WHERE ARE COMPUTER AND INTERNET IN A CHILD'S LIFE?

Assist. Prof. Dr. Belgin ARSLAN CANSEVER
Ege University
Faculty of Education, Elementary Education Department, Primary Education Program, Izmir-Turkey
belgin.arslan.cansever@ege.edu.tr

Abstract
Rapid technological advances in the late 20th century and early 21st century have enabled children to be reared in a multi-stimulus environment that includes not only television but also computers, the Internet, cell phones, game consoles and so on.The review of literature suggests that computers and the Internet penetrate into and become an indispensable part of children's lives at an early age. The aim of the present study is to identify levels, frequencies, durations and using types of internet usage at 8 years old children based on gender variable. Sample consists of 13 second grade students (7 female, 6 male) from a government primary school at Buca, Izmir,Turkey who were selected by appropriate sampling and their 8 (6 female, 2 male) volunteer parents. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the participants in reference to the overarching questions composed by the researcher.The data were subject to descriptive analysis, a qualitative study approach. Results showed that males used internet more often and longer than females and that this difference was more pronounced during holidays. Moreover, results showed that males mostly play computer games and that females watch cartoons or play dressing-type games. In the study, it is identified that parents are very happy about their children's computer and internet use from young ages and that they define this issue as "catching up technology" and "preparing for future". Parents consider that it is more important that the child is using this technology than how s/he is using it. Parental guidance about the duration and content of children's computer and internet use can be provided via media literate competency. Childhood period is an important period in terms of growing of individuals who are aware of media literate.
Keywords: Child, computer, Internet, media literacy.

Introduction

The concept of childhood was perceived as something different from adulthood and admitted into the literature for the first time in the 1600s, which was followed by particular emphasis placed on child education. The 1800s witnessed a focus on physical health and functions of children rather than their mental status. In the 1900s, it was agreed that it was necessary to prepare children for adulthood. In today's world, there is a consensus that it is adults who are responsible for bringing up children (Gander & Gardier, 2001).Recent research reports that children are now valued as "individuals" and emphasizes the importance of raising them in a way that will enable them to have self-confidence, to adapt to society and to turn out to be creative individuals.

Rapid technological advances in the late 20th century and early 21st century have enabled children to be reared in a multi-stimulus environment that includes not only television but also computers, the Internet, cell phones, game consoles and so on. Macionis and Plummer (2006),calls the new generation as "the net generation." This new generation is born into and internalizes technology. For many children, using new technology is as natural as breathing. The net generation has even shadowed the wave of "baby boom", which was characterized by a dramatic increase in birth rate. Whereas today's net generation represents 30% of the overall population, boomers account for 29% of all people living on earth. The former is raised in a different climate than their parents, who were brought up with television. Reared in an environment marked by computers, videogames and multi-channel televisions, the new generation is at ease with all these instruments, listening to digital music on the Internet, downloading them, playing online games, creating web pages, communicating through e-mails, chatting on the Internet and sending instant messages (Tapscott, 1998).Studies have suggested that the amount of time spent by children on the media is getting greater and greater each day. According toLivingstone and Bovill (1999)those aged 6 to 17 in England spend five hours a day on the media. Other two studies conducted in the U.S.A. (Roberts, Foehr, Rideout,& Brodie, 1999; 2003) revealed that children and adolescents spend five and a half hours a day on the media. The Study on the Use of the Internet and Family, which was carried out in Turkey, reported that eight out of ten children with access to the Internet at home get connected to the Internet at least once a day and stay connected for one to five hours (Kuzu et al, 2008).Similarly, another study (Bayir & Numanoglu, 2009) found that nearly one-third of Turkish students use their computer every single day and almost all of them make use of the Internet spending an average time of two hours a day on it. Moreover,

male students use the Internet more often than female ones.Arnas(2005), conducted a study in Adana, Turkey, on the ways parents, children and adolescents use interactive communication devices. A positive correlation was found between age and the amount of time spent by children and adolescents on computers and the Internet.

