worried by new devices leading to more overall screen time and whether this might contribute to making children less sociable. Hence, they set rules about children's use.
- Many parents are also worried about the costs of smartphones and tablets, including children losing such expensive items or having them stolen. This added to the rules about children's use.
- Some parents are concerned that these personal devices mean it is more difficult for them to monitor their children's use online, although others find other ways to control or check use.
- Sometimes parents acknowledge that their own use of smartphones and tablets might be at odds with the advice they give to their children - i.e., they were not presenting good role models.

Teachers

- There is a general feeling among teachers that using smartphones at school, and especially during breaks or playtime, was restricting opportunities for social interaction and that school is a place of learning and not a place for these devices.
- Teachers' influence on smartphone use extends beyond the school premises as they give advice about using phones safely on route to school and in public places.
- Children do appreciate the need for school rules. However, the severity of punishments is not entirely condoned (e.g., confiscation of devices for a long time, banning many children's use because of the actions of a few).
- Although teachers are more positive about the educational potential of tablets, they could not foresee an equitable system for distributing their use, nor could they see it working in a universal way in all schools as some would be less able to accommodate them than others.

Children

- Children are in general not using these devices anytime/anywhere. In addition to parental and school restrictions on when, where and for how long smartphones can be used, children are often careful with these expensive devices, sometimes restricting their own use.
- Children still find it useful to go online via other technologies for certain purposes (e.g. because of larger screens, keyboards).
- Some children think they communicate more themselves, and many consider that there is more communication in general, because of the channels offered on their portable devices.
- Children can be as critical as adults about such things as the 'noise' – i.e. trivial communications – created by their peers.
- Many children, especially younger ones, are not opposed to parents checking the smartphone's history. Nevertheless, the smartphone is a highly personal device and checking this is now perceived as being more intrusive than checking the history on a PC.

Methodology

The UK interviews took place between January and September 2014. A total of 19 boys and 19 girls took part in the research, either in single sex focus groups in schools, individual interviews in schools, and interviews with individuals or single sex pairs in homes. Participants were recruited through schools using opportunity sampling. 3 focus groups (N = 17) with parents of children aged 11-17 were conducted, as well as 2 individual parental interviews. 2 focus groups (N = 13) with teachers and 1 (N = 4) with others working with children were also undertaken.

Background

The Net Children Go Mobile Project was co-funded by the Safer Internet Programme to investigate how the changing conditions of internet access and use - namely, mobile internet and mobile convergent media - bring greater, lesser or newer risks to children's online safety using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Source The Net Children Go Mobile Network

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Full report Haddon, Leslie and Vincent, Jane (2015) *UK children's experience of smartphones and tablets: Perspectives from children, parents and teachers*. Net Children Go Mobile, The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK. Available at <http://www.netchildrengomobile.eu/reports/>

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