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REVIEW

of the doctoral dissertation by Dror Krikon, MA:

The Smartphone in the Life of Israeli Youth. From "Virtual Friend" to Addiction.

written under the supervision of dr hab. Witold Wrzesień, professor UAM

Following the decision of the Vice Dean of Scientific Research of the Faculty of Sociology, Adam Mickiewicz University, announced on January 26, 2023, to appoint me as one of the reviewers of the thesis at hand, I enclose my comments.

The subject of the work is extremely up-to-date and has an important practical dimension for social sciences, including the process of teaching and education. It fits into a broader trend of research on network-holism (Young, 1999; Kaliszewska, 2010; Makaruk, Wójcik, 2014). In the light of research conducted under the Safer Internet plus program and the EU-NED-ADP research project among young people aged 14-17 in European countries, social networking sites are the most common form of online activity. The study carried out in 2011-2012 in Greece, Germany, the Netherlands, Iceland, Poland, Romania and Spain in order to deepen the knowledge base on the risks associated with Internet addiction among European youth showed that 90% of the surveyed youth had at least one profile on the portal social media and spent at least two hours a day on it. Active participation in the virtual world was supposed to alleviate or eliminate the effects of perceived loneliness. It was usually the result of an insufficient level of satisfaction with social interactions (Makaruk, Wójcik, 2014: 8). Today, the virtual world of the Internet fits in the pocket of our pants or purse. Access to social networks or e-mail is easily possible from a smartphone. The multitude of applications and the endless possibilities of our mobile contribute to our gradual dependence on this rectangular object. As the discussed dissertation shows, the problem of smartphone use and

abuse is global, supranational and generational. The digitization of everyday life means that especially young people cannot imagine functioning without a smartphone. Therefore, the doctoral thesis is part of the current of modern research on the types of addictions and may be a stimulus for further investigations of this type. The project described by the doctoral student seems to be a broad and much in-depth undertaking, which makes reading interesting and important not only for the teaching community of Israel, but also for other regions of the world.

1. The assessment of the formal dimension of the work: work structure, the sequence of chapters, language correctness, mastering the writing technique, list of contents, references.

The content of the work corresponds to the topic specified in the title. The structure of the work is correct. Parts of the work have been highlighted in a logical way. The work consists of three main parts, an introduction that is too long (40 pages) and an epilogue (2 pages), which is a summary of the work. The introduction contains general indications as to the direction of research, including the interpretative paradigm as the leading one, and symbolic interactionism as the interpretation framework. It is also a theoretical introduction, with interesting considerations on postmodernism. It discusses the issues of growing up, pointing to generational differences. Marks methods and techniques. In the introduction, we also get to know the main problem question and 17 additional ones, which the author answers in his work. The first part is devoted to theoretical considerations and consists of four chapters (120 pages). Each chapter ends with a short summary. This section covers topics such as the smartphone, the youth, socialization and smartphone addiction. The second part (chapter five) is a description of both research methodology (1.5 pages) and own research (96 pages). The proportions between the individual chapters are relatively correct, although the methodological description may be a bit unsatisfactory. In addition, the work includes a properly constructed list of tables and a list of charts, as well as a bibliography and two attachments, including a survey questionnaire and a questionnaire containing questions for an in-depth interview.

Linguistically, the work is correct, with the use of appropriate academic language. It is properly edited, with accurate footnotes, tables, charts, and references. Many of the listed items are online sources with no data of access. The bibliography consists of 291 items and

has been very well selected and carefully prepared. There is no division into literature and Internet references. Quotations in the work are highlighted with italics. Quotes have not been highlighted, which sometimes makes them difficult to read. Their additional distinction, e.g. the use of block quotes, indentations, etc. would make them easier to see. The Harvard style is used for literature references. The footnotes at the bottom of the page are explanatory and supplementary.

2. The selection and application of sources

The work was written based on the literature on the subject and the results of quantitative and qualitative research as stated by the author (pp. 44, 166). The author indicates that the research is sociological ethnographic research, field research and comparative research (pp. 44, 166). The quantitative study was carried out using a questionnaire created using GoogleForms and sent via Facebook and WhatsApp. The actual study was preceded by a short pilot study, as a result of which the number and wording of the questions were verified. The research sample consisted of 152 respondents belonging to the Y generation (ages 33-37) and 537 respondents belonging to the Z generation (ages 15-18). The selection of the sample for the quantitative study is correct. Allows you to compare results for both generations. The qualitative study was carried out on the basis of an individual in-depth interview (IDI). A questionnaire with questions was constructed, a pilot was conducted, as a result of which the number of questions was verified and increased. My biggest reservations at this stage are the selection of the sample for the qualitative study. As the author writes on page 167: "respondents were randomly sampled from questionnaire responses". 20 people from generation Y and 30 people from generation Z were selected. I will refer to the selection of the sample and its consequences later in the review. Main problem, research questions and hypothesis are properly and correctly formulated in the thesis. The Author selected the sources appropriately. I offer additional comments on the methodological aspect of the work in the forthcoming section.

