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Emerging Needs for Minimizing Negative Effects of Technology Overuse among Children

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Abstract: In the current era of digitization and multi-media communication, Romania is the land of technological contrast: we have almost the highest connectivity in Europe, but we are the last at digital competencies, use of the Internet and digitization of the economy. Through smart phones Internet data consumption is growing exponentially, especially among children and younger, but is lacking the education for a healthy and responsible consumption. The studies about the effects of technology overuse on children prove negative effects on their development: decrease of cognitive, learning and communication capacities, of their self-control, emotional intelligence and empathy, or even worth, psychiatric problems may occur, such as anxiety, depression, social phobia and addiction. Within the Romanian educational system the school counselor teachers are in the forefront, being the first professionals who can promote within schools relevant information for preventing such negative effects among children, parents and teachers.
This paper will address the issue of increased and uncontrolled use of technology among Romanian children and younger through the lentils of data gathered from European and Romanian sociological research studies, but also from the Bucharest school counselors' teachers' activity reports. The aim is to prove the vicious link between the pupils increased technology consumption and the lack of information regarding the healthy use of it between all the responsible adults, parents and teachers alike. The negative effects of Internet and digital technology are real and are already affecting children development and school counseling could and should be the first solution for minimizing them.

Keywords: *Internet risk's; Internet consumption; children and younger; school counselor teacher.*

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1. Children and youth media consumption in the EU and Romania

New media, especially new technological devices offering continuous and everywhere access to Internet has profoundly shaped our world. New competences, known as "media literacy – the capability to use, understand and create media and communication in a variety of contexts" (Ofcome, research report 29.11.2017, p. 1) are required from all social categories, no matter the age or educational level or social status of the user in order to remain safe on Internet. Children are more exposed, especially because they are heavy users starting from very small ages, as showed by all researches worldwide. Year by year until now the Internet usage habits have grow continuously, the same report showing that in average, in 2017, 21% of children 3 – 4 years old have their own tablet and 53% of them go online for nearly 8 hours a week, compared with teenagers of 12-15 years old: 83% own a smartphone, and 55% have also their own tablet, 99% of them go online for nearly 21 hours a week, 77% play games for about 12 hours a week and 74% have a social media profile. (Ofcome, research report 29.11.2017, p. 2).

Even there are differences between countries, the Internet usage trend is generally the same, as shown also by the research synthesis of Global Kids Online from November 2016. The studies were using multiple methods to map children and parents' online behaviors (2017), comparing data from different countries and focusing on revealing the benefits and online risks for children. Comparing results from four countries from different continents, Argentina, Philippines, South Africa and Serbia, the European survey reveal that worldwide, children are a homogeny group facing same types of issues:

- predominantly access the Internet from home and through mobile devices, smartphones and tablets;
- majority of them learn something new from Internet at least every week, but also a substantial minority of them have had contact with unknown people online and have reported been bothered or upset by something online;
- when such unwanted situations occurs children are seeking support from friends, the next source of support are parents and rarely the teachers;
- all younger need support for gaining digital safety skills, and as low the age limit, as big the need for digital media literacy;
- countries vary a lot in the amount of young users patterns, the risks and opportunities encountered, but finally, all young users are facing the same issues.

Regarding Romania, the few data's collected within the International Data on Youth and Media 2017 (IZI) research overview are as alarming as the

research findings from EU Kids and Net Children Go Mobile researches from the last 3 – 4 years:

- Romania is the only country where is a negative ratio between younger who are using the Internet in a private, separate space (69% in their room), and the younger that are using it also at home, but in a family common space (59%); (EUKids Online 2015, p. 56)
- In Romania are the most 9 – 16 younger who have a profile on a social network, 57%, compared with the next country, Italy, 32%.(Net Children Go Mobile, 2014, p. 62)
- In Romania are the most teenagers, 18%, who respond to all requests on social media, compared with UK, the second one, with 14%. (Net Children Go Mobile, 2014, p. 65)
- Romanian children and adolescents 9 – 16 years old, are on 2nd place, with 61%, after those from Denmark, with 71% regarding the negative experiences encountered online (European Commission, 2015, p. 68)
- Romania was on the last position regarding younger tablet and smartphone ownership (4% have tablets and 21% smartphone), but the situation is changed dramatically in the last 3 years (Net Children Go Mobile, 2014, p. 75), as proved by the Eu Kids Online in 2015, showing that 43% of the Romanian children access the internet from a smartphone, the same percentage as in Belgium (EU Kids online 2015, p. 77).

