Article

Barriers to Children's Socialisation in Light of Technological Innovations in Smartphones: Electronic Games as a Model

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Abstract

This research addresses electronic games through smartphone platforms and their impact on the pillars of socialisation, particularly self-regulation, integration, social normalisation, and social distancing. The study delves into the conceptual frameworks and the extensive literature within the social sciences concerning the notions of socialisation and familial bonds with children within the digital space. From a sociological perspective, this paper highlights the laxity of parental supervision and social control, as well as children's excessive use of electronic games. It also reveals the key factors contributing to the success or failure of the socialisation process within the virtual society and its implications for developing children's personalities, attitudes, and behaviours. This is explored through

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a socio psychological lens, analysing erroneous socialisation patterns and the dangers and aggressive threats targeting children, as well as the obstacles contemporary societies, including Algerian society, face in countering electronic afflictions. To achieve the research objectives, the study employs a descriptive methodology to comprehensively grasp the topic, allowing for accurate delineation in line with the nature of the research. This includes an in-depth examination of the socialisation process, its barriers, and the consequences of addiction to electronic games. The study draws upon prior scientific contributions and a selection of relevant references listed at the end of the paper. In conclusion, several important suggestions and recommendations are presented regarding the current topic.

Keywords: Electronic games; Smartphones; Socialisation; Socio-cybernetic.

Introduction

Every society is fundamentally built upon the presence of conscious individuals who shape its course and contribute to its construction and development. Society represents the essential environment in which individuals live and cannot be isolated. This is a natural and inherent reality. Institutions play a crucial role in socialising and educating the younger generation and protecting them from the risks of ongoing social changes. The presence of children as members of society ensures their continuity and gradual renewal. Human traits evolve as family and community members share life experiences. Suppose a child lives without a social environment or interaction with others. In that case, they are deprived of the opportunity for socialisation, which is the process that transforms the child from a purely biological being into a social one. Notably, social characteristics are acquired, not innate, and are not born with the child.

In light of the growing advancement of modern technological innovations, globalisation, and the accompanying influences and current scientific revolutions unprecedented in any previous era, the internet in general, and social media in particular, has brought about a profound transformation in the entire media and communication landscape. These networks have altered our perceptions of ourselves and our societies. Among the most influential means of communication are social networking platforms, which have significantly reshaped modern social interaction. Traditional human interaction no longer occupies a central place among most segments of society; outdated stereotypical views have been surpassed and no longer appeal to most people. The world has largely transitioned into a new paradigm characterised by the compression of distances, time, means, and costs. Modern individuals can surpass traditional forms of communication and instead turn to advanced technologies, enabling them to perceive the vast world in mere moments. Despite its vastness, the world is experienced as a small village. This metaphor evokes notions of closeness and immediacy, effectively dissolving spatial and temporal boundaries in communication among users of these networks and technologies.

Technological change within society has imposed new forms of social groupings, as technology significantly influences the transformation of the concept of social groups. With increasing internet use at the global, regional, and local levels, new terms have emerged in conjunction with technological advancements and the communication revolution. Individuals who interact via the internet have formed virtual communities from various parts of the world, where they communicate, build friendships, and share mutual interests. These interactions simulate those of the real world but occur without physical proximity, as they are mediated through the internet (Al-Hanafi, 2017, p. 12).

Artificial intelligence, a modern phenomenon of the early 21st century, stands out as one of the most prominent features of modern communication technologies. It has substantially opened new opportunities for individuals to interact and express their concerns by constructing virtual social relationships that extend only to the screen's edge. This immense technological development, especially with the emergence of the seventh generation of devices and beyond, has led to a widespread and seemingly uncontainable addiction to social media platforms. Consequently, this has resulted in various psychological, social, economic, and cultural challenges that hinder children's upbringing and behavioural development. Many sociologists and specialists agree that smartphones are among the most significant obstacles to effective family education.

This shift in the nature of communication now threatens the strength and cohesion of familial relationships. It has further implications across multiple dimensions, such as the emergence of virtual relationships and identities, among other constructs that attempt to simulate reality. These developments have substantially altered the nature of traditional social relations, which have historically served as cohesive bonds connecting members of society (Normar, 2011, p. 1).

Building upon the aforementioned discussion, this study was conducted to achieve several research objectives, most notably shedding light on the barriers to children's socialisation in light of technological innovations in smartphones, from a sociological perspective. This study positions smartphones and their technological advancements as key variables in uncovering the significant risks and adverse effects that hinder children's social development, with a specific focus on Algerian children. The research concentrates on several core points, beginning with a scientific problem at the heart of the current issue, and includes explaining related concepts and terminology. It also examines children's transition from traditional forms of play to innovative electronic gaming and explores its relationship with socialisation in this newly shaped environment.