Other research in the literature (Arnas, 2005; Arslan Cansever, 2010; Buckingham & Scanlon, 2003a, 2003b; Facer, Furlong, Furlong & Sutherlve, 2003; Kraut, Scherlis, Mukhopadhyay, Mannig & Kiesler, 1996; Roberts, Foehr, Rideout & Brodie, 2003), suggests that most families purchase a computer and Internet access to provide educational opportunities for their children at home, but it is rather rare that they are used for this purpose.For instance, National Schools Foundation (2000) carried out a study in the U.S.A on parents with children and adolescents aged 2 to 17 and 9 to 17. The study revealed that girls use the Internet more often for e-mail and chatting purposes whereas boys use it for entertainment and game-playing. Facer, Furlong, Furlong & Sutherlve (2003) and Roberts, Foehr, Rideout & Brodie (2003) reported that children and adolescents use the Internet at home for playing computer games, taking up hobbies or searching for information, and increasingly for instant messaging and involvement in social network sites. Buckingham and Scanlon (2003a, 2003b),identified three types of computer-buyers: enthusiasts, resisters and followers. Those who are enthusiasts strongly believe in the educational potential of computers. Although some of the individuals in the group have little information about computers and find it hard to learn about this new technology, they do not want their children to miss out on this technology. Those who are resisters - some of the people in this group are quite wealthy- are unwilling as far as home computers are concerned and do not allow them. Some believe that marketers in the computer industry blackmail parents by exploiting their educational concerns for their children. Followers are between the first and second groups. Although they have some second thoughts about computers, they perceive computers as a device that everybody owns and find it sensible to have one.

The review of literature suggests that computers and the Internet penetrate into and become an indispensable part of children's lives at an early age. Therefore, it is quite hard to isolate students from messages coming from computers and the Internet, which are called the new media. From a child's perspective, children should be enabled to gain an awareness of how to read these messages, how to internalize them in their inner world, and how to select and assess them. Children can be enabled to develop these abilities through media literacy education (Arslan Cansever, 2013). Media literacy is an "individual's ability to benefit from media channels and know how to use them; an ability toreceive, perceive, internalize, elaborate, criticize and evaluate; and, to transfer messages from 'traditional' media(newspaper, magazine, radio, television etc.) and 'new' media (Internet, mobile phone, game pad etc.) to othersthrough oral or written language (Aslan, Aslan & ArslanCansever, 2012, p. 47).Media literacy education is the process by which media is learnt and taught. Media literacy, on the other hand, is an outcome that involves knowledge and skills the learner has mastered. It provides young people with an opportunity to criticize, question and interpret the media that sneaks in their lives. Rather than becoming simple consumers, individuals are enabled to develop the ability to create their own media, thus transforming themselves into active participants (Buckigham, 2007).

The purpose of the present study is to identify in reference to the variable gender how often and how long children aged 8 use the Internet and what they do on it. In accordance with the findings, particular emphasis is placed on upbringing individuals that are media literate starting from primary school.

Methodology

Participants

Sample consists of 13 second grade students (7 female, 6 male) from a government primary school at Buca, Izmir,Turkey who were selected by appropriate sampling and their 8 (6 female, 2 male) volunteer parents.

Data Collection Instrument

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the participants in reference to the overarching questions composed by the researcher. The participants were addressed the following questions:

1. Do you have a computer at home?
2. Do you have Internet access at home?
3. (If yes) How long have you been using the Internet?
    How often do you use the Internet?
    What is the amount of time you spend on the Internet?
4. For what purpose(s) do you use computers in your daily life?
    Alternative Question: What do you do most on computers?
5. For what purpose(s) do you use the Internet in your daily life?
    Alternative Question: What websites do you follow most on the Internet? Are these sites determined by you or someone older than you?
The interviews with the parents were conducted in reference to the following questions:
1. For what purpose did you buy a computer and Internet access?
2. What is your opinion of your child's using computers and the Internet?
    -Positive?
    -Negative?