Although we do not have exact data from 2017, there is a significant increase over 2014, the age at which children receive their own mobile phone being lowered. At the same time, the use of tablets by children is high, and from 2014 until now they are becoming more and more prevalent among children. Moreover, research shows that in most countries, children accessing the Internet on a smartphone have at least another personalized device for accessing the Internet: tablet or laptop, which leads to a significant increase in time and online experiences. This also has implications for how children use technology, gaining diverse digital skills from younger ages.

Qualitative research in 2014 highlighted the fact that parents, although uncertain about the age at which to give children their own phone or device with Internet access, most often influence each other, being sensitive to the idea of "my child having what the other has". Also, parents are delighted with the "nanny" technology use of these devices, which keeps children's attention focused.

What can be noticed is a slight decrease in the age at which children receive their own device from 2014, which we believe has been propagated and continued to 2017 also in Romania. The Ofcome report show a significant increase of children age 5 – 7 years old who use a smartphone, 43% in 2017,

versus 28% in 2016) and are using also a tablet (75% versus 67%). Generally speaking, this report shows an increase on all types of devices usage and owning, the 12-15 years old group now are using regularly a mobile phone (86% versus 75% in 2016).

As pointed before, even there are differences between countries, motivated by socio-cultural trends, the big picture regarding Internet usage seems the same.

By comparing these data with those resulting from a quantitative research at national level, conducted in Romania by Save the Children Organization on a representative sample of children, the data are consistent, showing that the age at which children have online access is decreasing, averaging 8 years in 2014 (perhaps even 6-7 years in 2017) and 78% of respondents use the internet daily - this study was conducted on 1024 children aged 7-18 from rural and urban areas and 1024 parents with children aged between 7 and 18, rural and urban, nationally representative. Children often use more devices to access the internet, and there are obviously significant urban/rural differences: 83% of urban children, compared to 70% of rural children, access the Internet daily, both at home and at school. (Study regarding the Internet usage within family, Save the Children Romania, 2015).

Concerning is the time spent by Romanian children daily on the internet, in the case of school days, approx. 60% of children spend 1-2 hours on the internet and over 30% of them spend 3 hours or more daily, with only 8% of respondents not having internet access during school days. These percentages increase significantly for days without school, when most children, more than 73% spend about 3 hours and more online, more urban than rural ones, show "Family internet use study", Save the Children, 2014.

As a conclusion, today children's access to smartphones and other free Internet access devices is very easy, with children aged 9 to 10 having at least their own phone or tablet, which leads to significant growth in access and time spent by children online. Although it has the advantage of increased digital literacy of children, it also implies a number of significant negative effects that adults, parents and teachers, are not yet fully aware of and not ready to deal with.

Both the questionnaires and the interviews conducted between 2013 and 2014 in Romania and other European countries demonstrate that there is a direct link between the online exposure time of children and the presence of the risks and negative effects of the Internet on them. In particular, children are from younger ages exposed to vulgar, pornographic, sexually explicit content and cyber-bullying exposure is growing as they spend more and more time online.

All three studies, looking at what children are doing online show that from 2010 to 2017, the preferences of children aged 9 to 16 have not changed, most of their time being devoted to social networks, videoclips, you tube movies, instant messaging, school needed information, online games, chatting and forums.

Unfortunately, all of these activities expose them to various online risks such as: getting in touch with strangers, being exposed to sexually violent messages, injured people or animals, details about drug use, anorexic, bulimic or even suicidal behaviors, bullying and cyber-bullying.

By comparing the data from the three researches, the conclusions would be: as the age of the children grows, exposure to risk factors increases, a possible explanation being the combination of a slight increase in on-line time and the decrease of control and parental involvement in online activities of older children. However, figures are showing similar consumption and risk exposure trends, relative to each age category. What is to be noticed, however, is an increase in the risk for 9 to 11 year old children, from 19% in 2010 to 23% in 2013, which is worrying and requires attention from parents and the other adults involved.

However, there is no need to underestimate the advantage of the digital skills that children who have a digital device with internet access from younger age are growing, demonstrating that when they are guided in use and are aware of the risks to which they may be exposed, children react positively, assimilating the information and skills they need to handle the digital world.