Furthermore, the study addresses the main obstacles associated with smartphone use, such as addiction, school dropout, verbal and sexual violence, and a range of psychological disorders linked to excessive use. Finally, the paper offers solutions to mitigate this phenomenon, followed by a general

conclusion presenting the study's most significant findings. This work is supported by a collection of relevant academic references and scientific studies listed at the end of the paper.

1. Research Problem

Technological advancements have triggered significant shifts, some of which are beneficial to societies, whereas others pose serious risks. Among these notable modern transformations is the global development in visual media, particularly in imagery and video. New methods that closely resemble reality have emerged through innovative updates and the rapid evolution of presentation formats. This evolution has extended into electronic games, where modern technologies have introduced massive changes in presentation, excitement, and stimulation. These enhancements have become powerful sources of attraction for various age groups. Electronic games are no longer confined to children; they have also captivated older people (Al-Sheikhi & Al-Zouei, 2022, p. 255).

What scientific, technical, and technological changes have introduced into a child's life is the emergence of a new socialising institution that was not available to previous generations to the same extent, namely, the media. Children are not isolated from these developments but are deeply immersed in them. These new relationships, formed through media engagement with members of society, including the child, are among the strongest due to the omnipresence of media in the child's environment from birth. In contrast to appearances, these media are not simple tools. Instead, they establish strong ties that have transformed the child's behaviours and reshaped their understanding of social relationships with their family and those around them (Hammal, 2011, p. 7).

Electronic games, encompassing a wide range of video game formats, have thus spread extensively in various forms, sizes, and genres. This expansion has been met with increasing demand across societies, particularly among children, who represent the demographic group most engaged with these games. This group, marked by psychological and social vulnerability due to the immaturity of their cognitive development, can be likened to a blank slate upon which society inscribes what it wills. Owing to their many varieties, these games have gained immense popularity and a strong capacity to attract children through their visuals, colours, adventure, and imagination. Consequently, we now face challenges imposed by technology, especially for today's children, despite the apparent legitimacy of these games entering homes and children's bedrooms.

Driven by the child's desire and insistence, parents often yield to their demands, allowing electronic games to dominate much of their children's time. These games effectively stolen children from a natural life characterised by physical activity and innocent play and have isolated them from meaningful interactions with the home's internal and external environments. As a result, children have withdrawn and become silent, with the majority of their relationships now centred on the virtual

world. These games rely heavily on rapid attention, concentration, and cognitive engagement. They can be played anytime and often require no more than one player. Moreover, their easy accessibility and lack of parental oversight regarding the content that children consume, including destructive games and programmes that promote values and behaviours that conflict with religious teachings and societal traditions, have made children a primary target, given their heightened susceptibility to cultural and entertainment content.

These games are among the modern entertainment tools that have seen a surge in popularity in recent years, mainly due to smartphone technology. The electronic gaming industry has successfully captivated children through its products' visual and technical appeal, resulting in children spending exceedingly long hours engaged in gameplay. Consequently, today's children are increasingly exposed to both the positive and negative effects of these games and have become prisoners of the virtual world and fantasy, distancing themselves from family life and reality owing to their excessive use of such technologies.

In 2020, the number of individuals engaged in electronic gaming reached approximately 2.69 billion players worldwide, and this figure is projected to rise to 3.07 billion by 2023, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.6%, as recently reported by the platform *Finances Online*. Moreover, the size of the global electronic and video gaming market reached 203.12 billion USD in 2020 and is expected to grow to approximately 546 billion USD by 2028, with a projected CAGR of 13.2% over this period, according to a recent report by *Fortune Business Insights* (Al Jazeera, 2022).

Therefore, Algerian society, like many others worldwide, includes a substantial segment of children who are deeply immersed in and addicted to video games. Therefore, this study sheds light on Algerian reality, particularly the evolving relationship between children and their families. Accordingly, the primary research question posed is as follows:

What are the barriers to children's socialisation in light of technological innovations in smartphones, particularly the application of electronic games?

To answer this central question, the following key points must be explored:

2. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Definition of the Child

The child, as defined by scholars in psychology, sociology, law, Islamic jurisprudence, and various other sciences, is an individual in the age stage beginning from the moment of birth and ending upon reaching the age of maturity. While adulthood may vary across disciplines, there is consensus on this general framework (Ben Ibrahim, 2014, p. 24).

