

**Patterns of children's use of YouTube and their relationship with social isolation - A survey study on a sample of children from Qasham Al-Miloud Primary School in the municipality of Djelfa -**

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**Abstract**

This article examines patterns of children's use of YouTube and their relationship with social isolation among pupils at Qasham Al-Miloud Primary School in Djelfa. Using a descriptive survey method, the study collected questionnaire data from a purposive sample of 60 primary school students. Results show that many children use YouTube heavily: 40% watch for more than two hours daily, and entertainment content, especially animation and video games, dominates their viewing. More than half usually watch alone, while parental supervision is often irregular or absent. The findings also reveal social indicators linked to intensive use, including reduced family communication, a preference for staying alone, and weak participation in group play. The study concludes that YouTube is not inherently harmful, but excessive, unsupervised, and individual use may reinforce social isolation. It also encourages schools to promote media literacy awareness programs.

**Keywords:** YouTube Usage, Children, Social Isolation, Parental Supervision

**Introduction**

YouTube has become one of the most present digital platforms in children's daily lives, providing a variety of content that includes cartoons, games, songs, educational videos, and entertainment challenges. The use of this platform by children is no longer just a passing activity; for many of them, it has turned into a daily routine that may affect their lifestyle<sup>1</sup>, family interactions, and relationships with their peers both inside and outside of school.

Modern literature confirms that the digital environment offers children educational and entertainment opportunities, but at the same time, it poses challenges related to mental and social health, especially when usage is prolonged or unsupervised<sup>2</sup>. The American Academy of Pediatrics indicates that digital environments designed to maximize interaction may encourage prolonged use, which could displace some healthy behaviors such as sleep, physical activity, and direct social interaction<sup>3</sup>. UNICEF also confirms that children's relationship with the digital world needs guidance and digital education so that technology becomes an opportunity rather than a source of danger<sup>4</sup>. Among the issues that require study, social isolation emerges as a potential consequence of excessive use of digital platforms, where the child may become more attached to the screen and less inclined to engage in group play, family conversations, or interactions with peers<sup>5</sup>.

Among the issues that warrant study, social isolation emerges as a potential consequence of excessive use of digital platforms<sup>6</sup>, where the child may become more attached to the screen and less inclined to engage in group play<sup>7</sup>, family conversations, or interactions with peers. Hence<sup>8</sup>, the

importance of studying children's usage patterns of YouTube and their relationship with social isolation among primary school students arises<sup>9</sup>.

Accordingly, the study's problem revolves around the following main question: What is the relationship between children's YouTube usage patterns and the manifestation of social isolation among students at Kacham El-Miloud Primary School in Djelfa Municipality?

This main question branches out into the following inquiries:

**- What are the patterns of YouTube usage among primary school children in Qasham Al-Miloud in terms of viewing duration and content type? What are the patterns of YouTube usage among primary school children in Qasham Al-Miloud in terms of viewing duration and content quality?**

2. What is the level of parental supervision accompanying children's use of YouTube? What is the level of parental supervision accompanying children's use of YouTube?

3. To what extent is YouTube usage associated with signs of social isolation in children? To what extent is YouTube usage related to manifestations of social isolation in children?

### **First: Study Concepts**

#### **1. YouTube**

YouTube is a digital platform based on sharing and watching videos, allowing users to follow diverse content according to their interests and age groups. For children, the platform takes on an entertaining and educational character at the same time, thru animations, games, songs, stories, and educational videos. YouTube also provides a child-oriented app called YouTube Kids, presenting it as a more inclusive environment for children, helping parents and caregivers guide the viewing experience<sup>10</sup>.

YouTube is operationally defined in this study as the platform used by the students of Qasham Al-Miloud Primary School to watch videos on smartphones, tablets, computers, or smart TVs.

