

The impact of globalization via the Internet and children's rights in student sexual abuse in urban areas

Impacto de la globalización a través de Internet y la relación de los derechos de los niños en el abuso sexual de estudiantes de áreas urbanas

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this literature review paper is to show the negative consequences of globalization via the mass media, especially the internet, on student sexual abuse, to provide analyses of children's rights and their shortcomings in this arena in urban areas, and to offer some solutions to reducing student vulnerability. The limitations of the research are based on insufficient information in the case of sexual abuse due to cultural issues in different states, which mean that not all cases of abuse by parents, teachers and the authorities are reported, so it is impossible to adduce complete data on victims of student sexual abuse. We shall attempt to show the growing danger of sexual abuse for students that poses a threat to future generations due to one of the major aspects of globalization—the internet—by taking into account diverse cultural communities and their dynamic limitations and political and social structures. This paper studies the different laws on child sexual abuse in some countries and some of the national and international organizations that support children's rights. It shall also define the increasing sexual abuse of students and their access to the internet.

RESUMEN

El objetivo del presente estudio fue analizar la literatura disponible y mostrar los efectos negativos de la globalización a través de los medios de comunicación masiva, especialmente la Internet, sobre el abuso sexual de estudiantes y proveer de un análisis de los derechos de los niños y sus deficiencias en las áreas urbanas, además de ofrecer algunas soluciones para reducir la vulnerabilidad de los estudiantes. Las limitaciones de la investigación estuvieron determinadas por la poca información en el caso del abuso sexual debido a los problemas culturales en las diferentes provincias, en donde no todos los casos de abuso sexual por familiares, maestros y autoridades son informados, por lo que es imposible tener los datos completos de estudiantes víctimas de abuso sexual. Tratamos de demostrar un crecimiento peligroso de abuso sexual en estudiantes lo que representa un riesgo para las futuras generaciones que están relacionados con uno de los mayores aspectos de la globalización –la Internet- por la penetración en diversas comunidades culturales, sus limitaciones dinámicas y las estructuras políticas y sociales. Este trabajo, también estudia las diferentes leyes sobre el abuso sexual en niños en algunos países y en organizaciones nacionales e internacionales que apoyan los derechos de los niños. Definiendo también el incremento en el abuso sexual de estudiantes y el acceso a internet.

INTRODUCTION

The major concern of each society is the future of its next generation, which is the main player in its future development (Cortese, 2003). Globalization, as a multidimensional phenomenon, has extensively created positive and negative effects on civil societies and enters the economic, social, political, and educational arenas (Buchholz, *et al.*, 2009; Kabeer & Mahmud, 2004; Wiersema & Bowen, 2008; Zi Teng, 2000). Digital media is one of the symbols of globalization, in which the internet and its natural decentralization along with its international easy access for everyone, has motivated people in rural and urban areas at all social, economic, cultural, and educational levels regardless of race or color (Porter, 2001; Warschauer, Shetzer, & Meloni, 2000).

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In spite of the benefits of globalization in distributing online technology, its negative aspects in the form of mass media have dramatically destroyed the moral values of societies with pornography and have attracted the attention of school students to such programs (Sutter, 2000). According to Prins (2011), one of the threats posed by the internet is to the privacy of the victim since offenders can easily track victims; with just a click of the mouse, most of the victims' information can be readily accessed. A very good example is Facebook which has a lot of users such as students, teenagers, youngsters and other international users.

Photos, films and pornographic texts (comic, romantic, adventurous, dramatic, and other kinds) can be exchanged through online channels and between peers, however, another downfall is that some digital tools like the internet have the ability to make it easy to download, save, and send programs with sexual content to others (Döring, 2009).

The internet also focuses on student sexual abuse, especially in urban areas where internet access is more possible than in rural areas (Greenfield, 2004).

There are many issues about the advantages of globalization in educational fields (Charlton & Andras, 2006; Engel & Rutkowski, 2008; Jordan & Yeomans, 2003), but few issues about its destructive effects on students (Hope, 2007).

Child pornography is often discussed in social, psychological and criminological arenas, but preemptive legal action is barely considered. Pereda and his contributors analyzed and compared child sexual abuse among 21 countries from 38 articles. They also compared their work with the work of Finkelhor (1994) and proved that this is still a major problem. Briefly, their study concluded and confirmed that rates of female sexual abuse (student and non-student) are higher than rates of male sexual abuse, except in two studies: in South Africa where the rate of female sexual abuse was 53.20% and male sexual abuse 60% in 2001, according to a study by Madu and Peltzer; and in Portugal where the female rate was 2.6% and the male rate was 2.7% in 2004, as stated by Figueiredo *et al.* (Pereda, Guilera, Forns, & Gómez-Benito, 2009). Some researchers like (Gillespie, 2010) and (Akdeniz, 2008) described national and international legal action and its limitations in the fight against child pornography, however, it is essential to do more work in this field because of the importance of the subject.