Definition of Electronic Games

Electronic games have been defined as "games to which individuals become continuously addicted, whether played online or offline, with generally negative impacts on individuals, and especially on children, affecting them socially, psychologically, and physically." They are also referred to as "the intensive use of online electronic games available via computers, mobile phones, PlayStation consoles, and various other imaginative formats" (Randa, 2020, p. 900).

Electronic games are considered mental activities that include all games played on computers, mobile phones, and tablets. They encompass cartoon-style digital games and are classified as software applications. These games are engaged similarly to other activities and rely on specific technological tools, such as desktop or portable computers, mobile phones, televisions, and other devices. They can be played individually or in groups via the internet (Kouider, 2012, p. 4).

They are also defined as encompassing all types of games presented in digital cartoon formats, including those available on personal computers (both desktop and laptop), smartphones, and online platforms (Zaboudi, 2015, p. 3).

Definition of Smartphones

The term *smartphone* is a modern expression that has gained widespread popularity in the last decade of the 21st century, although it first emerged in the 1990s. It refers to a category of modern mobile phones that individuals carry wherever they travel. These devices combine two main features: the ability to communicate via cellular networks and the inclusion of an advanced operating system that enables the running of mobile applications, encompassing a wide range of software programs. Smartphones offer numerous functionalities, such as making phone calls (with or without video), sending text or voice messages through various methods, etc.etc. Compared with laptops, their relatively small size makes them highly portable, allowing users to carry them around the clock. In the context of the present study, the term *smartphone* refers specifically to devices equipped with multiple applications, especially electronic games that attract children for recreation and emotional release through specific forms of gameplay.

Definition of Technological Innovations

Technological innovations refer to all technological discoveries and inventions that involve modern devices and tools, particularly those associated with what is now known as *artificial intelligence*, which simulates the human mind. This encompasses every new development and invention in technology, smartphones, and digital media. These innovations are characterised by their reliance on advanced technologies and are digital electronic products that evolve alongside current digital and industrial technological progress.

Among their most prominent features are the following:

➢ Interactivity

➢ Individuality

➢ Globality

➢ Integrality

➢ Accessibility

➢ Total Quality Management (TQM)

➢ Flexibility

➢ Participation and collaboration

➢ Three-dimensionality and image precision

➢ Attractiveness and diverse color schemes

➢ There is great diversity in content and formats.

Examples of modern technological innovations

Examples of modern technological innovations include but are not limited to:

Interactive video, internet, *videoconferencing*, *computers*, *multimedia technology*, *interactive multimedia*, *videotext* (video communication banks), *fax*, *faxmail*, and various social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Twitter*, *LinkedIn*, and *Skype*.

Definition of Socialisation

Socialisation is a comprehensive concept encompassing all the aims of education that seek to nurture and instil values, principles, behaviours, attitudes, and cultural norms in children to shape them into morally upright individuals. It physically, cognitively, and emotionally supports the holistic development of the human personality. Thus, socialisation serves as a protective process for the individual, involving intentional and unintentional methods and continuing throughout one's life.

It is the process through which the child is integrated into society's cultural framework by acquiring dominant modes of thinking, beliefs, customs, traditions, and associated behavioural patterns until they become internalised elements of the child's personality (Al-Fayez, 2011, p. 12).

Hence, socialisation is essentially an educational process aimed at shaping an individual's personality across all dimensions—spiritual, intellectual, physical, cognitive, and behavioural—in alignment with society's beliefs, traditions, customs, norms, and systems of thought.

3. Examples of Electronic Game Types Frequently Played by Children

3.1. Military strategy games

Military strategy games follow a similar foundational concept to economic strategy games but are directed toward a different thematic focus. These games place the player in the role of a military commander, often simulating the responsibilities and decision-making of a real-life general. To succeed,

the player must construct military facilities, form battalions, and launch invasions against rival territories. Success in such games requires understanding the chosen army's capabilities and formulating a genuine strategy for both attack and defense, allowing for accurate anticipation of opponents' moves or adequate responses to them. Like economic strategy games do, military strategy games demand skills in evaluation, analysis, and rapid thinking, often to an even greater degree, as they typically require immediate and well-considered decisions in dynamic environments.

3.2. Simulation games

Simulation games are designed to replicate real-world activities with high realism. They are fundamentally based on the rules of real-life practices, preserving detailed elements with a strong commitment to accuracy. These games are either directly inspired by reality or constructed from an imagined interpretation, aligning with their source material. Simulation games are not solely based on realistic graphics but also emphasise the immersive role granted to the player. For example, the player virtually assumes the pilot's position in flight simulation games such as *Microsoft Flight Simulator*, one of the genre's most renowned and long-standing examples. The user sees the aircraft's cockpit and control panels on screen and the surrounding environment, which is often populated with enemy aircraft. As in real life, the range of control and adjustment systems is vast and complex, requiring novice players to undergo a learning process. Without concentration, memory, and dexterity, the player may be unable to sustain a flight for more than a few minutes or even achieve take-off.