On the other hand, research on parents demonstrates that many parents of children who have access to the internet through a smartphone or personal tablet have a permissive parental style, without focus on reducing the time spent by children online (there is a slight decrease in those who responded that they did not impose any restrictions or rules), and above all, showing confidence in the children's online behavior, rarely controlling or checking them. In Romania, only 17% of parents used parental control programs in 2014, many of them considering that the antivirus program offers enough protection against some inadequate information to the age of children.

The results of European research "Net Children go online" draw attention to this issue of parental control and the need to respect the right to children's intimacy and may require concerted action at the level of social policy to regulate it.

2. Advantages and risks of Internet

Without wishing to minimize the benefits that technology brings to our lives and to children, including the formation of motor skills and speed of

reaction, even growing memorization capacities, attention to detail and increasing visual concentration from very young age, we must take into account the existence of many disadvantages, in particular for children and youngsters who have been exposed for too long and too often to screen and digital mobile technology.

Studies have shown that a 30-minute daily exposure to children's online activities can improve their academic and general performance, access to information enriches their productive experiences, and in the absence of a large amount of information being stored, children are more likely to remember where to access the online necessary information.

On the other hand, psycho-neurological studies have shown that internet over-use, more than 2 hours per day use of digital technology devices by children and adolescents, can have negative effects on their neurological development, increasing psychic problems, especially where there is a minimalist hereditary potential: timidities and introverts become predisposed to anxiety, depression, social phobia, etc. Internet addiction of social networks or online games is recognized as a mental illness, a serious addiction to gambling, substance abuse and so on.

It has already been demonstrated that changes in media consumption culture and the excessive use of current multi-media means by children and young people are related to decreasing school performance, increasing parental and child's distance, premature sexualisation and "compression of generations", with a lack of compassion and the increasing inefficiency of the education system, as long as it delays so much to connect to reality and upgrade. Moreover, a concept about which is rarely spoken in our country is "sexualization", referring to the very high measure in which children and young people in too early ages are victims of the excess of advertisements and products, becoming too early sexualized and consuming as mini-adults, taking on and integrating in their system of values what the media reflects: gender stereotypes and consumption behaviours that become negative prejudices and discrimination, transforming our children into addictive and depressing consumers, trying to reach the ideal model and at the same time being future victims, promoters of a substanceless consumer society. It is accepted and demonstrated that films, music, magazines and the Internet have at least the same influence in the formation of attitudes and sexual behaviors as parents, religion and friends of the same age. Prolonged exposure to the media alters the perception of the social reality of young people because they cannot distinguish between reality and distorted misleading reality in the media (Levin & Kilbourne, 2008).

Another negative effect of the use of advanced digital technology by children is due to the speed of message transmission, the fact that faced with conflicting situations of cyber-bullying children often react impulsively without thinking of the consequences of messages and the impossibility of deleting them. Thus, their decision-making capacity is diminished, children learn to react impulsively, not to make decisions based on real information and anticipate the consequences of their actions (Alter, 2017). Other experts, such as psychologist Max Blumberg (Blumberg, 2015), predict that in the future individuals will lose the ability to think in depth and take strategic decisions, becoming impulsive and reactive, if people continue to use this technology excessive.

Another problem has been found to be the decrease in the children and teenagers ability to communicate face to face, children and youth who spend a lot of time online preferring now the communication through social networks and instant messaging. These online mediated relationships are superficial, of inferior quality, and especially they do not help the young to learn empathic relationships without prompt and real feedbacks. Research has shown an increase in language violence and conflict situations among children, mostly translated into the online, virtual environment. Girls are mostly victims of social networking, spending hours in a row and being dependent on the number of likes and responses to various posts, and boys, though not so active on these networks, spend a lot of time online playing networking games (Alter, 2017).

Experts talk about behavioral dependence on the use of smartphone technology, children and adults alike, being permanently connected to the online environment, spending a lot of time checking emails, searching for any information or interacting with instant messaging, the average time being between 3 and 5 hours a day. The real problem with this new addiction is that being with the smartphone in your pocket is more difficult to control the compulsive usage behavior and stop the addiction. Moreover, creators of online games, eager to obtain material profits and to induce repetitive behaviors in order to prolong the time spent gaming, are very careful in introducing various elements that increase addiction to play, such as so called "micro-stimulation" - obtaining bonuses and visual and auditory bonuses to achieve small tasks required in the game - or potentiating the "beginner's luck" effect, which has been found as a certain solution to attract players to repeat the action and persevere in the game (Alter, 2017).