Procedure

Certain precautions (alternative questions and tips, explaining misunderstood questions again) were taken so that the children and their parents could express their opinions comfortably during the interviews. The participants were assured that the interviews were in the form of conversations and that there were no correct or wrong answers to the questions. In addition, they were explained why it was important to record the interviews. In this way, informed consent was obtained from both the children and their parents. The interviews took place between January 9 and 20, 2013. Each lasted for 25-35 minutes. They were conducted in a favorable environment (quite, at normal temperatures, comfortable, etc.) for both the children and their parents. The process was administered by the researcher in person.

Data Analysis

The data were subject to descriptive analysis, a qualitative study approach. The interviews were recorded and transformed into transcripts by the researcher in person in order to avoid data loss and not to miss any detail. The names of the children that participated in the study, as well as their statements, were coded. Afterward, the data were read by the researcher four times (two times incessantly and another two times intermittently) so that they could be grouped, interpreted and discussed in accordance with the two main themes specified by the researcher. Since direct quotations in descriptive analysis enable ideas to be reflected in a striking way (Yildirim & Simsek, 2011), data interpretation often involved such quotations.

The qualitative data set obtained is presented in Table 1.

Data Collection Technique	Data Source	Material	The time spent on transforming data into transcripts	Data set (page)
Interviews	Students	1 sound file	5 hours	9 pages
Interviews	Parents	1 sound file	7 hours	12 pages

Table 1. The Qualitative Data Set

The sound files obtained as a result of the interviews with the participants were transformed into separate transcripts for each participant, making them easier to be used in data analysis. The outcome was a data set that consisted of 21 pages, on which the researcher worked for 12 hours. The stage was followed by data analysis.

For validity purposes, direct quotations from individuals were included and an attempt was made to draw conclusions accordingly. In order to ensure the internal validity, particular emphasis was

placed on such key concepts of the study as children, computers, the Internet and media literacy and an attempt was made to make sure that the questions to be used for the interviews were consistent with those in the literature. As for the external validity, the characteristics of the students and the data collection instrument were described in a detailed way. It can be argued that the findings of the present study can be reproduced with samples that contain participants with similar characteristics in similar school conditions. In addition, the methodology was explained in detail so as to further ensure the external validity. The sound files, as well as the transcripts, were archived and stored. Prior to the analysis, the data were read four times- two times incessantly and another two times intermittently, which made the coding process easier. In order to further ensure the internal validity, the questions to be included in the interviews were designed in a clear and comprehensible way.

Findings

The responses by the students to the open-ended questions were grouped under two main headings, namely "how long and how often children use computers and the Internet" and "the ways children use computers and the Internet." Since it was assumed that *gender* would play a role in the participants' use of computers and the Internet, an attempt was made to interpret the data with consideration into this variable.

How Long and How Often Children Use Computers and the Internet?

All the participants reported that they had a "computer and Internet access" at home. Furthermore, they used both computers and the Internet regardless of their gender. For instance,

> F3[1]:*We have two computers at home. Both can connect to the Internet. Because one of them is in my elder brother's room, it kind of belongs to him. The other is a laptop, which my father uses in the evening. I play on the computer until my father comes in the evening.*

> M1: *We have only one computer at home and Internet access. I use the computer for surfing the Internet.*

> F6: *We have only one computer, too. Thus, we argue with my brother from time to time. Although he is only 5, heis a computer freak. Whenever the computer is on, he will come and want to watch his favorite videos.*

> M4: *I have been using the Internet since I was five; it is so interesting. When we moved to our current home, we did not have Internet access for a while. I was so upset, but then it came back, which made me happy.*

Six female students reported that they used the Internet for an average time of one hour a day during the academic year. Another female student stated that she used it for one and a half or two hours a day. On the other hand, all the male students noted that they used the Internet for two hours a day during the academic year. It is clear that there was a difference between male and female students in the time they daily used the Internet during the academic year, with male students spending more time on it when compared to female ones. Some of the male students seemed to identify computers with the Internet. For instance,

> M6: *I think a computer without the Internet is useless. If my parents stopped my Internet access, I would not want the computer in my room.*

---

[1]F3: F stands for female and 3 stands for the person number 3

M2: What is the good of a computer without Internet access? Because my mother is a working woman, there is nobody at home when I come home. I sit at the computer and do not get bored thanks to the Internet. I not only do my homework but also spend some time. I quit it when my mother returns home. This is sometimes longer than two hours.