Due to the fact that there is no central mechanism for controlling the internet, it is crucial to take some

precautionary measures, such as controlling children's internet addiction, avoiding the playing and viewing of violent games and eliminating any access to pornographic and hostile content, as well as the invasion of privacy (Çankaya & Odabaşı, 2009).

In this paper the researchers discuss the prominent impact of globalization and its effects on student sexual abuse through one of global media's powerful tools—the internet. This paper also evaluates some of the rules created by some states to reduce this problem and also offers some meaningful suggestions to reduce this problem.

Globalization and children's rights

Globalization is a widespread phenomenon, which globally and increasingly shares and trades the world's production, integrates the productive systems of different countries and involves many advantages as well as many evils (Cigno, Rosati, & Guarcello, 2002). It is somewhat misleadingly thought that the most important features of globalization, either long-term or short-term, are due to increasing connectivity, also sometimes called interconnectedness (Robertson & White, 2007).

The effects of globalization via the internet depend on many factors, such as differences in demographics, economics and the local situation. Other factors like Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Online Service Providers (OSPs) are secondary (Kamssu, Siekpe, & Ellzy, 2004).

The negative effect of globalization on children who are more vulnerable than others is crucial; the internet is the one of the major tools that has the most attention among children and teenagers, and pornography also has the highest level of users among both children and adolescents. The negative aspects of the internet are its addictive use, high viewing of inappropriate programs, creation of abrasive characters and negative role models through vulgar sexual programs (Döring, 2009), therefore, children should be protected from the negative impacts of this phenomenon, especially via the internet (Heins, 2001; Preston, 2007). Though parental supervision and monitoring of children's internet use through blocking and filtering obscene sites and programs can be useful, it cannot solve the root of this problem. Other legal strategies are necessary. So in order to support children, it is necessary to have powerful laws against offenders. While the main purpose of the law is to protect the weak from the strong and to compensate injuries caused by carelessness and neglect, when the problem is child

abuse, courts often fail to carry out effective remedies as they consider it necessary for children to attend school (DeMitchell, 2002).

There are many national and international laws considered by states for the protection of children's rights. In 1979, to embarrass the West, the Polish government proposed that the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child be made a binding agreement (Jones, 2005). All member states were called to consider all appropriate measures to prevent forcing children to take part in unlawful sexual activity or to prevent them being exploited in prostitution, pornography or other unlawful sexual acts by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Ahmed, 2005). The United States Congress asked all elements of the ICAC (Internet Crimes against Children task-force) to review procedures to discover child exploitation. In 2009, task forces reported almost 28 000 complaints involving child pornography, seduction or lewdness directed at juvenile and child prostitution. These complaints resulted in more than 13 000 investigations (United States, 2010). Other organizations in this country such as the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), United States Army Criminal Investigation Command (USACIDC), Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI), Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS), Child Victim Identification Program (CVIP), Child Pornography Image Index (CPII), Armed Forces Center for Child Protection (AFCCP) and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to obtain a Sexual Maturity Rating (SMR) are working to combat child abuse.

There are some legal measures to reduce child sexual abuse that some states apply while trying to ratify the rules supporting children's rights. In Europe, in its latest review of the telecommunications regulatory reform process, the European Commission recommended the establishment of a technologically neutral future legal framework in the EU. This would imply that services provided via the internet could be subject to the same kind of regulations that apply to other communications networks (Bauer, Berne, & Maitland, 2002). But the European Commission argued that the internet should establish a legal framework for both the private and public sector. The European Union internet policy regime appeared within the greater context of proposals and innovations in the Information Society (Halpin & Simpson, 2002), such as progress including the provisions of the Communications Decency Act 1996 (CDA). The CDA was created in large part to protect children from objec-

tionable online material (King, 2003). Web publishers are able to apply Platform for Internet Content Selections (PICS) labels to limit access to web content (see the "Web Content Filtering Approaches" sidebar) (Lee, Hui, & Fong, 2002).

One useful tool that can be used for supporting children's rights is the internet itself, which the most relevant organizations defending children's rights, unfortunately, barely use since they still use traditional means. But, promoting knowledge of both related authorities and victims via the internet through educational films and games can be a great help to them in confronting offenders (Prins, 2011).