In the absence of last year researches on the issue, we can only predict that the unprecedented evolution of mobile technology over the last three years, the emergence and widespread deployment of smartphones,

smartwatches and specially designed VR equipment for children, will impact somehow the way children communicate and interrelate with the social environment, especially since at the age of 10 over 75% of European children have their own mobile phone.

Although not so significant, differences in status and social class, such as parental financial power, influence the extent to which children have direct access to technology, those from poor, disadvantaged families having less access to technology, unlike children in middle and upper class families that have widespread access, usually to more than one performing devices, which increases their risk of exposure to unwanted factors. Perhaps it should be an alarming signal for all parents and adults in the world that none of the great inventors of this digital technology, from Bill Gates to the founders of Twitter or Instagram, even some World of Warcraft designers do not let their children use the iPad or smartphones at all, nor to test the various games and consoles, but prefer to buy them tons of books and to attract them to other types of ludic-educational activities.

A real issue for children is also the risk of early exposure to sexual material and pornography, especially as it is very difficult to analyze theirs effects, as DeAngelis (2007) observes, there are a number of limitations inherent in this type of studies due to, on the one hand, moral and ethical considerations when addressing these issues of analysis and, on the other hand, the methodological problems raised by such empirical projects, which is particularly true in the case where the analyzed samples were composed almost exclusively of the respondents very young age (DeAngelis, 2007).

European studies (Šmahel, Ševčíková, Macháčková, Šerek, 2011) that analyzed the exposure of children and young people to sexually explicit online material showed that boys are generally more willing to look at such material on the internet, more often to send links to pornographic webpages, and can more often use search engines to find information about "sex" and "eroticism." Flood (2007) research in Australia has come to similar results, data indicating that 38% of the boys surveyed looked for sexual content, compared with only 2% of the girls who did the same. Svedin, Åkerman and Priebe (2006) conducted a research in Sweden on the exposure of youngsters and children to sexually explicit sexual content on the Internet and their results showed that these types of online sites are accessed three times more by boys. Moreover, research has shown that both children and adolescents are deliberately exposed themselves to sexually explicit content on the internet (Flood, 2009), (McQuade, Sampat, 2008), (Svedin, Åkerman, Priebe, 2011), (Owens, Behun, Manning, Reid, 2012), (Sinković, Štulhofer, Božić, 2012). At the level of European research, both in 2010 and 2014 the results showed that more than

30% of 11-16 year olds children were exposed to such sexual content on the internet. On the other hand, gender differences have diminished over time, research showing that in 2014, for the first time, boys have spent less time playing online then the girls (36% girls, compared to 35% boys), shows A. Alter in "Irresistible" (2015).

In summary, although children are not born technology addicted, they become dependent on it at an early age, which, like a "double-edged sword", brings both advantages and disadvantages, and the fine line between them can be easily passed by anyone, regardless of age, education, income or social class, as long as it has a smartphone with unlimited internet access in his pocket. Therefore, it is important that the role and attitude of significant adults in the lives of children - parents, relatives and teachers alike – is to act concertedly, uniting their forces to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks to which children are exposed.

3. Role of family and school in the digital era

All of the above-mentioned researches, Eukids, Net Children Go Mobile and Save the Children, aimed at studying the behavior, reactions and attitudes of parents towards the online experiences of children, give important data to complete the research landscape.

All three researches have homogeneous conclusions about what parents should do about the online behavior of children:

- Talk to kids about their online experiences, or even spend time on the internet together.
- Explain to children the dangers and risks of online activities and the strategies to deal with them.
- Establish rules and restrictions on how and when to use the internet.
- Use filter and parental control programs and monitor the online activity of their children**.** (Haddon, & Vincent, 2014).

Research has shown that parents adopt this kind of measures as long as they themselves are active Internet users and use it daily, having access to a variety of devices, both at work and at home. Problematic situations arise in the case of parents who are not sufficiently familiar with technology, in which case children are often recognized as having better digital skills and thus a dangerous reversal of family roles occurs, children being "authority" and thus exposing them to the risks inherent in the use of the Internet it grows a lot. In addition, with the aging of the children, parents are tempted to give them more confidence and freedom, parental control programs and online childcare monitoring are decreasing, which is why children aged 14-16 are at the most

exposed risks. (Macheroni, G., Cuman A., Net Children Go mobile, country report, Romania, 2014).

Another negative effect of using state-of-the-art devices by parents and children also addresses the umbilical link that keeps and strengthens with each other through smartphones geolocation functions - parents permanently controlling where the children are and thus appears an extra intrusion into children life and a negative inference with the need for independence of children and youth, with effects on the formation of self-esteem and the establishment of mutual trust relationships between parents and children. (Net Children go Mobile, Children and their carers' understanding of use, risk and safety issues related to convergent mobile media, 2014).