3. Substantive evaluation of the work

Basically, the Ph.D. Candidate begins his theoretical considerations in the introduction, where he writes in a very mature and interesting way, among others, about "liquid modernity",

pointing to different approaches to postmodernism. He refers to the most significant and important sociologists of our time, Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck, and Zygmunt Bauman. It's hard not to agree with the PhD student when he writes:

“in the postmodern era, randomness takes over from order, challenges the idea of free will and the deliberate value of judgment, and draws attention to the great power of arbitrariness. The feeling that “everything is possible” creates a sensation of fantasia and euphoria and an experience of non-reality” (pp. 11).

Then he goes on to discuss the concept of globalization. He also leans on the idea of a capitalist society. Interesting is the passage referring to neurobiology and biological perspective by Susan Weinschenk, who says that dopamine is:

“the neurotransmitter that makes us feel happy and experience enjoyment, and thus increases motivation to look for certain substances or behaviors such as food, sex, and drugs” (p. 23).

The use of a a smartphone triggers the same reaction. Dopamine is released and the user feels euphoric and happy. This can cause addiction. In this part of the work, we can also read about the rapidly changing reality, maturation and cultural changes affecting young people. Although the introduction is a pleasure to read, it is too long. There is a lot of content here that could be included in the theoretical part. As mentioned above, the theoretical part includes four chapters rich in scope. The author operationalizes the concept of socialization, addiction, generation, including the youth, and the technology brought by the smartphone. In each of these parts, he uses a "general-to-detail" approach, which shows the Ph.D. Candidate understanding of the importance of the issues presented. Subchapters could function as separate articles, as each of them discusses a different scope of issues. Everything comes together in the fourth chapter, where Dror Krikon shows the impact of the use of smartphones by young people and the process of socialization on the emergence of technological addiction. Generational difference *“is mainly due to globalization, technological advancement, and global economic development”* (p. 94). The adopted assumptions are correct and embedded in the world literature on the subject. At the same time, it is a pity that the author, trying to embed the theoretical chapter in the interactive paradigm, does not refer to the concept of identity and puts less emphasis on the interactive and relational nature of the adolescence process.

Similarly, the adoption of the assumptions of symbolic interactionism is not visible in the empirical chapter, where there is no in-depth description and understanding of mutual relations and the process of building identity by mutually assigning meanings. The empirical chapter, despite the above remark, is a well-written part. The reader is guided through successive answers to previously formulated problem questions. Hypotheses are verified each time. The analysis of a quantitative study is more than sufficient. You can see proficiency in using statistical measures and the ability to formulate accurate conclusions. For the reviewed PhD thesis, it would be sufficient to stick to quantitative methods.

The methodological chapter caught my attention.. First, it is divided. Part of the information on the paradigm and methodology can be found in the introduction (pp. 41-44). The second part is at the beginning of chapter 5 (pp. 166-167). Here we learn about the test procedure. Secondly, the methodological part is not complete. Unfortunately, there is nothing here about the qualitative data analysis procedure. The author does not refer anywhere to the ethnography mentioned earlier. In my opinion, it is the weakest part of the work. Although the Author guides the reader through his assumptions and explains his choices, there are some fundamental misunderstandings. First of all, he frames the research as an ethnographic one, which, I believe, is a kind of misuse concerning what has been done and described. Secondly, he talks about the use of the interview as a questionnaire. Thirdly, the selection for the qualitative study is quite surprising. Unfortunately, we don't learn much about the analytical process itself. The researcher, being at the same time a high school teacher, teaching psychology, sociology, citizenship, road safety, and science, certainly has many observations to which he could refer. Qualitative research is not a coherent process here that can be modified during the conducted research.

The same applies to the notion of ethnography. Again, the doctoral thesis does not provide references to the works of those who had a significant impact on ethnographic research. It is in vain to look for references to the books of Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson or Robert Prus. I believe that the Ph.D. Candidate could have backed out of referring to her research as ethnographic by accommodating the term qualitative research. The further part of the thesis indicates that the technique used in the study was an individual in-depth interview. There is no reference to observation as a research technique. Assuming that observation is the leading research technique in the case of ethnography, and the collection of empirical data takes place in the natural environment—in the everyday context of the analyzed phenomena

and processes (Hammersley, Atkinson 2007; Deegan 2001; Prus 1997), I find referring to the research at hand in terms of ethnography a kind of unnecessary misuse.

Conducting qualitative research is difficult, tedious and time-consuming. The analysis requires, for example, coding the interviews, separating the categories and defining the matrix of conditions. Unfortunately, it is difficult to see analytical procedures in the proposed qualitative study. As readers, we also do not know what the average duration of the interviews was and whether they were recorded and transcribed. There is an irresistible impression that the interview referred to here as in-depth interview was an scheduled interview (Richardson, Dohrenwend, Klein, 1965). Perhaps it was an open-ended questionnaire. The range of literature selected to describe the method used is also negligible.