Unfortunately, each state has its own laws to deal with this problem, for instance, the dominant strategy for addressing child sexual abuse in the United States is the formal child protection system, while Kenya focuses more on locally-based efforts for empowering children and communities to resist and stop exploitation and abuse (Mildred & Plummer, 2009). Some preemptive measures for protecting children's rights include the idea of 'governance without government', a multi-layered governance system (material sovereignty or action capacities). The EU represents a multi-level system of governance with negotiating networks encompassing public and private actors spanning various sub-national, national, and supranational levels (Börzel & Risse, 2000), but censorship of the internet's harmful content by authorities appears to be no solution in the regulation of illegal and harmful content on the internet. Though it is increased by the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, there is no mention of what kinds of measures and punishments will be legally performed against those states that ignore their responsibilities towards child sexual abuse. Furthermore, it is not determined which organization administers punishment for violations against children at national or international levels (Futa, Hsu, & Hansen, 2001; Ibanez, Borrego, Pemberton, & Terao, 2006; Le & Kato, 2006). In actual fact, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a value-based legal document source, but there is a considerable gap between a legal document describing ideal conditions for children at a macro-governmental level and reality (Hundeide & Armstrong, 2011).

Furthermore, there is failure in powerful organizations and international laws in this regard, for example in the Group of Eight (G8) there was no consensus amongst members. Japan rejected the criminalization of the possession of child pornography in 2010 and Russia was considered a major source of child pornog-

raphy (Gillespie, 2010). The exact definition of offences such as child pornography varies from one country to another and what is considered harmful will depend on cultural differences (Akdeniz, 1997). There are great attempts by law enforcement investigators to discover all the methods used by offenders, such as using e-mail correspondence pictures, that could strengthen cases and result in additional charges for crimes such as child pornography production, as well as all means of communication between victims and offenders in the context of all child sexual abuse via the internet (Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2005; Mitchell *et al.*, 2007).

It is necessary to focus on international efforts since there is an inconsistency in our attempts to find child sexual offenders due to the international role of the internet and the national function of laws within territorial boundaries. Therefore, the effective response to children's rights should be at a global level (Hick & Halpin, 2001).

Student sexual abuse and urbanization

Child sexual abuse is inappropriately exposing or subjecting the child to sexual contact, activity, or behavior. Sexual abuse includes oral, anal, genital, buttock, and breast contact. It also includes the use of objects for vaginal or anal penetration, fondling, or sexual stimulation (Prevent Child Abuse America [PCA], 2001). The sexual exploitation of children is generally regarded as the use of a child for sexual purposes in exchange for cash or favors between the client, intermediary or agent and others (parent, family member, procurer, and teacher), who profit from the trade in children for these purposes (Koen, 2007).

The greatest harm that destroys the trust between educator and student can be the sexual abuse of students. In the relationship that exists between student and educator, some sort of pathological need may be created towards teachers who exploit their students, which leads to students not reporting sexual abuse from their teachers or parents. This process may reduce the child's self-esteem whereby the victim may not attempt to seek help or protect himself, indeed the victim may even tolerate more sexual abuse, thus continuing the pattern (DeMitchell, 2002).

There are different kinds of child abuse that some teachers or school staff have committed, the majority of which is sexual. The first is sexual abuse, which is sexual intercourse and the fondling of the private parts of girls' bodies, and even the exchange of pornographic films between students and their teachers. The second

is physical abuse, which is the illegal verbal or physical punishment of students. The third is emotional or verbal abuse such as depriving students of their rights or using offensive words in front of them. The final one is child labor, such as cleaning teachers' houses and buying food for them (Shumba, 2011).

A few teachers report child abuse, but most have never done so and if they have, they have failed to give a legally descriptive report (Kenny, 2001). The main problem is that it is easier for a school to deny reports of child abuse than it is to monitor children regularly and make the school available for inspection by school authorities (Cigno, *et al.*, 2002). The reason for teachers not reporting student abuse is inadequate training in this field (Kenny, 2001). Current child abuse prevention programs are focused primarily on educating pre-school and elementary school children on how to recognize cases of abuse and teaching them personal safety skills (Birdthistle & Vince-Whitman, 1997). It is interesting that those adolescent girls and boys with a history of sexual abuse report greater sexual risk-taking than those without such a history (Raj, Silverman, & Amaro, 2000). On the other hand, communication between students and teachers via the internet and other digital tools may make it easier for offenders (teachers) to access their prey inside and outside school. There are many examples of sexual abuse of students by teachers, like the case of oral sex between a 37-year-old teacher and his 16-year-old student in his classroom and the photo of a naked 12-year-old student attached to a message which was then sent to his teacher by cell phone. There was also the case of the teacher who used some of his students as models for pornography (Maxwell, 2007).

Suggestions like training the public in the prevention of child abuse, introducing preemptive educational programs for pre-schools and elementary schools, transferring responsibility to adults instead of children, and considering preemptive programs are needed because child sexual abuse is often addressed through protective and criminal justice systems, which is useful but not enough. All systems consider child sexual abuse after the abuse has already happened (PCA, 2004). It is necessary to consider the role of urban environments in child sexual abuse due to their better infrastructure and equipment. Pupils in urban schools may also take advantage of learning spillovers related with closer connections to a greater and more different group of students. Furthermore, the usual instructors are better distributed and shared by city schools, e. g. faster links for information technologies or public transport (Gibbons & Silva, 2008). Educational researchers have also

participated in linking the construction of the urban area to specific populations and intellectual proclivities (Buendia, 2011). It is common in developing countries for the relationship between the state and the peasant to be compulsive, and there is an urban-based connection between rural and urban sectors (Fang, 2003).

