

MIKE study - Abstract

In a representative manner, the MIKE study has investigated the media usage behaviour of primary-school-age children living in Switzerland. MIKE stands for Medien, Interaktion, Kinder, Eltern (media, interaction, children, parents). Between mid-September 2014 and the end of January 2015, a total of 1065 children aged from six to thirteen, as well as 641 parents, were surveyed in Switzerland's three major linguistic regions. The results show that for children, media experiences are part of everyday life and the vast majority grow up in households replete with media. Mobiles/smartphones, computers/laptops, Internet access and televisions are present in almost all households. Despite the broad range of digital media, play is the most commonly pursued leisure activity. Homework is also part of children's everyday life. Meeting friends, playing sport and doing something with the family are activities carried out with about the same frequency as the most frequent media activities: listening to music, watching television and reading books. During primary school, media usage behaviour changes, whereby the Internet and mobile phones in particular are used more often by older children. Although many children do not yet own a mobile phone, or even use one regularly, the mobile phone tops the list of children's favourite media. With both television content and Internet content, children have considerably more positive than negative experiences. The MIKE study not only sheds light on children's use of media, but also on numerous aspects in the charged environment of family and media. Parents and children influence each other with regard to media usage and often use the same media with about the same frequency, except for video games. Parents are most concerned about violent and pornographic media content.

Alongside the global analyses of the media behaviour and leisure-time behaviour of parents and children, the following grouping characteristics are taken into account: age, gender, linguistic region, migrant background, socioeconomic status (SES), parents' education, degree of urbanity and family size. The MIKE study provides scientifically reliable and representative data for authorities, institutions and private individuals who deal with children.

Summary and conclusions

In a representative manner, the MIKE study investigates the media usage behaviour of primary-school pupils in Switzerland. MIKE stands for Medien, Interaktion, Kinder, Eltern (media, interaction, children, parents). For this study, over 1000 children aged from six to thirteen, as well as over 600 parents, were surveyed in Switzerland's three major linguistic regions. Made possible by the support of the Jacobs Foundation, this is Switzerland's first representative study of children and media.

Most frequent media activities: watching television and listening to music

The vast majority of children grow up in households replete with media: mobiles or smartphones, computers or laptops, Internet access and televisions are present in almost all households. Audio media, such as CD players and radios, appear in children's bedrooms most often on the whole. However, these media are mainly in children's bedrooms in German-speaking Switzerland, in families without a migrant background and with a high socioeconomic status.

For children in Switzerland, media experiences are a central part of everyday life. However, play and sport are the most popular leisure activities for children aged 6 to 13 in Switzerland, still ahead of media activities like watching television or films, gaming, reading and music. Also in terms of how often they are carried out, play and homework are still ahead of media activities. Meeting friends, playing sport and doing something with the family are non-media activities carried out with about the same frequency as the most frequent media activities: listening to music, watching television and reading books.

Additional media gradually start to get used as the primary-school years progress. The intensity of usage also increases. This is particularly accentuated regarding mobile phones and the Internet, but an increased frequency is also evident with respect to gaming, listening to music, reading books or magazines/comics, taking photos and making videos. It is noticeable that with many of these activities, an abrupt rise in usage frequency occurs at the age of 10 or 11. The more frequent usage is often also accompanied by a rise in the daily usage duration.

Television, music and games play a major role among the youngest of those surveyed, as well as the oldest. Among those aged 12/13, the Internet and mobile phone are also strongly

represented in everyday life, whereas those aged 6/7 use books and DVDs/videos instead. The middle of the primary-school years is the peak phase for reading books; reading intensity already decreases again among those aged 12/13. Comparison with the JAMES study (Willemse et al., 2014) shows that in adolescence, only a few still read books regularly. A similar trend is evident in gaming, whereby the decline takes place somewhat later here.

Gaming is where the gender gap is the widest

Gender-based differences in media usage are already evident at primary-school age. Boys use games far more often than girls; the JAMES study (Willemse et al., 2014) shows that this is accentuated further in adolescence. DVDs, magazines/comics, the Internet, free newspapers and other newspapers are also used more frequently by boys. Girls, on the other hand, listen to music, read books and listen to audio plays / audio books more often than boys. Among primary-school children, sport games are the most popular, especially the football game FIFA. The second-most popular game is the adventure game Minecraft. Super Mario and Clash of Clans occupy the next places on the list. Among films, Harry Potter is the frontrunner, followed by How to Train Your Dragon, Frozen and Doraemon. With regard to both games and films, different preferences can be observed between girls and boys, as well as between primary-level and lower-secondary-level children.