Regarding the role of school and teachers, although the expectations of parents to provide digital education are high, the reality of Romanian and even European schools is still far from this desideratum. As the daily reality within school confirms - and also the research as Net Children go mobile (Children and their carers' understanding of the use, risk and safety issues related to convergent mobile media, 2014) - the overall school climate has changed within the last years, with the penetration of mobile phones into the classroom, the pupils having their own mobile phone from the primary cycle. Starting with the inference of more interruptions during classes due to the sound of phones ringing, or the fact that some children prefer to play with phones rather than watch the teacher, until the fact that pupils have acquired additional rights and powers through access to technology, all changes the way in which classes interact and unfold. The main "powers" acquired by pupils are: the possibility of verifying and even supplementing the information provided by teachers in real time through internet access; the ability to record and advertise non-conforming behaviors of teachers during the hours; the ability to ridicule and expose teachers to online bullying; the possibility of involving parents actively in problematic school situations, skipping the preliminary stages of discussions with teachers.

Although the main advantage of digital technology in class is the easy and fast access to information, it is not used by teachers during classes for various reasons, among which is the preservation of "equality" among pupils, not all having access to the same high performance technology. Then, although it is generally forbidden to use phones during classes, at each school level the regulations and the way they apply are different. There are schools that completely prohibit the use of mobile phones by students during their study hours, gather their devices on arrival and give them back when leaving school, but also there are schools that are not so restrictive, so that children spend extra time online at school, to the detriment of educational activities. In

addition, each teacher has their own style of applying these rules, which makes students take full advantage of the inconsistency of applying the rules. Moreover, it is problematic to apply the "punishment", in most cases the teachers confiscate the phone of the disobedient pupil, which raises a series of questions: are the teachers authorized to confiscate the good of the pupil? Where should they keep these expensive devices and what happens if they get damaged or lose the confiscated smartphone? Can students and parents blame teachers and school for the loss or damage of mobile phones?

On the other hand, pupils are aware of the need for and implementation of rules regarding the use of digital technology in school, especially as they realize that their attention and school performance are affected, and some of them admit that in the absence of the rule and punishment cannot stop using the smartphone. Survey statistics support these views, especially since in reality, only 26% of students use the internet for school activities daily, 13% for joint projects and only 6% to solve different requirements in class. (Haddon, & Vincent, Net Children Go Mobile, Children and their carers' understanding of the use, risks and safety issues related to convergent mobile media, 2014).

One of the main risks faced in schools now is cyber-bullying, the popularization of indecent photos, online identity theft or even the devices, which requires from teachers new abilities for mediating new type of conflicts, with greater or lesser success. The challenges for teachers are great because: first of all they do not have enough media skills, the pupils often become "teachers" for teachers within digital technological issues, and then teachers are often cheated by the pupils with the help of multi-media means, and they even do not always realize it. Teachers additionally raise the issue of equity among students in using these devices and, in order not to increase inequality, prefer to do not use technology during classes.

Following results studies and taking into account the opinions of parents and teachers, apparently the most useful device to be used at school would be tablets, endowed with educational software and offered to all pupils by the state, an idea still pending in Romania, but proven already successful in some schools in Germany, Belgium, Italy or England. In addition, in countries such as England, where general courses in schools about the healthy use of the internet and digital devices exist, children tend to be less exposed to risks than within countries that have not taken such measures. It is therefore necessary not only to train students but also to help teachers in learning the skills needed to fully use existing devices so as to maintain the traditional distribution of roles in the family and society where adults and not children are the ones who "know" to solve any situation, online or offline.

4. School Counseling

Within the Romanian educational system school counseling is the counseling addressed by school counselor teachers to educational actors - students, parents and teachers - in order to maximize the positive educational effects of the school on pupils. It is addressed to everyone and especially to those who at a certain moment go through a difficult, conflictual situation, the main purpose being to improve pupils' school efficiency and to improve the school climate, to minimize conflicts with disturbing effect on learning. The counseling also aims at forming the psycho-socio-professional competences of the pupils and their educational and professional orientation according to their own capacities, attitudes and skills, constantly trying to rally the educational act's purpose with the requirements of the labor market and of the global society.