3.3. Entertainment and Excitement Games

This category of games is designed primarily for enjoyment and the passing of time. Players, especially children, are drawn into a fantastic game world and become deeply engaged in recreational play, often to the point of addiction. A noticeable attachment to these games has developed, mainly due to their continuous updates and new levels. Entertainment-based electronic games are specifically designed with various reinforcements and stimuli that ensure prolonged engagement. These features make it difficult for players to disengage, fostering a cycle of continuous play and dependency.

3.4. Adventure and Puzzle-Solving games (*Jeux d'aventures et de réflexion*)

From a casual observer's perspective, these games may resemble other action and adventure genres. However, the player assumes a central role through a virtual protagonist who may or may not be visible on the screen. What distinguishes this type of game is its emphasis on mystery, which plays a critical role in the storyline's progression. Deductive reasoning and careful observation are essential for player success. Like a private detective, the player must unravel various enigmas surrounding a central puzzle.

The game environment varies widely across titles but consistently prioritises realism and visual sophistication. These games maintain a continuous level of suspense that gradually leads the player toward fulfilling their mission. The player, embodying the virtual hero, navigates through a narrative rich in uncertainty, where analytical thinking and attention to detail are vital for advancement.

3.5. Educational and Instructional Games

These games are designed with a clear educational objective to impart specific knowledge or skills to the learner during gameplay. The purpose is intentional and direct: to create a meaningful learning opportunity that aligns with the interests and preferences of the learners. Students engage interactively with the game's events, establishing a dynamic relationship that supports the achievement of learning outcomes. These may include the development of mathematical abilities; problem-solving skills; guided thinking processes; and the acquisition of concepts, principles, and techniques (Atiyah & Hussein, 2007, p. 154).

3.6. Action games

Action games are primarily based on hand–eye coordination rather than the depth of the game's content. They typically involve fast-paced gameplay and are often associated with adventure or fantasy-based combat scenarios.

3.7. Strategy games

Strategy games emphasise logical thinking and tactical planning. Examples include puzzle games and chess, which require players to anticipate moves and devise comprehensive plans to succeed.

3.8. Sports games

These games simulate real-world sports, whether individually or as part of a team. They share structural similarities with strategy games in terms of rules, coordination, and goal-oriented play.

3.9. War and Puzzle Games

• Shooting games focuses on combat, featuring gunfights, wrestling, and other forms of aggressive engagement.

• Puzzle games rely heavily on intelligence and aim to stimulate cognitive processes. The goal is typically to solve a problem, complete a mental challenge, or participate in knowledge-based competitions (El-Sayed, 2024, p. 65).

4. From Traditional Play to Smart Electronic Gaming: The Algerian Child's Transition

Past and present games have taken many forms, yet the child remains constant. Between yesterday and today, profound differences exist in how children play and experience joy, reflecting broader shifts in life values and societal contexts. The child of yesterday is certainly not the same as the

child of today. The modern child lives in an era of technology and electronic revolutions, where distances have diminished or even disappeared owing to the proliferation of digital devices. However, despite these advancements, nostalgia still connects us to many past descriptions as beautiful.

Among the most significant transformations is the widespread adoption of electronic games, which have captivated every segment of society, including children. Today, it is not unusual to see a child as young as four skilfully navigating games on an iPad, computer, or smartphone (Oman Daily).

This raises an important question: *How did children in the past play?*A rich tradition of folk and traditional games has been established in Algeria and across many Arab countries. Many of these games were remarkably similar, with only slight differences stemming from shared cultural roots deeply grounded in Islamic values.

This question naturally leads to another: *Have traditional games disappeared from our children's lives because of the rise of electronic games?* Or are electronic games simply overtaking and displacing traditional play in the lives of Algerian children?

-* In light of the transformations experienced by Algerian families and society shaped by cultural, economic, social, educational, and global factors, change is natural and inevitable. This transformation has been accelerated by globalisation and borderless modern technologies, which have introduced a new way of life and redefined the structures through which societies are formed. Most nations have found themselves unable to resist or confront this phenomenon, which has become an integral part of daily life. As a result, societies have sought alternatives and safeguards to protect vulnerable groups, particularly children.

To keep pace with global scientific and civilisational advancements, the Algerian child now faces a difficult test that significantly influences their personality due to the many risks of electronic games. These games possess distinct features that capture the mind, including interactivity, flexibility, visual and audio effects, immersive imagination, and the creation of virtual friendships that replace real social bonds. They also generate a false sense of euphoria, leading children to develop strong attachments and commitments to such games.