YouTube is an integral part of everyday life for children in the fourth to sixth years of school: three quarters use YouTube at least once a week. Also among children's favourite apps, YouTube is number one. Use of other online services, websites and apps like Instagram, Facebook or WhatsApp is significantly more seldom.

The fascination of the mobile phone

Around half of children say they own a mobile phone, whereby most of these are smartphones. About one third say they never use a mobile phone. The mobile phone also tops the list of children's favourite media and fascinates many children, even if they do not yet own one themselves. The second-most popular medium is the television, followed by the book. More than one in ten children use their mobile phone at least once a week, also when they are actually supposed to sleep. Among the oldest children, it is even one in three. As shown by various studies (e.g. Durand et al., 2012; Könen et al., 2015; Lemola et al., 2014), this can have a negative effect on the subsequent sleep and the performance at school. Around one third of children who have a mobile phone of their own say there is no rule about what

happens with their mobile phone at night. According to parents, however, it is only half as many.

Almost all parents say there are rules at home pertaining to the duration, timing or content of various media, or that they conduct checks to that effect. The proportion of children who see this the same way is smaller. One explanation for this divide could be that when rules are not consistently enforced by parents, children do not perceive them as rules. It could also be assumed that the parents who took part in the survey are more likely to be those who have rules in place in their households.

Like parent, like child – except with video games

The saying “The apple does not fall far from the tree” also applies to how parents and their children use media: parents and children influence each other with regard to media usage and often use the same media at about the same frequency. Music, television and books can be described as family media that are often used by parents as well as children. Playing sport, meeting friends and (naturally) doing something with the family are activities carried out by children and parents with a similar frequency. Radios, mobile phones and the Internet are used more often by adults, while magazines, comics, DVDs, videos and, above all, games are more popular among children.

With regard to games, there is a particularly marked parting of the ways between parents and children. While 61% of children play games at least once a week, only a few parents say they sometimes play games together with their children (17% at least once a week). Also, compared to other media, only a few parents attest that games have a positive influence on the child. Books and music are considered to be the most positive. In addition, when various media are rated according to how important they are to the parents themselves, games are at the bottom of the list. On the other hand, most parents find the Internet and books particularly important, closely followed by the mobile phone.

Music, mobile phones, the Internet, radios and televisions are part of parents' everyday life and are used by the vast majority of parents several times a week. Among parents, various differences in media usage are evident on the basis of age, level of education and origins.

Barometer of concern about media

More than half of parents are concerned about media content in the context of their children's media usage. Violence and pornography are the two most frequently mentioned topics. Here, it is noticeable that parents are most concerned about online content, while children previously had negative experiences more often with television content. The second-most frequent cause of concern for parents is their parenting role in connection with New Media (child-raising aspects like rules/control). Possible negative social or emotional effects of media usage are also often mentioned as a concern. The duration of media usage and the possible addictiveness of various media also have problematic potential in the eyes of parents.

However, with both television content and Internet content, children have considerably more positive than negative experiences. As they use television more often than the Internet, both positive and negative experiences with television are also reported as more frequent. Most parents surveyed are aware of age recommendations for media content. Almost all parents (93%) know the recommendations of the film rating organisation Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft (FSK) for films and/or DVDs, 75% know the recommendations on television (notice or red bar) and 66% know the Pan-European Game Information (PEGI) recommendations for games. Parents say the recommendations for films at the cinema are observed most strictly, whereas the recommendations on television are observed least strictly. The vast majority of parents find the FSK and PEGI recommendations quite helpful or very helpful.

Media literacy is key – already at primary-school age

Even in the Internet Age, television dominates media usage among younger children, but mobile phones in particular fascinate the vast majority of children immensely. From around the age of ten onwards, children's media usage rises abruptly. Parents are concerned about media content, but many families have introduced rules and they are aware of age recommendations, such as those provided by the film rating organisation Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft (FSK).

Although the MIKE study focuses on media usage among primary-school children, it also provides a picture of the handling of media within families in Switzerland and sheds light on parents' attitudes and concerns in relation to the topic of media. The results demonstrate the significance of the family as an agent of socialisation in this age group. Characteristics of the family, such as level of education or origins, have a substantial influence on children's media usage. Primary-school pupils often use the same media as their parents, whereby they

predominantly learn to handle media by observing and imitating parents and caregivers. Parents should be conscious of this role-model function and of their influence; the tasks of a parent also include active engagement with New Media. The parent questionnaires' pleasingly high return rate (60%) also shows that the topic of media usage at primary-school age is an important topic for parents.

The primary-school years are an intense time, in terms of picking up new media activities. During primary school, several new media are added to a child's repertoire, including the Internet and mobile phone in particular. At the end of the primary-school years, the Internet is used by practically all children. This clearly demonstrates that promotion of media literacy, already at early primary-school age, is of great importance.