The examination of online kids' sites with the purpose of raising kids' self- protection awareness

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Abstract

It is seen that studies such as training, preserving, consciousness-raising, etc. of children have been transferred to virtual platform (European Online Children Project/the EU Kids Online Project, 2010) and children-oriented sites have proliferated together with the rise at the rate of children's access to and use of computer and internet, and with the fall at the age of being online. Thus, it has become possible both to present similar training processes to very large masses, and to reach the children with the unmediated, direct learning processes. On the other hand, these platforms have posed their own internal risks, security problems, as well. Cyber risks have also increased in parallel with the risks that the children have come across in real life, and the issue has become one of the most critical issues, which has to be handled particularly in terms of children. Security risks, abuse, bullying, etc. are, by their nature, the issues which are needed to be carefully handled. Handling these issues directly in the online learning environments and intended for children is more critical. For this reason in our study, it has been investigated which kinds of features the online environments that will be created to this end should possess, and in line with scale items that has been created, the current situation of the Turkish sites has been revealed. According to the study results, it has appeared that the Turkish sites do not correspond the items in the scale created at a large proportion, and need to be improved in this direction.

1. Introduction

On the internet, a great number of online learning environment exist from now on. Therefore, the necessity for the designers and developers to make their own environments more attractive and functional than the others for users has been emerged. Three factors can be said that are of capital importance for the productivity of an online learning environment. These are: Target audience, content of learning and features of environment. According to Prensky (2001a), today's children "…spend their whole lives by being surrounded with computer, video games, digital music players, video cameras, mobile phones and all of the instruments of the new era, and by using them". Accordingly from their likes, dislikes to attentions and learning activities their many characteristics have been differentiated. These differences have been determined by the researchers as follows (Pedró, 2006; Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005; Connaway et al., 2008):

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> They generally prefer to access to information through unprinted, digital resource es.
> E   They give priority to picture, motion and music rather than text.
> E   They can easefully carry out multitasks.
> E   They prefer to process information with nonlinear processes.
> E   Their attention spans are short, they demand instant response.
> E   They share their opinions, ideas with others on the internet without hesitation and use the internet as a social technology to meet new people and to experience different cultures.
> E   They demand to personalize learning a lot.

Cooper (2005) has summarized child development specialists' suggestions which are for how digital environments appropriate for children's developments should be as follows: "The child must be controlled, be active rather than passivity. The digital environment must contain many senses. It must promote critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving. It must provide quick feedback, be uninterrupted and keep records in order to reutilize. It must be user-friendly. It must support social interaction."

Besides the studies of the children's characteristics and features of online environments, as well as issues such as risks to children, child abuse remain on the agenda, the studies related to prevention of such cases also draw attention. The children have brought up against many risks around themselves because of being defenseless in real life. Child abuse, bullying and cyber bullying include these risks. World Health Organization (WHO, 2006) has described child abuse as physically and/or emotionally maltreatment, sexual abuse, indifference and negligence, moreover exploitation of the children commercially and in different manners; and has separated into four as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, and negligence. According to cyber bullying, the "hitches" of internet revolution increases new opportunities to harm and abuse to teen internet users. In general terms, internet has been shown as a new environment which commonly known forms of maltreatment to child, sexual and emotional abuse are able to be followed. We can say "Cyber bullying" to bullying performed in this environment. Hinduja & Patchin (2010) have described "Cyber bullying" that a person, while the other one is online, is continuously disturbed while s/he uses mobile phone or other electronic instruments, is mistreated or mocked. Regarding the types of cyber bullying, Willard (2007) has specified the types of cyber bullying as flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, trickery, exclusion and cyber stalking.

In the meantime, in the case studies of child abuse, bullying and cyber bullying which are on the agenda at abroad and in Turkey, the fact that the children are faced with bullying and in this respect many of them act unconsciously has drawn attention (Çağıltay, 2011; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). The usage rates and diffusion of online environments shed light to us on this issue, and utilizing from internet technologies will become meaningful for the sake of being a conscious society on child abuse, which is a social problem, and bullying. When the environments which have been developed in this respect have been analyzed, both its inefficiency in numeric sense and absence of its standard in qualitative sense has called attention. At this juncture, our problem has come up and in our study, the questions related to how this issue, which could cause susceptibility for the children, should be conveyed in the online environments, and which kinds of features these environments should possess have been inquired.