Seeing that taking children's behaviors only during the academic year into consideration will not yield reliable results, it is necessary to focus on their use of the Internet at weekends, during the mid-term breaks and summer holidays. From a child's perspective, the holiday is a time period when their school responsibilities are relieved and they feel freer. Whereas female students reported that they used the Internet for two or two and a half hours during the holidays; male students spent three to four hours on it. Especially male students reported that it was their mothers who determined how long they could use the Internet and that they felt bad about it.

M3: My mother says that I can do anything that I want to during the holidays, but when it comes to the Internet, she does not want me to spend too much time on it.

M4: I have the right to use the Internet two hours in the morning and another two hours in the afternoon, but it is simply not enough…time runs out so fast. When I refuse to quit the Internet, she gets angry and calls my father. The amount of time they give is not enough, what am I supposed to do?

The amount of time spent on computers and the Internet gets increased during the holidays regardless of gender. However, male students spend more time on computers and the Internet than female ones during the holidays, as is the case during the academic year. A male parent states significantly:

P-M1[2]:We have got a computer and Internet access at home because of my job-related duties. We put the computer in our child's room so that he can learn. But we removed it from his room when he used it as if it was his toy. He loses control of himself when it is on. He totally forgets about time. In summer, particularly, he will not leave it if we do not warn him to do so.

In general, parents are quite positive about their children's spending time on computers and the Internet. For example,

P-F5: I understand neither computers nor the Internet. Bu I wanted my child to learn about them. He is the next generation; he should learn about everything and not turn out to be like me.

P-F1: My daughters can use the computer blindfold. Of course, I made so much effort for this. Because I did not know how to use it, I placed them in front of the computer and allowed them to learn by trial and error. This takes time, but how else are they supposed to learn it? I do not mind the time.

P-M2: Computers and the Internet are an opportunity for next generations to catch up with technology. I think that they should learn it however they can. I had too much difficulty in my working life just because I did not know how to use a computer. I do not want my son to have the same difficulties.

P-F4: We bought a computer and Internet access so that our child could be better prepared for the future. She is happy just as we are. In this way, she is right under our nose rather than doing pointless things outside.

---

[2]P-M1, P stands for Parent, M stands for Male and 1 stands for the person number 1

The ways Children Use Computers and the Internet

Some of the female students (f=3; 43,0%)reported that they used the computer for studying and preparing their homework while others (f=2; 28,5%) stated that they watched cartoons on it. Some (f= 2, % 28,5)said that they used it for playing baby dressing games. On the other hand, male students used the computer and Internet mostly (f=3; 50,0%) for playing games and educational purposes(f=3; 50,0%). For instance,

M1: I use the Internet for doing research and playing with my friends.

F7: I use the computer for searching for information about my homework. The Internet has any information. Our teacher likes my studies.

F2: I like baby dressing games so much. My aunt showed them for the first time and I have never quit ever since. Time runs out so quickly while I am playing these games.

M5: I use the Internet for playing online games with my friends; it is exhilarating.

M3: Playing computer games makes me happy. I use the Internet mostly for playing games.

In the Turkish culture, conventional values and norms maintain their influences on the process of socialization. A review of parents' attitudes to child upbringing from past to present suggests that girls are raised in a way that will make them more obedient, easy going and mild-mannered while boys are reared more independently of their parents. The ways of upbringing shaped by gender discrimination have an influence on children's interests. Boys tend to be interested in fictional computer games in which they can feel more independent. In contrast, girls have a tendency to play such passive activities as baby dressing games. The way parents raise their children has an impact on what purposes the latter use the Internet.