#### **2. Usage patterns**

By usage patterns, it refers to the ways in which a child interacts with YouTube, including the duration of viewing, timing, device used, preferred content types, nature of viewing, whether it is done individually or collectively, in addition to the presence or absence of parental supervision. It is operationally defined as the communicative and behavioral habits that characterize children's use of YouTube in terms of time, frequency, type of content, and nature of supervision.

#### **3. The child**

The child in this study is the student enrolled in the primary stage, which is a sensitive age period where social behavior is formed, and the importance of family, school, and peer groups in socialization becomes evident. The child is operationally defined as a male or female student from Qasham Al-Miloud Primary School in the municipality of Djelfa, who use YouTube to varying degrees.

#### **4. Social isolation**

Social isolation is the decline in an individual's participation in social relationships and interactions, whether within the family, school, or peer group. It may manifest in the child thru a preference for staying alone, reduced conversation with family members, a lack of desire for group play, or prolonged screen time at the expense of direct relationships.

It is operationally defined as: a set of behavioral indicators that indicate the child's weak interaction with their family and peers, coinciding with frequent use of YouTube.

### **Secondly: The study's methodology and tool**

This study relied on the descriptive survey method, as it is the most suitable for studying communicative and social phenomena as they exist in reality. The survey method allows for the collection of data from a specific sample, then describing, analyzing, and deriving its implications.

As for the study tool, it was represented by the questionnaire form, which is a suitable tool for collecting data from a number of respondents in an organized manner. And since the respondents are elementary school children, the questionnaire questions should be simple and clear, with the possibility of being explained by the researcher or the teacher.

The questionnaire included the following sections:

- Duration of YouTube usage daily.
- The type of content most watched.
- Nature of viewing: Individual or group.
- Level of parental supervision.
- Signs of social isolation in the child.

### **Research community and its sample**

The research community consists of the students of Qasham Al-Miloud Primary School in the municipality of Djelfa, as they are the target group of the study. As for the study sample, it is a purposive sample consisting of 60 male and female students from the third, fourth, and fifth grades of primary school. This group was chosen because they are more capable of understanding the survey questions compared to first-year students, and their use of YouTube is often clearer and more consistent.

### **Theoretical background employed**

The study relied on Albert Bandura's social learning theory, considering it one of the appropriate theories for understanding the impact of visual content on children's behavior. This theory is based on the idea that an individual<sup>11</sup>, especially a child, can learn behavior by observing models they see, whether in reality or thru media. Learning does not occur only thru direct experience<sup>12</sup>, but also thru observation, imitation, and indirect reinforcement<sup>12</sup>.

This theory is suitable for the study's subject because the child does not engage with YouTube merely as an entertainment medium, but may also adopt the characters they watch as models for behavior, language, and interaction style<sup>13</sup>. And when a child spends a long time in front of videos, they may be influenced by the behavior patterns they see, and they might prefer digital interaction over direct social interaction<sup>14</sup>.

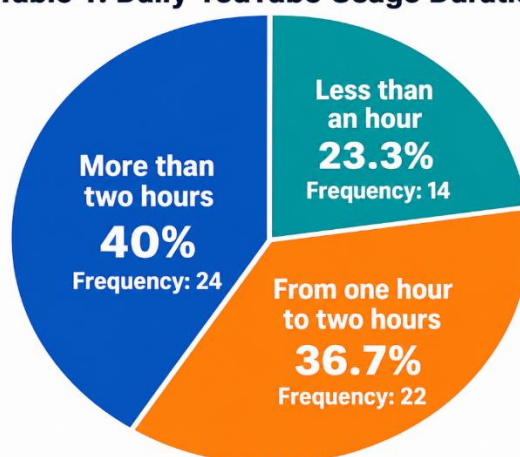
The study also benefits from the uses and gratifications approach, which views the audience as an active participant who chooses the media to satisfy specific needs, such as entertainment, escaping boredom, learning, or seeking pleasure. In the case of children, YouTube may serve as a means of entertainment or a way to fill free time, but with excessive use, it can become a substitute for group play and family conversations<sup>15</sup>.