These games often involve lengthy adventures that consume hours of a child's day, typically in front of a smartphone screen. One of the key psychological factors at play is the excitement and perceived heroism associated with in-game achievements made in imaginary worlds that draw children away from what they perceive as a dull reality. This detachment becomes a form of *virtual addiction*. This serious condition contributes to other dangers, such as social isolation, estrangement from family members, and a general withdrawal from community engagement. It thus constitutes a real threat to a child's development and poses further challenges to the parent–child relationship. As a result, the child

ends up living in an illusory world with no equivalent. This disconnect leads to fear of the future, a collapse in self-confidence, a weakening personality, and a growing aversion to real life. Consequently, the child may experience psychological, physical, social, cultural, economic, security-related, moral, and ethical issues. In such a context, traditional forms of socialisation with all their methods and media prove ineffective in the face of the pervasive influence of electronic games. Even *social control*, which typically functions as a remedy for accumulated problems, becomes insufficient to address the depth and complexity of these emerging challenges.

*- Traditional play, therefore, appears to be heading toward decline and eventual disappearance due to the proliferation of technological media, which has introduced new forms and models of play for children, as previously discussed. These innovative games, while offering certain benefits, also present significant risks. The impact ultimately depends on the family's approach, particularly the role of parents in actively monitoring and accompanying their children consistently and attentively. A conscious and involved family engages with the child's play in an organised and intentional manner. In contrast, a less attentive family may neglect this responsibility, thereby increasing the dangers posed by brilliant games to the child's personality and contributing to serious obstacles that hinder healthy socialisation.

Consequently, traditional play becomes marginalised, even stigmatised, in the presence of electronic games. This signals the erosion of traditional socialisation methods, which have been replaced by alternative tools and practices facilitated by modern technologies. The situation was further exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which raised numerous questions and caused ongoing confusion within Algerian households, such as confusion they had never encountered before. It has become a national crisis, raising the pressing question: *How can we protect children from the dangers of electronic games?* Fewer people now inquire about how to socialise their children effectively; instead, the overwhelming concern is *how to protect our children.* In today's world, ensuring child safety is a significant achievement.

Contemporary socialisation increasingly gravitates towards the values of the Western creators of these technologies, distancing itself from Arab and Islamic values. As a result, traditional games with a national cultural identity are being marginalised. However, no one seems to be able to protect the child from what researcher Marzouk Al-Hilali described in her book *Confronting Digital Tyranny* as a purely Western form of digital despotism. This force heightens fears across societies in all aspects of life.

*- This new form of play may also be described as themigration of children into the virtual world in search of belonging among friends from diverse nationalities and cultures. Within these digital spaces, they engage in various conversations, spend extended hours together, and express their

emotions and views freely without parental supervision. This phenomenon has given rise to what may be termed a *digitally silent child* and, by extension, a *"silent family"*, a term that reflects the broader impact on all members of society.

In this context, Mustafa Mahmoud's prophetic words in his book *Gentlemen, Remove Your Masks* resonate deeply: "Modern warfare is about making your enemy kill himself, so you no longer need to endure the burden of doing it yourself."

*- Psychologists suggest that children who have grown up alongside the development and spread of the internet are more firmly attached to the content of the digital world and pay significantly less attention to traditional human relationships. Instead, they adopt the values of the new, electronically driven world shaped mainly by Western ideologies and seek integration within it. This results in their more profound attachment to new digital values over those rooted in their local culture. Children are rapidly captivated by the enticing offerings of the internet, and given their cognitive flexibility at an early age, they quickly adapt to its intricacies. They become highly skilled users, and all traditional taboos begin to dissolve, transforming them into first-class citizens of the virtual world (Kouider, 2012, p. 108).

What has further enhanced the popularity and influence of electronic games among Algerian children is their tendency to imitate and emulate the heroes portrayed in these games. These figures become new role models from whom children derive values, concepts of strength, and even physical self-images. As a result, the Algerian child is no longer inclined to look up to his father, mother, brother, religious leader, or schoolteacher. As celebrities and artists inspire adolescents today, children now idolise fictional characters and imaginary heroes.

While adults may engage in heated debates over a single episode of a Turkish drama or the legitimacy of women driving or working, the younger generation has moved far beyond such disputes, creating their parallel world. Internet generation has realised the need to break free from traditionally assigned roles, shattering taboos, challenging prohibitions, and escaping the constraints of reality. They have migrated into the digital realm, where they now live an entirely different life from the one they left behind (Kouider, 2012, p. 109).