Parents provided divergent justifications for buying a computer and Internet access. For example,

P-F6: We decided to have a computer and Internet access at home so that my husband could do job tracking at home. But now it is me and my children who use them more often. We particularly encourage our children to use them. Anyway it is a good choice for their studying. It is even my best assistant.

P-M2: Why did we buy the Internet access? For it is a must nowadays. If you ask how, they are assigned homework at school and their teacher definitely asks them to do searching on the Internet. It makes me happy that my child uses the Internet at home under my supervision instead of having to go to an Internet café.

P-F2: We do not have much playground for children around where we live. I do not want my child to play in the middle of the street with many cars around. The Internet is helpful in this way. He is likely to stay in front of it for ages if I do not warn him to stop. It is better to have him under my nose. In addition, knowing how to use a computer will always be helpful for him in the future.

P-M1: The Internet is the best advantage of the global world; everything is just one click away. Why would I deprive my child of this advantage…I am positive about it and support it absolutely. I believe that technology will do no harm.

The parents whose ideas are listed above seem to be quite happy about having computers and the Internet in their children's life. Even though they report their dissatisfaction with their children's

spending too much time on computers and the Internet, they mostly emphasize the importance of "catching up with technology" and "preparing them for the future."

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings suggest that the variable "gender" is not effective in children's use of computers and the Internet, but it leads to a difference in what purposes they use them. Whereas female students report using computers for searching for information about their homework, watching cartoons and playing baby dressing games, male students mostly use it for playing games. This finding is supported by several other studies in the literature (Arslan Cansever, 2010; National School Foundation, 2000). Another finding is that male students spend more time on computers and the Internet when compared to female ones during both the academic year and holidays. This finding is consistent with other previous research (Arslan Cansever, 2010; Bayir & Numanoglu, 2009).

One interesting finding is that parents perceive their children's using computers and the Internet as "catching up with technology" and "preparing them for the future." Some parents reported their dissatisfaction with their children spending too much time on computers and the Internet and talked about their attempts to put limits accordingly. Furthermore, it is because of educational purposes that parents have a computer and Internet access at home, a finding which is supported by many other studies (Arnas, 2005; Arslan Cansever, 2010; Buckingham & Scanlon, 2003a, 2003b; Facer, Furlong, Furlong & Sutherlve, 2003; Kraut, Scherlis, Mukhopadhyay, Mannig & Kiesler, 1996; Roberts, Foehr, Rideout & Brodie, 2003). However, it can be observed that they are rarely used for educational purposes.

Childhood is a time period where many habits and attitudes start to get formed. It is clear that computers and the Internet are occupying a greater and greater place in children's world. They have proved to be a technological game device especially for children with working parents in urban areas. As with other traditional and new media channels, computers and the Internet may bring about serious negative physiological, sociological and psychological consequences unless they are used consciously. Therefore, it is essential that students should be trained starting from primary school in a way that will enable them to be individuals that are selective and media literate and that can distinguish between what is fiction and what is real and know how to use technological devices. In Turkey, the curriculum for 7th and 8th grades includes a course on media literacy, which is a step in the right direction. However, the course should be made compulsory starting from primary school, whose importance is well-known, so that students can be trained to be individuals that are media literate.

References

Arnas, A.Y. (2005). 3–18 Yaş Grubu Çocuk ve Gençlerin İnteraktif İletişim Araçlarını Kullanma Alışkanlıklarının Değerlendirilmesi. The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET, Volume 4, Issue 4, 59–66. http://www.tojet.net/volumes/v4i4.pdf, Erişim Tarihi: 11.08.2008

Arslan Cansever, B. (2010). Ergenlerin internet kullanımının aile ve okul bağlamında yarattığı sorunlar, Yayımlanmamış Doktora Tezi, İzmir: Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.

Arslan Cansever, B. (2013). Çocukların "Medya" ile "Medya Okuryazarlığı"na İlişkin Algıları, 23 Nisan TRT Uluslararası Çocuk ve Medya Kongresi-II, 16-18 Nisan, İzmir.