### **Quantitative analysis of the study sample data**

#### **Table 1: Duration of children's daily YouTube usage**

Duration of use	Frequency	Percentage
Less than an hour	14	23.3%
From one hour to two hours	22	36.7%
More than two hours	24	40%
Total	60	100%

**Table 1: Daily YouTube Usage Duration**



Sample size: 60

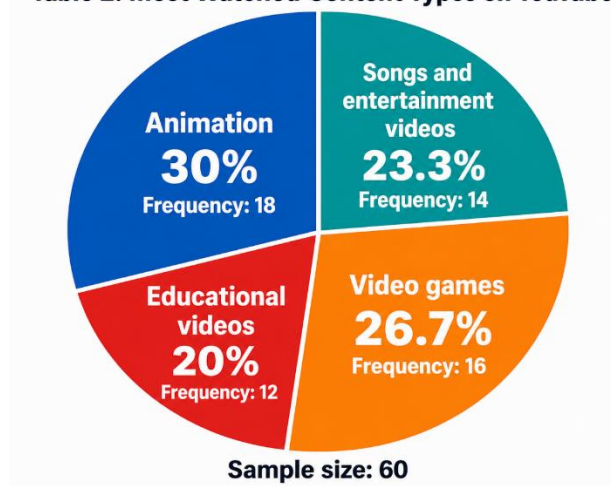
**Quantitative reading of Table No. 01:**

The table shows that 40% of the sample members use YouTube for more than two hours daily, which is a high percentage for elementary school children. Additionally, 36.7% use it for one to two hours daily, while only 23.3% use it for less than an hour. These results indicate that YouTube occupies a significant amount of time in children's daily lives, which may affect the time allocated for studying, sleeping, playing, and family interaction.

**Table 2: The most-watched content types on YouTube.**

Duration of use	Frequency	Percentage
Animation	18	30%
Video games	16	26.7%
Songs and entertainment videos	14	23.3%
Educational videos	12	20%
Total	60	100%

**Table 2: Most Watched Content Types on YouTube**



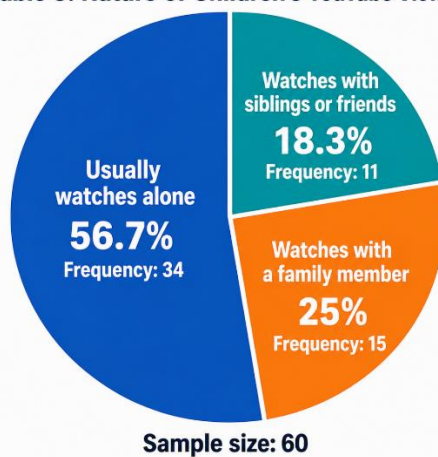
**The quantitative reading of Table No. 02:**

The results show that cartoons ranked first with 30%, followed by video game content with 26.7%, then songs and entertainment videos with 23.3%, while educational videos ranked last with 20%. This indicates that the predominant use of YouTube among children is for entertainment rather than educational purposes, highlighting the importance of family and school guidance toward more beneficial and balanced content.

**Table No. 3: Nature of Children's YouTube Viewing.**

Nature of viewing	Frequency	Percentage
Usually watches alone	34	56.7%
Watches with a family member	15	25%
Watches with siblings or friends	11	18.3
Total	60	100%

**Table 3: Nature of Children's YouTube Viewing**



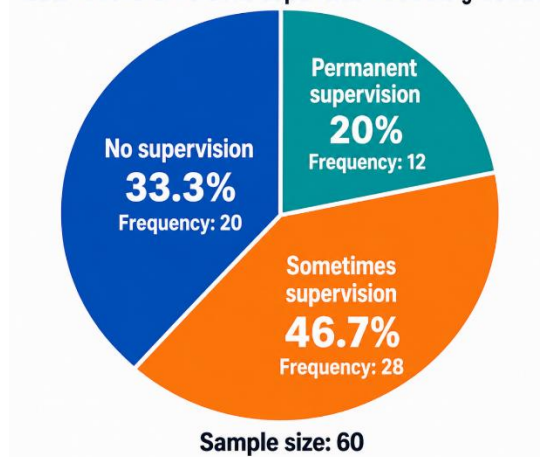
**Quantitative reading of Table No. 03:**