*- We do not deny the positive aspects and functions of electronic games or the benefits they offer children in terms of developing imagination, expanding awareness, stimulating the mind, discovering new facts, engaging in social interaction, and acquiring new cultures. These games can also contribute to behavioural adjustment, shape attitudes, enhance curiosity, promote openness to the world and its societies, and improve proficiency in foreign languages through interaction with diverse digital peers. Furthermore, they can increase cultural and scientific knowledge, foster motivation,

encourage social participation, and provide entertainment, recreation, social learning, and adaptability skills that help prepare children for life.

However, a closer look at electronic games reveals that their negative aspects often outweigh their positive aspects, especially in the absence of continuous parental supervision and protective oversight to regulate the child's daily gameplay.

*- Scientific studies have attempted to address key questions surrounding the causes of addiction to electronic games amidst the overwhelming surge of technological advancements, as well as the anticipated consequences of prolonged immersion in the world of smartphones. A study published by the American Psychiatric Association examined two groups of children aged between 13 and 15. The results revealed that children who regularly engaged in computer games, particularly violent games involving war and killing, exhibited increased aggressive behaviour and a tendency towards irritability and quick temperism.

The study also noted additional adverse effects, including sleep disturbances, elevated heart rates, and social withdrawal from family and friends. These habits are likely to lead to future physical, psychological, and social health issues (Al Manal Magazine).

*- Numerous statistics and reports issued by international organisations have highlighted the dangers associated with excessive engagement in electronic games. According to these sources, there are approximately 175,000 documented medical cases globally linked to electronic game addiction. In addition, 285,000 children have been reported to suffer from vision problems as a result of video game use.

Multiple studies have confirmed that spending more than nine (9) hours per week playing video games can harm children. These studies emphasise a clear correlation between the amount of time a child spends playing and the emergence of behavioural problems, increased conflict with peers, and a noticeable decline in social skills (Al Manal Magazine).

*- A recent Spanish study revealed that children who engage in video games for more than nine hours per week are at increased risk of harm. Researcher Jesús Pujol conducted the study at the *Hospital del Mar* in Barcelona, and his colleagues included 2,442 children aged between 7 and 11 years. The findings indicated a clear relationship between the amount of time spent playing video games and the presence of behavioural problems, particularly among children who exceeded the nine-hour threshold weekly. Moreover, a previous study revealed that playing video games for just one to two hours per week was associated with improved motor skills and specific cognitive abilities in children (Al Manal Magazine).

To objectively assess the scope and risks of electronic games, Dr. Pujol stated:

"Playing video games is neither inherently good nor bad; rather, the outcome depends on the amount of time the child spends playing."

This conclusion, published in the *Journal of Neurology*, did not focus on the specific types of games played but instead highlighted time as the critical variable. This principle can be broadly applied within the Algerian context, considering several cultural and societal factors that support the notion that the duration of gameplay ultimately determines the impact of electronic games on Algerian children.

In this spirit of rationality, it becomes essential for children to adapt to the realities of modern life via contemporary tools. Time does not stand still, and failing to embrace these technologies could lead to isolation from the broader, digitally connected world.

5. Barriers to Socialisation in Light of Modern Technological Advancements

Studies indicate that the internet, along with all forms of communication and electronic influences characterised by cultural diversity, has played a significant role in altering socialisation methods, the relationship between parents and children, and the relationship between children and society. Traditional methods of socialisation are no longer the primary source; instead, knowledge and values are increasingly acquired through these digital means.

This reality necessitates the development of new approaches and methods of socialisation, especially with the spread of new communication and information technologies. In the information age, socialisation has become closely intertwined with the internet. Traditional methods have become outdated and are no longer compatible with present-day realities. The socialisation of the digital era fosters awareness of the value of what is being presented to individuals. It enables them to distinguish between what is beneficial and what is harmful.

In light of technological communication, it is possible to identify the barriers and challenges related to child upbringing and socialisation through several scientific studies and researchers' insights. This section aims to analyse and describe these challenges by highlighting the current state of socialisation in the context of the digital world.

The continuous overuse of modern technological innovations by members of the same family has become a form of addiction. A recent British study revealed that both men and women who frequently use mobile phones may suffer from a type of dependency, whereby they feel compelled to use their devices unconsciously. This phenomenon is linked to electromagnetic waves emitted by mobile phones, which infiltrate the brain and trigger the release of endomorphin substances similar to morphine, which can induce a state of euphoria and lead to addiction. This form of dependency has affected

Algerian families, making a return to traditional socialisation methods increasingly difficult, if not entirely impossible.