Aslan, K., Aslan, N. & Arslan Cansever, B. (2012). Eğitim Bilimine Giriş, Pegem Akademi, Ankara.

Bayır, Ş. & Numanoğlu, G. (7-9 Ekim 2009). İlköğretim Öğrencilerininİnternet Kullanımı. Üçüncü Uluslararası Bilgisayar ve EğitimTeknolojileri Sempozyumu, Trabzon.

Buckingham, D. & Scanlon, M. (2003a). Education, Entertainment and Learning in the Home, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Buckingham, D. & Scanlon, M. (2003b). Learning Online: E-learning and the Domestic Market. Swindon: Economic ve Social Research Council.

Buckingham, D. (2007). Beyond Technology: children's learning in the age of digital culture, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Facer, K., Furlong, J., Furlong, R., ve Sutherlve, R. (2003). Screen play: Children ve Computing in the Home, London: Routledge.

Gander, M.J.; Gardier H.W. (2001). Çocuk ve Ergen Gelişimi, (Çev. Bekir Onur), İmge Kitabevi, 4.Baskı, Ankara

Giddens, A. (2009) Sociology (Sixth Edition). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kraut, R., Scherlis, W., Mukhopadhyay, T., Mannig, J., Kiesler, S. (1996). The HomeNet field trial of residental internet services, Communications of the ACM, 39, 55- 63.

Kuzu, A. et al(2008). İnternet Kullanımı ve Aile, T.C. Başbakanlık Aile ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Genel Müdürlüğü Yayınları, No: 133, Ankara.

Livingstone, S. & Bovill, M. (1999). Young People, New Media: Final Report of the Project, "Children, Young People ve the Changing Media Environment", An LSE Report, London: London School of Economics ve Political Science, http://psych./se.ac.uk/young_people.

Macionis, J. J. & Plummer, K. (2006). Sociology: A Global Introduction, 3 rd edition, London: Pearson Education Limited.

Roberts, D.F., Foehr, U.G., Rideout, V.J., & Brodie, M. (1999). Kids ve Media @ the New Millennium. Menlo Park, CA: Henry J. Karser Family Foundation.

Roberts, D.F., Foehr, U.G., Rideout, V.J., & Brodie, M. (2003). Kids and Media in America, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Scheibe, C. & Rogow, F. (2008). 12 basic ways to integrate media literacy and critical thinking into any curriculum. Third edition, Ithaca: project look sharp.

Tapscott, D. (1998). Growing up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation, New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies.

Tan, M. (1993). "Çocukluk: Dün ve Bugün", Toplumsal Tarihte Çocuk Sempozyumu, Ankara Üniversitesi, Ankara.

Thoman, E.,& Jolls, T. (2008). 21. Yüzyıl Okuryazarlığı: Medya Okuryazarlığına Genel Bir Bakış ve Sınıf içi Etkinlikler. (Çev. C. Elma & A. Kesten) Ankara: Ekinoks Yayınevi.

Yavuzer, H. (2012). Çocuğu Tanımak ve Anlamak, İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.

Yıldırım, A. & Şimşek, H. (2011). Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri (6. Baskı), Ankara: Seçkin Yayınları.

BİLGİSAYAR VE İNTERNET ÇOCUĞUN YAŞAMINDA NEREDE?

Özet

*Problem Cümlesi:*20. yüzyılın sonu ile 21. yüzyılın başında yaşanan hızlı teknolojik gelişmeler, çocukların televizyonun yanı sıra, bilgisayar, internet, cep telefonu, oyun konsolları vb. çok uyaranlı bir ortamda yetişmelerine olanak sağlamıştır. Macionis ve Plummer (2006), bu yeni kuşağı "net kuşağı" olarak isimlendirmektedir. Bu kuşak, teknoloji ile doğmakta ve onu özümsemektedir. Pek çok çocuk için, yeni teknolojiyi kullanmak nefes alıp vermek kadar doğaldır.Bu kuşak, televizyonla yetişen kendi ebeveynlerinden farklı bir çevrede yetişmektedir. Bilgisayarlar, video oyunları ve çok kanallı televizyonlarla yetişen yeni kuşak tüm bu medya araçlarını kolaylıkla kullanabilmekte, internet üzerinden dijital müzik dinleyip indirebilmekte, çevrimiçi oyunlar oynayabilmekte, web sayfası yapabilmekte, e-mail yoluyla haberleşebilmekte, internet üzerinden sohbet edebilmekte ve mesaj gönderebilmektedir (Tapscott, 1998). Alanda yapılan pek çok araştırma sonucu, bilgisayar ve internetin küçük yaşlardan itibaren çocukların yaşamına girdiğini ve yaşamlarının önemli bir parçasını kapsadığını göstermektedir.