The table shows that 56.7% of children often watch YouTube alone, which is an important finding in the context of studying social isolation, as prolonged individual viewing may limit opportunities for family dialog and collective interaction. In contrast, 25% watch with a family member, and 18.3% with siblings or friends. These results indicate that shared viewing is weak, which reduces the possibility of guiding the child while exposed to digital content.

**Table 4: Level of parental supervision while using YouTube.**

Level of supervision	Frequency	Percentage
Permanent control	12	20%
Sometimes supervision	28	46.7%
No supervision	20	33.3%
Total	60	100%

**Table 4: Level of Parental Supervision While Using YouTube**



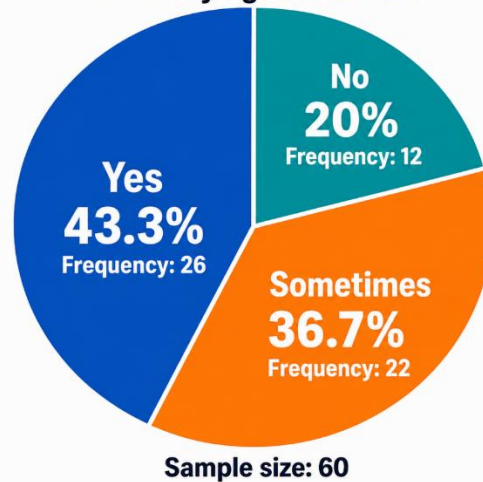
**Quantitative reading of Table No. 04:**

The results indicate that constant parental supervision does not exceed 20%, while supervision occurs sometimes for 46.7%, and 33.3% of the children are not subjected to any supervision. These results reveal a relative weakness in parental supervision of children's YouTube usage. Although YouTube Kids provides parental control settings and guidance for the viewing experience, the effectiveness of these tools remains linked to the extent to which parents use them.

**Table 5: Child's Preference for YouTube Over Playing with Others.**

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	26	43.3%
Sometimes	22	36.7%
No	12	20%
Total	60	100%

**Table 5: Child's Preference for YouTube Over Playing with Others**



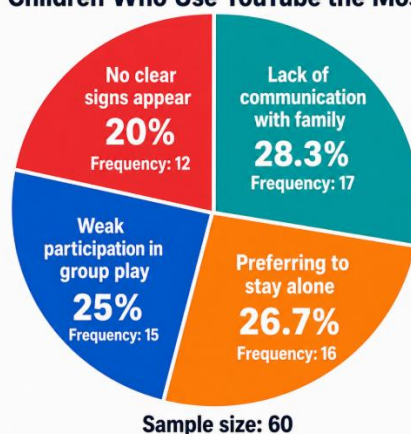
**Quantitative reading of Table No. 05:**

The table shows that 43.3% of children prefer YouTube over playing with others, while 36.7% answered "sometimes," and only 20% stated that they do not prefer YouTube over group play. This result is a clear indicator of the potential link between frequent YouTube use and a decline in the tendency for direct social interaction, especially when the usage is prolonged, individual, and unsupervised.

**Table 6: Aspects of Social Isolation Among Children Who Use YouTube the Most.**

Social Aspect	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of communication with family	17	28.3%
Preferring to stay alone	16	26.7%
Weak participation in group play	15	25%
No clear signs appear	12	20%
Total	60	100%

**Table 6: Aspects of Social Isolation Among Children Who Use YouTube the Most**



**Quantitative reading of Table No. 06:**

The results indicate that 28.3% of children show a lack of communication with the family, 26.7% prefer to stay alone, and 25% participate poorly in group play. As for 20%, they do not show clear signs of isolation. These results indicate that social isolation does not manifest in a single form, but can take on multiple shapes, including withdrawal from family conversations, a tendency toward solitude, or reduced interaction with peers.

