# A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF TURKISH MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS' CYBERBULLYING EXPERIENCES AND PERCEIVED PARENTAL INTERNET MONITORING

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# RESEARCH METHOD

7 focus groups were conducted

in 2014 and 2015

with a total number of 80 (40 male, 40 female)

7th and 8th grade students

from İstanbul, Samsun, Ankara, Van, Gaziantep, İzmir and Adana

Content Analysis

# CYBERBULLYING

"Willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (Patchin and Hinduja, 2014: 2)

# PARENTAL MEDIATION AND CYBERBULLYING

One of the key category of prevention strategies reported in the literature focuses on parental supervision and parenting behaviour. As time spent online is considered as a risk factor for cyberbullying, parental restrictive mediation (which decreases the amount of time children spend online) was found to reduce cyberbullying risks (Livingstone et al. 2011; Rosen, Cheever, and Carrier 2008).

Restrictive mediation reduces online risks, but it also reduces childrens' online opportunities and skills.

In the other hand active mediation of internet use tend to reduce children's exposure to online risks without reducing online opportunities, and they also reduce young children's (9-12 years) reports of being upset when they encounter online risks (Duerager and Livingstone, 2012)

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(1)What are students' perceptions of their parents' monitoring/mediation of their internet usage?

(2)Have they ever been involved in cyberbullying?

(3)Have they shared their cyberbullying experience with their parents?

# RESULTS:
## STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF
## THEIR PARENTS' INTERNET MEDIATION

# 1) My parents attempt to regulate my internet use by employing many strategies

(The most frequently given answer by the students)

**2- My parents do not need to regulate my internet use. Because:**

**a)  I do not spend a lot of time on the internet:**
*"They do not impose any ban on me, since I do not use internet all day. I also do not go online every day. Whenever I go online, I spend a little time, so it does not cause any problems for me. "* (M/Mavi/Gaziantep),

**b) I am doing well in my classes:**
*" Since I study hard  and I get good grades, they do not say anything."* (F/Gri/Adana),

**c) They trust me:**
*"They are looking at (my social media profiles)...I give my passwords to them. They trust me. They are looking at what I am doing online, so they do not oppress me."* (M/Beyaz/İstanbul).
(Although parents are monitoring him, he does not perceive it as an oppressive regulation.)

SİBER ZORBALIĞA
NO CYBERBULLYING
HAYIR

**3- My parents can not regulate my internet use even if they want.**

**a) I can evade parental regulation with the help of my technological skills:**
"I have the competence to evade regulations. *First of all there are passwords. After passwords, there are also passwords in the software. They cannot regulate. My mobile phone is always with me. There are three passwords for my computer:  one is for going online, second for games and also for signing on to the computer."* (M/Sarı/Ankara)

**b) I ignore their warnings about internet use:**
*"They leave me alone because I do not listen to them. They told me a lot, but since I do not listen to them they do not tell me anymore."* (F/Beyaz/İzmir).

## WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR PARENTAL INTERNET REGULATION?

Parents attempt to limit the time their children spend on the internet because they:

• Are concerned that when their children spend too much time on the internet, they will spend less time on their studies and they will fail their exams.

• Want their children to socialize offline.

• Think that their children will have health problems and will be addicted to the internet .

## HOW DO PARENTS REGULATE THEIR CHILDRENS' INTERNET USE?

1) **Placing passwords on the computer / filtering (for blocking unwanted web sites)**

*" My father attemps to place password on my computer (with my mum's provocation). Since I look at the password in secret, it does not cause any problem for me and I go online again. "*
(F/Mavi/Van)

## HOW DO PARENTS REGULATE THEIR CHILDRENS' INTERNET USE?

## 2- Taking away the mobile phone/computer or deleting games

*"They take my i-Pad if I get low exam grades."* (F/Yeşil/İzmir),

*"I was playing a lot with my phone, so they deleted the games."* (M/Bordo/Gaziantep),

## HOW DO PARENTS REGULATE THEIR CHILDRENS' INTERNET USE?

### 3- Warn / Have a talk

*"Generally my mum says not to go online a lot. She says that my time is very valuable. She gives this advice to me."*
(M/Lacivert/Adana),

*"They tell me about the danger of the internet, to watch out for unsafe things."* (F/Sarı/Adana),

## HOW DO PARENTS REGULATE THEIR CHILDRENS' INTERNET USE?

### 4- "Interfere with" the computer/mobile phone

*"They do not restrict but they interfere. Sometimes they say, 'I have looked at your Facebook. What were these messages?"*
(M/Mor/Ankara),

# DO THE ADOLESCENTS APPROVE OF THESE REGULATIONS?

The city in which parents' restrictive mediation is most accepted was Van.