Here we come to the problem of sample selection for qualitative research. In the work, I did not find any justification for using this and not a different selection of interlocutors/interviewees (called respondents in the dissertation). I do not know why it was decided to select 30 people in Generation Z and 20 in Generation Y. Why were the interlocutors drawn from the pool of previous respondents? Such a procedure could definitely influence the answers given. The interlocutors were familiar with the subject beforehand, and some of the questions asked were even identical. The phrases that emerged while filling in the questionnaire remained in the answering of subsequent questions. Each of us has a tendency to stick to a decision once made, especially when it has met with prior approval. The second problem that arises with such selection is the anonymity of the interlocutors and respondents. If by sending the survey to the respondent, we assure him of full anonymity, is it justified to ask him again later? In my opinion, the principle of anonymity has been violated here. I wonder what was the reaction of people who were again approached by the author with a request for an interview? I hope to get an answer to this question during the defense.

However, the very choice of the qualitative method deserves attention, which in itself I perceive as a big advantage of the dissertation.

Personally, probably due to my professional interests, the analysis of emotions felt and recognized by smartphone users seemed interesting. When creating the questionnaire, the author used several questions to show whether frequent smartphone use changes the perception of emotions and whether users are able to recognize the emotions indicated in the photos. Question 28, although interesting, would be more interesting if the respondents entered the recognized emotions themselves. While the basic emotions, such as joy and anger,

called here nerves, are universal and have proven to be easily recognizable, the others are complex emotions and, regardless of the use of a smartphone, each of us has a different ability to recognize them. Very interesting research in this area was conducted many times by Paul Ekman. You could also use his "Face Reading" test included in the book: *"Emotion Revealed. Recognizing Faces and Feelings to Improve Communication and Emotional Life"* (2003). Despite the lack of reference to the already classic Ekman in this respect, the very idea of isolating and examining the impact of smartphones on the ability to recognize facial expressions is an interesting idea. Although the hypothesis that the increasing use of smartphones leads to a lack of ability to recognize facial expressions among young people has not been confirmed, the problem of identifying emotions both in direct and indirect communication using technology may be an interesting topic for further research.

As I mentioned earlier, the analyses in the reviewed work are not conducted based on the distinguished categories. The author used a procedure that is very common in quantitative research. Subsequently, he answers the problem questions he has posed and verifies the adopted hypotheses. Despite previous comments, chapter five, which is the empirical part of the work, is well written and made interesting to read. The author shows step by step how individual factors influence each other and lead to describing the world of people using a smartphone. As a qualitative researcher, I feel a certain lack of qualitative analysis. The collected material seems, after reading the presented quotations, very interesting.

Finally, the question bothers me why, when examining smartphone addiction, the author did not refer to (or did not use) the Mobile Phone Problem Use Scale for Adolescents - MPPUSA (Lopez-Fernandez et al. 2012; Lopez-Fernandez et al. 2012; Lopez-Fernandez et al. 2012; 2013)? A comparison of the research results obtained using the scale with the research conducted by the author using a questionnaire could give very interesting results and show the problem of addiction even more clearly. The screening tool for measuring problematic mobile phone use among schoolchildren is very popular in European surveys (including Spanish and English). It is recognized as a reliable and reliable measurement method for identifying problematic mobile phone use among adolescents. Currently, it is also popular in Poland.

Apart from the comments presented above (such is the thankless role of the reviewer), I rate the entire empirical chapter and the entire work very highly. The conducted quantitative study is very reliable. You can see the enormous of work put in by the Ph.D. Candidate. The author moves freely in the presented issues. I also appreciate the reflexive approach to the research

and the Ph.D. Candidate's indication of areas for further research and analysis. The Author showed the path of development and deepening of research in the future.

Conclusion

In my opinion, the doctoral thesis of Dror Krikon MA, deserves a positive assessment. The Ph.D. Candidate described the problem of gradually becoming addicted to smartphones with great care. He points out that "any technology is both a burden and a blessing" (p. 265). Exploration of the characteristic features of the influence of smartphone use on the everyday life of contemporary youth in Israel allowed to indicate many interesting aspects of the functioning of young people in the culture of Israel, but also in the global postmodern world. The conclusions of the research may be of great importance not only for teachers, pedagogues, psychologists or parents, but also for producers of new technologies. The aim of the work has been met.

My questions and comments presented in the review do not change my positive assessment of the work. Once again, the Author's research maturity and his analytical competencies merit highlighting, especially in relation to quantitative research. The reviewed dissertation is a significant contribution to understanding the process of addiction to technology and, perhaps above all, it allows you to look at contemporary global culture through the eyes of young people. Recognizing the educational change is a must to be able to increase the motivation of children and youth to pro-effective actions.

Thus, in my opinion, in the light of the applicable regulations, **the presented work meets the requirements for doctoral theses** following Art. 13 sec. 1 of the Act of March 14, 2003, on academic degrees and titles, as well as on degrees and titles in the field of art (Journal of Laws of 2016, item 882, 1311 as amended), and I, therefore, ask for the admission of the Ph.D. Candidate to further stages doctoral dissertation procedure, including public defense.

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