Çalışmanın Amacı: Bu araştırmada, 8 yaşındaki çocukların internet kullanım düzeyleri, sıklığı, süresi ve internette neler yaptıkları cinsiyet farklılığı değişkenine göre belirlenmeye çalışılmakta, ulaşılan sonuçlar çerçevesinde ilkokul döneminden başlayarak medya okuryazarı birey yetiştirmenin önemi vurgulanmaktadır.

Yöntem: Araştırmanın katılımcılarını İzmir'in Buca ilçesinde bir devlet ilkokulunun ikinci sınıfında öğrenim görmekte olan ve uygun örnekleme yoluyla seçilen 13 öğrenci (7 kız, 6 erkek) ile bu öğrencilerin araştırmaya katılmayı kabul eden 8 velisi (6kadın, 2 erkek)oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın verilerini toplamak amacıyla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği kullanılmıştır. Çalışmada araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanan soru başlıkları doğrultusunda katılımcılarla bire bir görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir.Araştırma verilerinin analizinde nitel araştırma geleneği içinde yer alan betimsel analizden yararlanılmıştır. Görüşmelerden elde edilen ses kayıtları, veri kaybını önlemek ve herhangi bir detayı gözden kaçırmamak amacıyla bizzat araştırmacının kendisi tarafından bilgisayar ortamında metin haline getirilmiştir. Görüşmeye katılan çocukların isim ve cümleleri kodlandırılmıştır. Ardından veriler, araştırmacı tarafından dört kez (iki kez kesintisiz, iki kez aralıklı) okunarak, planlanma aşamasında araştırmacı tarafından belirlenen iki ana tema göz önünde bulundurularak gruplandırılmış, yorumlanmış ve tartışılmıştır.

Bulgular: Araştırmaya katılan çocukların açık uçlu sorulara verdikleri yanıtlar, "çocukların bilgisayar ve İnterneti kullanma süreleri ve sıklığı" ile "çocukların bilgisayar ve İnterneti kullanma biçimleri" olmak üzere iki ana başlık altında toplanmıştır. Çocukların cinsiyetinin onların bilgisayar ve internet kullanımlarına yansıyacağı düşünüldüğünden veriler cinsiyet değişkeni göz önünde bulundurularak yorumlanmaya çalışılmıştır.Katılımcı çocukların tamamı evlerinde "bilgisayar ve internet" bulunduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Bununla birlikte çocuklar arasında cinsiyet ayrımı olmaksızın gerek