**Sixth: A review of the study results**

The study results reveal that the use of YouTube among the children of Qasham Al-Miloud Primary School in the municipality of Djelfa is characterized by a clear time intensity, as a significant percentage of the children use it for more than two hours daily. This indicates that the platform has become part of the children's daily routine, rather than just a limited recreational activity.

The study also showed that entertainment content, especially cartoons and video games, is the most watched, while educational content ranked lower. This indicates that the educational use of YouTube is still limited, and that children often gravitate toward quick entertainment satisfaction.

The results also reveal that more than half of the children watch YouTube alone, a finding directly related to the issue of social isolation. Long individual viewing may reduce the child's opportunities for dialog with the family or play with peers, especially in the absence of parental supervision. This intersects with the warnings in modern literature, which suggest that prolonged use of digital media may crowd out essential healthy and social patterns necessary for a child's development, such as movement, sleep, and social interaction. <sup>6</sup>

As for family supervision, the results showed that it is irregular; permanent supervision is weak, while a significant percentage of children are not subjected to any supervision. This increases the likelihood of the child being exposed to content that is not age-appropriate, or entering into a pattern of excessive use that is difficult to control.

The results confirm the presence of indicators of social isolation in a number of children, such as reduced communication with the family, a preference for staying alone, and weak participation in group play. This does not mean that YouTube is the sole cause of isolation, but it may appear as a contributing or reinforcing factor, especially when three conditions are met: prolonged usage, individual viewing, and weak parental supervision.

From the perspective of social learning theory, it can be said that a child may be influenced by the behavioral models they watch on YouTube, and may reproduce some patterns of behavior or prefer digital interaction models over direct social interaction. From the perspective of uses and gratifications, the child's resort to YouTube can be interpreted as a search for entertainment or an escape from boredom. However, excessive use of this platform may turn it into a substitute for real social relationships.

Based on that, it can be said that the relationship between YouTube usage and social isolation is not a direct or inevitable one, but rather a probabilistic relationship influenced by the duration of use, the type of content, the level of parental supervision, and the nature of the social environment surrounding the child.

### Conclusion

This study concluded that YouTube represents an influential digital platform in the daily lives of children, especially in the primary stage, where a significant number of students use it for long periods, often individually. The survey conducted on a sample of children from Kacham El-Miloud Primary School in the municipality of Djelfa showed that the prevailing usage patterns are predominantly recreational, and that family supervision remains insufficient for a significant proportion of the children.

The results also revealed signs of social isolation among some children who use YouTube the most, such as reduced communication with family, a preference for staying alone, and limited participation in group play. Therefore, YouTube cannot be considered a danger in itself, but it may become a contributing factor to social isolation when used excessively, without guidance, supervision, or balance with real-life social activities.

Accordingly, the study recommends the necessity of enhancing conscious parental supervision, encouraging parents to watch together with their children, setting an appropriate daily time for YouTube use, and directing children toward educational and pedagogical content. The school also recommends organizing awareness activities about the safe use of digital platforms and integrating media education into school activities, so that the child learns how to use technology without losing their social and psychological balance.

### Endnotes

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- 4 Twenge, J. M., et al. (2018), Media use trends. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 12, 271–283.
- 5 Przybylski, A. K., & Weinstein, N. (2017), Screen time and well-being. *Psychological Science*, 28(2), 204–215.
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- 12 Bandura, Albert, Social Learning Theory. The theory asserts that observational learning can occur by observing typical behavior and the cognitive processes that accompany it, without always requiring direct reinforcement.
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