2. Method

The study is a qualitative and descriptive research. The process has been started with investigation of body of literature and the Turkish online environments prepared for children. Thus and so, by depending this investigation Online Environments Scale Adding Consciousness of Self Preservation to the children has been developed. During the development process of the scale, it has been interviewed with 14 children who attend 4th and 5th Grades, and an observation has made and the obtained data have been analyzed in order to designate criterion. Alongside the technical dimensions, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the scale which also includes the criteria concerning the features of the environment with regard to learning, motivation and content has been carried out with the data of 90 experts' opinions, and what is more studies of validity and reliability have been exercised. Thereby, the scale that

has acquired the applicability qualification has been used in order to examine the Turkish online environments prepared for children

3. Conclusions and Implications

In line with the online multimedia scale intended for the children's self preservation, the current situations of following sites have been revealed:

1. Güvenli Çocuk (Safe Child): "http://www.guvenlicocuk.org.tr/guvenliCocuk/anaSayfa"
2. Atlıkarıncam (My Merry-go-round): "http://www.atlikarincam.com/"
3. Beni koruyun (Protect Me): "http://www.benikoruyun.com/"

	ACCESS DIMENTION CRITERIA	1	2	3
1	The site should have an easily memorable, short name.	x	x	
2	The opportunity to be able to see the purpose, scope and potential features of the site should be allowed to the users without being member login.	x	x	x
3	Saving the existing documents in the computer or uploading document to the environment (an apparent uploading symbol) must be easy and safe (virus scanning) on the site.	x	x	
4.	A labeling which will provide easily to reach information and pages on the site should be used.	x		
	MOTIVATION DIMENTION CRITERIA	1.	2.	3.
1	There must be profile pages which the children have their own on the site.	x		
2	The children should have the option of opening their profiles to anyone whom the children wish.	x		
3	The environment must allow the users to keep, share and print their own commodities.	x		
4	With the membership login, it should be provided that the environment acknowledges the user or users acknowledge each other, make sharing.	x		
5	The noticeability should be increased by using stimulating, bright, vivid colors in the visual design.	x	x	
6	In the editing of screen, the simplicity should be taken care; the visual clutter should be avoided.	x		
7	It should be refrained from the function-free, constant mobility of animations.	x		
8	The environment should be enriched with entertaining, intriguing objects, questions, writings, videos.	x	x	
9	In the use of language, childish emphasis and intonations should be refrained from.	x	x	x
10	A mechanism should be constituted that will provide to observe the objects' loading duration like video.	x		
11	Short or subdivided games should be used in order the child not to feel the emotion of completing and not to remain addicted to the game.	x	x	
12	When the activities are completed, awards such as watching animation, word games etc. and showing the results must be given.	x	x	
13	The characters in the environment should show consistency in terms of features such as sound, speaking, language and behavior.			
14	Current events should be entreated in the content and activities.			
15	The users should be allowed to develop the content with their own commodities' contributions. (with writing and picture contests, their own stories, letters…)	x	x	
	LEARNING DIMENTION CRITERIA	1.	2.	3.
1	The profile pages should be in the form that will provide opportunity for customizations such as naming, creating avatar etc.	x		
2	Close to colloquial narrative, an interactive language should be used.	x		
3	The texts should be edited by considering the child's vocabulary.	x	x	
4	The texts should consist short and canonical sentences.		x	
5	The texts must be presented in the form of short blocs and by supporting with visuals.	x		
6	The content of the audio narrations must be inclusive of the content of the text.			
7	The learning process should be supported with games.	x	x	
8	The games must be related with the purpose and content of the environment.	x		
9	Games which the child has the choice and which have different interaction and difficulty levels should be used.	x		
10	The activities should be diversified in order the child to give the opportunity to choose the learning activities.	x	x	
11	The environment should embody instruments such as e-mail, forum, and chat rooms that the children can share their ideas with other children according to their interests.			

		1	2	3
12	Interactive contents should be presented to the child, which the child can change the story or alter the content of the activity.			
	CONTENT DIMENTION CRITERIA	**1**	**2**	**3**
1	The content should include samples which are true or fictionalized in a real-like manner.			
2	Important concepts should be given by embedding in the samples/problems including risk circumstances and possible reasons of them.			
3	Different samples on the same subject should be presented together in order to add different points of view.			
4	The samples/problems which have been handled should be unfinished with a certain result, and be open to dispute.			
5	The problems/samples must be dealt with multilaterally in terms of their reasons, results, parties etc.			
6	Required clues must be given in order the child to be able to distinguish the situations which s/he needs to preserve herself/himself from the other situations.			
7	The content should include samples which focus on the actions to be taken in the risk circumstances.			
8	In the problems/samples in the content, extremeness on the foregrounding of the emotional dimension must be avoided.	x	x	
9	Messages which emphasize the importance of protection of her/his own rights and respect to others' rights, fulfilling her/his responsibilities and duties should be given.	x	x	
10	Messages in the direction of sharing their situations with and taking support from people whom the children rely on and who may support them (whom the children may get help) should be given to the children.			
	SUPPORT DIMENTION CRITERIA	**1.**	**2.**	**3.**
1	The site should be followed by a trained, volunteer team that will consistently and actively perform the communication support.			
2	Online communication opportunities (chat room, msn…) that the child can get in contact with the team for her/his any kind of sharing or question should be provided.	x		
3	Expert-assisted environments that the children can ask, discuss the issues which they wonder about should exist on the site.			
4	A system that the child can express her/his complaint should be provided to the child when s/he encounters with contents such as inappropriate comment, picture.	x		
5	Important, emergency telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, addresses of the related institutions should be given in an easily accessible way in the environment.		x	
6	The children should be reminded of the risks that may arise from giving too much personal information about themselves in the environment.	x	x	

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