Telephone lines are the first step to accessing the internet in most developing countries and this is not possible for people living in rural areas because it is both costly and slow. On the other hand, access to the internet is conditional upon subscribing for a limited time, or agreeing to display advertisements on some websites. While most urban residents use the internet, in developed countries they use other infrastructure like modems instead of telephones, (Kamssu, *et al.*, 2004). For example, in Tanzania more than 77% of the population live in rural areas and only 23% in urban areas, so internet users in this country represented less than 1%, but between 2000 and 2005 the number of users grew fivefold from 60 000 to 330 000 due to internet cafes, which are a good opportunity for those who are deprived of internet access (Furuholt & Kristiansen, 2007).

The Internet and its effects on child sexual abuse

The Internet has become an essential part of daily life. Though computers and the internet are increasingly indispensable tools for children, they also cause anxiety because of the violent content of games, extreme use of computers, easy access to pornography and other content, invasion of privacy and internet addiction (Çankaya & Odabaşı, 2009). While the Internet is a useful means of communication, it can offer many hazards from the exposure to sexual content in the form of online activity.

Today, Internet risk behaviors are related to health. Some risk behaviors that lead to internet sex crime is the sending of personal information, photos or address by email, playing jokes or making abusive comments that create a kind of relationship with the potential for an offense, which gradually seduces children and teens to engage in exposed sex (Dowell, Burgess, & Cavanaugh, 2009).

Child sex exploiters can easily network via the internet and from its websites target children and simply provide pornographers and sex exploiters with access (Koen, 2007). Sex exploitation of children involves pedophilia, moral deviation and pornography. Pedophilia discourse is the field of child sexual abuse that should have serious protection because it concerns images and internet content, as well as actual child

abuse incidents (Kleinhans, 2004). The impact of information technology has created many moral deviations among students, for instance, if we compare playing computer games and video-arcade games it is clear that the internet is more enjoyable than computer and video-arcade games (Thomas & Martin, 2010). The results of stepwise regression analyses revealed that disinhibition and total perceived stress were predictive of internet abuse for sexual purposes and that perceived hopelessness and susceptibility to boredom were predictive of internet abuse for non-sexual purposes (Velezmoro, Lacefield, & Roberti, 2010). For example, viewing sexually explicit material online has been found to lead to internet abuse later on. On examining sexual sensation seeking and sexual compulsivity among 307 college students, they found that with students who used the internet for sexual material, as they progressed through school (or consumed more material), their sexual sensation seeking score increased (Velezmoro, *et al.*, 2010).

Some new technologies such as phones equipped with features like multimedia messaging, internet access or built-in cameras have made it possible to broadcast and receive sexually explicit content from the palm of your hand. This is extremely troubling given the huge rise in teen cell phone use over the past few years (Dombrowski, Gischlar, & Durst, 2007).

CONCLUSION

Student sexual abuse and the role of the internet in increasing this problem, specifically among school students in urban areas due to the negative consequences of globalization, highlight children's rights and supportive policies for children, so the existence of international laws is necessary to reduce and confront this problem.

The shortcomings of national and international laws in this field and the legal ways to deal with child sexual abuse, especially since a fraction of it affects school students, shows that there is no consensus among states for solving this problem. Although some countries have enacted codes of practice, each state has its own laws, therefore, there is no specific international law to deal with this problem. The role of policy makers at national and international level is crucial, as is the role of parents and school authorities, especially in urban areas where most students can access the internet very easily.

To solve this problem, it is essential to consider global and international measures because the defini-

tion of sexual abuse and the actions taken to deal with it differ from state to state. Therefore, the main problem of student sexual abuse via the internet is the incoherence in comprehensive, imperative and international law, as well as the carelessness in the reporting of child sexual abuse by authorities, parents and teachers.

There are some suggestions for the public to reduce this problem. The first is that pornographic sites should be regularized not to be accessible to everyone everywhere.

The second is that the distribution of information should be extended to the public by policy makers to stipulate the need to report child sexual abuse. The third is to consider the best preemptive programs to provide education on sexual abuse for pre-school, elementary, secondary and high school students. In this regard, the use of educational films, cartoons and games via the internet can help children defend themselves and report suspicious cases. The last is training parents to have closer relationships with their children in order to reduce this problem; parental supervision of lewd internet programs are useful but not enough.

Further research in this field is essential to offer practical ways to deal with this issue.

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