bilgisayarın gerekse internetin kullanıldığı belirlenmiştir.Çocukların okul döneminde günlük ortalama internet kullanım sürelerine bakıldığında 6 kız öğrenci ortalama 1 saat, 1 kız öğrenci 1,5-2 saat; erkek öğrencilerin tamamı ise 2 saat internet kullandıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bulgular çocukların okul döneminde günlük ortalama internet kullanım süresinin cinsiyete göre farklılaştığını, erkek öğrencilerin okul dönemi içinde kızlara göre daha uzun süre internet kullandıklarını göstermiştir.Çocukların internet kullanım durumlarını belirlemede tek başına okul zamanını değerlendirmek doğru bir sonuç vermeyeceğinden hafta sonu, sömestr ve yaz tatili gibi dönemlerin de sorgulanması gerekmektedir. Tatil dönemleri çocuklar açısından bakıldığında okuldaki sorumluluklarının azaldığı ve daha özgür hissedilen zaman dilimleridir. Çalışmada kız çocukların tatil döneminde 2 saat ile 2,5 saat; erkek çocukların ise 3 saat ile 4 saat arasında zaman geçirdikleri belirlenmiştir.Araştırma kapsamına alınan çocukların bilgisayar ve internetle geçirdikleri zaman her iki cinsiyet grubu için de tatil dönemlerinde artmaktadır. Ayrıca erkek öğrenciler okul döneminde olduğu gibi tatil döneminde de kız öğrencilere göre bilgisayar ve internetle daha fazla zaman geçirmektedirler.Araştırmaya katılan kız öğrencilerin bir kısmı bilgisayarı okul ödevlerini araştırma ve hazırlama, bir kısmı çizgi film izleme, bir kısmı ise kıyafet giydirme oyunu oynama için kullandıklarını belirtmiştir. Erkekler ise bilgisayar ve interneti çoğunlukla oyun oynama ve eğitim amacıyla kullanmaktadırlar.

Sonuç ve Öneriler: Araştırma sonuçlarına göre çocukların bilgisayar ve internet kullanımında "cinsiyet" değişkeni farklılık oluşturmazken internet kullanım amacında farklılık göstermektedir. Kız öğrenciler bilgisayarı okul ödevlerini araştırmak, çizgi film izlemek, bebek giydirme oyunu oynamak için kullandıklarını belirtirken erkekler ise çoğunlukla oyun oynamak amacıyla kullanmaktadır.Araştırmada ortaya çıkan bir diğer sonuç ise gerek okul gerekse tatil dönemlerinde erkek öğrencilerin kızlara göre daha uzun süre bilgisayar ve internet kullanmalarıdır.Araştırmada ortaya çıkan ilginç sonuçlardan biri ise ebeveynlerin çocuklarının bilgisayar ve internet kullanımını onların "teknolojiyi yakalaması" ile "geleceğe hazırlanması" olarak görmeleridir. Görüşmelerde bazı veliler çocuklarının uzun süre bilgisayar ve internet başında kalmalarından rahatsız olduklarını dile getirmiş ve bu konuda süre sınırlaması koymaya çalıştıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca velilerin evlerinde bilgisayar ve internet bulundurma amaçlarının pek çok araştırmada olduğu gibi, çocuklarına eğitimsel fırsatlar sunmak olduğu belirlenmiştir. Ancak sonuçlar bu konudaki kullanımın oldukça sınırlı olduğunu göstermektedir.

Çocukluk dönemi pek çok konuda kazanılan alışkanlık ve tutumların temelini oluşturmaktadır. Bilgisayar ve internetin çocukların dünyasında giderek daha önemli bir yere gelmeye başladığı görülmektedir. Özellikle kent yaşamında ebeveynleri çalışan çocuklar için bilgisayar ve internet teknolojik bir oyun aracı haline gelmiştir. Bilgisayar ve internet diğer geleneksel ve yeni medya araçlarında olduğu gibi bilinçli bir biçimde kullanılmazsa gerek fizyolojik gerekse sosyolojik ve psikolojik bakımdan ciddi olumsuz sonuçlar doğurabilir. Bu noktada teknolojik araçları kullanmasını bilen, seçici davranan, fantezi ile gerçek arasındakini ayırt edebilen medya okuryazarı bireylerin ilkokul döneminden itibaren yetiştirilmesi oldukça önem kazanmaktadır. Türkiye'de ortaokullarda 7. ve 8. sınıflarda verilmeye başlanan medya okuryazarlığı dersi önemli bir gelişmedir. Ancak medya okuryazarlığı bilincinin oluşmasında ilkokul döneminin önemi göz önünde bulundurularak bu dersin "zorunlu" olarak ilkokuldan itibaren verilmesi çocukların bilinçli birer "medya okuryazarı" olarak yetişmesi açısından son derece gereklidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çocuk, Bilgisayar, İnternet, Medya Okuryazarlığı