As a result, the inevitable trajectory of smartphone technology has shaped the behavioural orientations of individuals and entire families through habitual consumption of its outputs. Possessing such technology has become one of the necessities of life. This aligns closely with recent studies exploring the relationship between individuals and their smartphones, one of which described the phenomenon as "nomophobia" (nomobilephone phobia), the fear of being without or losing one's mobile phone.

This trend has produced a sense of *autonomy and individualism* within the Algerian household, posing a significant barrier to the child's upbringing. Children's minds become deeply entrenched in the content delivered by smartphones and other media platforms, undermining traditional socialisation processes' preventive and protective functions.

The issue of weakened family communication and reduced social interaction between parents and children has significantly impacted the processes of socialisation, especially in the context of widespread addiction to smartphones and technological innovations among both children and, at times, parents themselves. This phenomenon constitutes one of the significant barriers to adequate socialisation. The absence of dialogue, or a lack of *dialogue culture*, creates emotional and psychological distance between family members. It weakens bonds of affection and care, and the frequency of meaningful conversations with children declines if they do not disappear altogether.

A study by Saida Oqba (2020) titled *"The Impact of Facebook on Family Dialogue"*, which was conducted on a sample of 80 Facebook users,revealed that Facebook hinders family dialogue by 33%. The study revealed that the most common topics of conversation within families were limited to requests for specific items or favours, indicating that daily interaction through Facebook has led many individuals to turn to the platform as their primary social outlet.

This shift has strengthened relationships outside the family unit and encouraged the formation of friendships in the virtual world at the expense of real-world connections. Consequently, interaction within the household has diminished, each family member has become increasingly isolated, and interpersonal relationships have deteriorated, leading to emotional detachment and a notable decline in intrafamily communication.

Thus, social isolation has significantly widened within the Algerian family and has become one of the key challenges facing socialisation in our contemporary context. This has had a detrimental effect on family communication, leading to a functional breakdown in the parental role. The weakening of

communication has resulted in fragmented family integration, making it increasingly difficult to transmit and instil family cultural values in children.

Algerian researcher Mustapha Boutefnouche asserts that "the strength of dialogue and communication measures the closeness between parents and children." First and foremost, the individual must feel integrated within the family. For them, the family represents the primary group, a context in which kinship ties are deeply rooted and cohesive in all aspects, whether social, economic, or otherwise.

This encompasses the individual's relationships with their ancestors, including their father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and so forth, up to the ancestor from whom inheritance is derived. These relationships carry both spiritual and material significance. They also include ties with collateral relatives, such as brothers and sisters from a common lineage, and with descendants, including sons, daughters, grandsons, and granddaughters.

Second, individuals perceive themselves as part of a broader familial social environment that surrounds and supports the nuclear family. Relationships within this extended environment enhance cohesion and solidarity, reinforcing internal family bonds. However, these external familial relationships, such as those with the spouse's family, are often indirectly mediated. While typically respectful, such relationships can sometimes be cold or even lead to estrangement (Boutefnouche, 1979, p. 55).

In addition to the previously mentioned barriers, the Algerian family today finds itself in constant exhaustion and frustration. This frustration stems from two primary sources: the emotional strain of continuously guiding and advising children, who, in the age of smartphones, often ignore such counsel, and the financial burden required to meet the needs of modern youth. These include the cost of internet access, continuous schooling, private tutoring (out of fear of academic failure), food, and clothing.

Compared with their peers, modern children require a financial allowance that satisfies their perceived needs. However, they often lack awareness or sensitivity to the fact that their parents may be poor or have limited income. Unlike children of previous generations, who often support their parents in meeting household responsibilities, today's child increasingly loses a sense of *gradual responsibility*. When parents cannot meet their demands, children may use illicit means to acquire money.

This dynamic gives rise to various social and psychological problems that deeply affect families and society. These include violence, sexual assault, theft, illegal migration, anxiety, drug use, and school dropout, among others. In such circumstances, we see the emergence of what Malek Bennabi described

as the "half-person": *an* individual who insists loudly on their rights *but* refuses to be reminded of their duties toward the family and society.

According to the Pew Research Centre, a leading global statistics organisation, 71% of parents with children under 12 expressed at least some concern about how much time their children spend in front of screens, including 31% who reported being very concerned about this issue. Many parents believe that their children spend too much of their time on digital devices, particularly tablets and smartphones.

In general, parents are also increasingly worried about the long-term effects of smartphones on child development. A significant 71%, a notably high percentage, believe that the harms of extensive smartphone use among young children outweigh its benefits. These concerns arise amid the widespread use of smart mobile devices by children.