In the current technological era, the role of school counseling is more complex as the challenges for children and their families are greater as society undergoes the major transformations and changes induced by the unprecedented technological evolution that we all need to adapt, and even more so the school institution needs to adapt.

Statistical data show that the usefulness of school counseling was understood in Romania, the coverage degree of psycho-pedagogical counseling within the school network is already quite high, almost 70% of pre-university school units in Romania benefiting from such a school counselor teacher, in big cities and in Bucharest being higher (85.8% in Bucharest, according to the CMBRAE Activity Report, 2017). Going beyond the issue of over-sizing the number of pupils per counselor teacher - at least 800 pupils per teacher and the fact that in rural areas, because of the small number of pupils / schools, it is harder to allocate positions of school counselor teachers, over the fact that often a single counselor teacher works in 2,3 or even 4 school units, which minimizes the effectiveness of his interventions, what is important to note is that all the actors involved have understood the usefulness and need of such professionals in the Romanian school. Analyzing the statistical data from Bucharest, in the school year 2016-2017, 12.370 pupils, representing approx. 5% of pupils in Bucharest, participated in at least one individual counseling session and the main topics of counseling interest were: self-knowledge, communication and social skills, career planning and personal development, healthy lifestyle, learning management.

The cases faced by school counselor teachers are widespread, with most schools having children with special educational needs and children with parents abroad (about 3% of the total school population identified) requiring specialized and long-term interventions. Additionally, over 12.000 hours of

group counseling with classes were achieved, so more than 85% of pupils in Bucharest benefited from such counseling and guidance (CMBRAE Activity Report, 2016-2017 and the ISMB Report on the State of Education 2016-2017).

Parents and some of the teachers were also counseled, both individually and in school meetings, the school counselors being interested in making the whole educational system more beneficial and superior to children. Although the situation in Bucharest is not always typical for the whole country, the data above is relevant to understanding how much such teachers are needed and how complex, and often successful, their intervention is. For example, out of the total number of pupils counseled on violence and bullying issues, more than half of the cases were significantly improved following the intervention of the school counselor. (According to the CMBRAE Activity Report, 2016-2017).

The role of the counselor teacher becomes now more important as ever, as the EU October 2017 Report on the state of education presents terrible data for Romania: we are on the third place in the EU with the number of children dropping out of school, 2 out of 10 Romanian children are not finishing high school, and those who do it are not so well-trained: we have the last place in the EU to acquire basic skills - writing, reading, counting - namely 4 out of 10 Romanian pupils fail to acquire them. Unfortunately, we have the lowest graduate rate in the EU, and the latest report of Save the Children regarding school bullying in 2016 shows that 4 out of 10 children are victims of this phenomenon in Romania.

These grim statistics require sustained efforts to remedy - teachers, parents and the state being forced to take urgent action for improvement and change.

5. Conclusions

Starting from the data gathered through research at European level and beyond, and taking into account the rapid evolution and changes in the online consumption patterns of society, due to the generalization of the use of smartphones and mobile devices with instant internet access from anywhere, all of us should be aware that the young population aged between 9 and 18 is the most active in using the new technology.

As in all stages of mankind evolution when major social changes have taken place, there is now a whole range of fears and new discovered risks of using on a such large scale, and from the very early age, the digital technology, especially since no one can now know what influences it will have on today's digital children, how they will evolve and how society will be transformed

under the conditions of the emergence of "virtual reality" and "artificial intelligence."

At the moment, looking from the educational system and the school's point of views, the effects on children are not positive, especially in the absence of joint actions, at the level of social policies and sustained interventions, every child, family and school are facing in a personal, individual manner the negative effects of excess technology in society. The main negative effects observed are: decreased interest in school activities, lots of bored children without technology and increased dependence of the online time, affecting family and friendship relationships in qualitative and temporal terms, high exposure to bullying and cyber-bullying, premature sexualisation, generation compression - because age differences are blurred by the acquisition or lack of digital skills that do not respect any age pattern – and, more often serious problems such as anxiety, depression, isolation, social phobia or internet addiction (of games or social networks). There is a decrease in the empathic capacities of young people and an increase in impulsivity and verbal and physical violence, supported in particular by the lack of direct contacts and instant messaging communication.

Given that parents and teachers are unequivocally prepared to cope with all these challenges, I believe that, at least at the level of Romanian education, school counselors can and should be those professionals to help all those involved, children, parents and teachers to face all these emerging challenges, given their increased capacity for adaptation, integration, understanding and proactivity to solve all the problematic situations in favor of the best interests of the child.

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