(Students also think that it is not right to spend too much time on the internet)

"I think my parents are justified because I really spend too much time"
(F/Lila/Van).

In other cities, the students who approve of the restrictions are in the minority.

Some of the students do not approve the restrictions and bans but they still think that their parents are correct.

# DO THE ADOLESCENTS APPROVE OF THESE REGULATIONS?

**The students who do not welcome the restrictions and bans made mention of:**

- Generally restrictions and bans are not appropriate solutions,

-Personal liberty,

-Using internet consciously is a more efficient way of reducing risk,

-Too many restrictions will damage the trust between their parents.

# WHICH PARENT REGULATES MORE?

There was not an important difference about which parent  is more likely to implement regulations or restrictions.
Some students said that, their mothers observe them and notice their over use and tell their fathers, who respond to them.
In some families this was because of the father's authority;
in some families it was because the fathers knew more about technology than the mothers.

**Most of the students have not experienced cyberbullying.**
**Gaziantep was the city in which the students had the least cyberbullying experiences.**

# Students' Cyberbullying Experiences:

-Rumours and gossips especially about relations

- Private messages in social networks

- Insults and slang words

- Flaming (about national and moral values)

--Impersonation (by fake profiles)

-- Sharing photos on social networks  without permission

# RESULTS: DO THE ADOLESCENTS SHARE THEIR CYBERBULLYING EXPERIENCE WITH THEIR PARENTS?

Most of the students stated that they do not share their cyberbullying experiences with their parents.

(They tend to share it with their friends in the first place, then with their elder brothers and sisters.)

# RESULTS: REASONS FOR NOT TELLING THEIR CYBERBULLYING EXPERIENCE TO THEIR PARENTS?

- **My parents cannot understand me (generation gap)**
*"In my family, I shared it with my elder sister. Because she is close to my age, she is able to understand how I feel. We are trying to find a solution together"* (M, Gri, Adana)

- **My problems are not big enough to involve my family. (does not take it seriously or trying to solve by himself/herself)**
*"No, I did not share with them. Because, how can I say, if it was a big thing such as threatening me or my family, then I would try to seek help. But these are just for satisfying the egos of people obviously our age. There is no need to make a big thing of something done just for fun."* (F, Mavi, Adana)
*"First I would talk to him/her myself, then if does not work, I would tell my parents."* (M, Beyaz, Ankara)

- **My parents have unhelpful and not solution-oriented reactions.**
*"I would not tell my mother and father. Why? Becuse my mum will say, 'go and do the same thing to him' but I do not know how...  My father will say, "Why are you doing such things, you should behave wisely.'* (M, Kırmızı, İzmir)

# RESULTS: DO THE ADOLESCENTS SHARE THEIR CYBERBULLYING EXPERIENCE WITH THEIR PARENTS?

The students who stated that they would /did share their cyberbullying experiences with their parents mainly wanted the cyberbullies to be punished.

*"Yes, I can tell about it (my cyberbullying experience). He/She does not have any right to behave like that to me. I would want him/her to be punished."* (M, Mavi, Gaziantep)

# DISCUSSION

The students are not likely to share their cyberbullying experiences with their parents.
A key reason for this can be that families in Turkey tend to be more restrictive.
So the students think that their parents will not understand them.
They tell about it to their peers.
They also do not consider their parents as an effective mitigation agency.
Parents are not perceived to employ evaluative mediation or active participation strategies such as advising and helping about internet use, recommending web sites or participating in online activities with children.

The result is consistent with the findings of a previous study that in Turkey
parents do more restrictive mediation and less active mediation than the European average
(Duerager, and Livingstone 2012, p.5).

By awareness raising programs, parents should be able to use other strategies which can reduce online risks without sacrificing opportunities.

**Thanks for your attention**.