For example, 80% of parents stated that their children aged 5--11 use or interact with tablets; whereas63% said the same about smartphones. Perhaps most strikingly, nearly 50% of parents with children under 5years of age reported that their children regularly use and engage with digital devices (Pew Research Centre, 2020, pp. 5–6).

YouTube has emerged as a primary content source for young and older children. According to thePew Research Centre, 89% of parents with children aged 5--11 years reported that their children watched videos on YouTube. This figure stands at 81% for parents of children aged 3--4 years and 57% for those with children aged 2 years or younger.

Although most parents acknowledge the platform's role in entertaining and educating their children, the report also reveals that most parents are concerned about their children being exposed to inappropriate content on the platform (Pew Research Centre, 2020, pp. 7–8).

Thus, these figures clearly illustrate the difficulty of socialisation in the era of the virtual machine, raising many questions that seek to anticipate future methods for socialising the Algerian child, especially as we now live within the sphere of artificial intelligence.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, we hope to have contributed meaningfully to raising awareness individually and collectively regarding a topic of great significance. Video games can indeed be both curse and blessing. For this reason, it is imperative that Algerian families in particular, and society at large, approach this global phenomenon with caution, as it has produced alarming consequences, especially when it affects a vulnerable and fragile group: children, who have not yet reached a sufficient level of awareness.

Relevant authorities must intensify their efforts in monitoring such games from psychological and religious perspectives and allow only those that align with our cultural traditions and the teachings

of Islam. There is also an urgent need to launch awareness campaigns through various modern media platforms to clarify the negative impacts of electronic games. Moreover, parents must closely supervise their children's playtime and leisure hours and carefully monitor the content of the video games they engage with.

7. Recommendations and suggestions

On the basis of the findings and reflections presented in this paper, we recommend the following:

➢ The World Health Organisation (WHO) has issued a report containing several recommendations on how to ensure healthy screen time for children. With respect to digital devices, the guidelines are strict: children aged 2 years and under should not be exposed to digital devices at all, whereas those aged 3--4 years should be allowed no more than one hour per day. This firm stance reflects the serious harm prolonged exposure to screens may cause in children's cognitive, language, and motor development (World Health Organisation, 2022, n.p.).

➢ Specific time limits for children's use of the internet or electronic games, ideally not exceeding one hour per day, should be set. Children should also be allowed to engage in physical and movement-based games away from screens. It is highly recommended that participation in traditional games that reflect cultural identity be encouraged (Baltaher & Garghout, 2018, p. 46).

➢ Raise awareness among parents, guardians, and teachers about their role in supervising children's play and monitoring the duration, content, and themes of the games they engage in. It is crucial to educate them on the dangers of excessive gaming and to prevent children from accessing violent or dangerous games while explaining the risks and long-term harms associated with them.

➢ Effortsbetween social institutions and state bodiesshould be coordinated to raise awareness among children, families, and educators about dangerous and harmful games and to work collectively to reduce the spread of this phenomenon. Additionally, support should be directed toward developing Arab-designed video games, particularly those created by Algerian innovators and developers across the Arab and Islamic world, games rooted in authentic cultural and moral values.

➢ The implementation of prior content regulation for electronic games released on markets and websites is similar to the oversight of video tapes, books, and other media. This can be achieved by establishing specialised technical and scientific committees responsible for reviewing and approving games before they are marketed and made accessible to children and adolescents. These committees should include sociology, psychology, religion, culture, education, and media experts; classify games according to their alignment with cultural, moral, and religious values; and prohibit any

games that promote violence or contradict the principles of Arab societies. Moreover, game producers should obtain licences before marketing their products, along with clear age-rating labels on packaging and mandatory compliance by retail outlets (Hanafi, 2018, p. 48).

➢ Engage broader civil institutions, including religious bodies and civil society organisations, in awareness campaigns addressing the risks and harms of electronic games, going beyond mere religious rulings of prohibition (Hanafi, 2018, p. 50).

➢ Emphasise the role of the family in allocating time for nondigital, traditional games that can be played collectively, thus reinforcing familial bonds and real-world social interaction.

➢ Expand and diversify the use of nondigital play through innovative approaches. This includes supporting play therapy as a specialised educational or therapeutic discipline and encouraging rough-and-tumble play (nonpassive physical play) within nurseries and schools under safe conditions. Activities could include tree climbing, fruit picking, or caring for domestic animals, all of which foster responsibility and reconnection with nature.

➢ Develop digital and traditional educational programmes for children in collaboration with academic departments atnational and international universities. TheMinistry of Education should adopt and distribute these programmes among trainers, educators, and families to ensure accessibility and effective implementation.

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