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Journalism in the digital age: trends and threads

Abstract. *In the globalised world the Internet is becoming extremely globalised. Freedom of speech and easy access to the information are praised. But how much can the Internet be good for people, especially for their most vulnerable part, such as children? This paper contributes to the discussion on protecting children from access to pornographic content. The topic of the article has a global significance.*

This paper contributes to the discussion on protecting children from access to pornographic content but has a global significance. Internet and mobile device usage have become a central feature in children's lives. Taking into account the growing availability of prohibited content such as pornography to children, it seems appropriate to launch certain measures in order to restrict kids' access to this. In addition, this consultation addresses many socially important research topics and answer several questions in this essay. In particular, whether age verification controls should be placed on all forms of legal pornography ('sex works') online that would receive a British Board of Film Classification rating of 18 or R18 or not; should this measure be implemented for websites containing still and moving images of pornography and which methods should be used in order to conduct age verification online.

Keywords: *Internet, freedom of speech, censor, globalization, media.*

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Introduction. Internet and mobile device usage have become a central feature in children's lives. Ofcom's 2014 study of media use claimed that 5-15-year olds spend an average of 12.5 hours a week using the Internet, with the oldest age-group (12-15) spending more than 17 hours a week online [15]. Portable and personal devices are more difficult for parents to supervise due to the fact that, unlike the family PC, they are usually used in private, often outside the home and with peers. According to Ofcom's survey, 71% of children aged 5-15 have access to a tablet computer, while four in 10 of this age group own their own mobile phone, rising to 65% among those aged 12-15 [15]. Taking into account the growing availability of prohibited content such as pornography to children, it seems appropriate to launch certain measures in order to restrict kids' access to this. Experts, based on the recent Net Children Go Mobile report, stated [13] that 17% of 9-16-year olds in the UK say they have seen sexual images online or offline within the last year (Livingstone et al., 2014). An earlier EU Kids Online survey reported that 14% of 11-16-year olds have seen sexual images online [9].

The increasing number of children accessing pornographic images or videos is a concern in the United Kingdom, which has traditionally been at the forefront of online child safety.

The UK has a specific body responsible for developing and overseeing child internet safety solutions called the 'UK Council for Child Internet Safety' (UKCCIS) chaired by Ministers from three government departments [2].

The UKCCIS consists of such working groups as Filters, Evidence, Education, Social

Media, and Age Verification. Each group is run by experts in the field. Recently, the UKCCIS produced two practical guides on social media: for providers of social media and parents. They include recommendations about the methods helping to prevent children from online access to pornography. There is no doubt that the British government takes all possible measures to protect young people from potential online threats.

Although this consultation addresses many socially important research topics, let us to try to answer several questions in this work. In particular, whether age verification controls should be placed on all forms of legal pornography ('sex works') online that would receive a British Board of Film Classification rating of 18 or R18 or not; should this measure be implemented for websites containing still and moving images of pornography and which methods should be used in order to conduct age verification online (ibid).

Analysis.

Questions and Policy recommendations.

Question 1: In your opinion, should age verification controls be placed on all forms of legal pornography ('sex works') online that would receive a British Board of Film Classification rating of 18 or R18?
Question 2: Do you think age verification controls should be placed on sites containing still as well as moving images of pornography?

First of all, it is necessary to identify the exact meaning of pornography. According to the BBFC classification, there are two categories which are defined as pornography, or 'sex works', i.e. "... works whose primary purpose is sexual arousal or stimulation" [1, p. 18]. **Based on this definition, we suggest that both stills and moving images that lead to sexual arousal should be classified as pornographic content. That is why we will answer two questions together (the first question refers both to stills and moving images).**

The Government is proposing that both categories of pornography, 18-rated and R18-rated, should be considered as unsuitable for children (ibid).

Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand that not only pornographic content may receive an 18 rating. Films that contain violent scenes but do not seek to arouse or stimulate are outside the scope of this consultation. The table provided below shows the difference between the two considered categories.

Pornography rated 18:	Explicit works rated R18:
• Sex works which only contain material which may be simulated are generally passed at 18 • For the purposes of this consultation, we are not including all 18 rated content - only that which is classified as pornography.	• A specific category for explicit works containing clear images of real sex, strong fetish material, sexually explicit animated images, or other very strong sexual material involving adults • There are restrictions on how R18 material can be supplied – films can only be shown in specially licensed cinemas, and hard copies can only be sold through licensed sex-shops (and are not permitted to be sold by mail order)

Figure 1: 18 and R18 content [1, p. 19].

In the ongoing public policy debates about pornography, it has been stated that pornography brings psychological harm to the vulnerable under-aged category of audiences. **However, we would argue that access to all forms of pornography in both still and moving images by children and adolescents should not be restricted by age verification controls.**

Theorists claim that despite not having extensive relevant data (experiments with children and screening pornographic content are limited due to ethical reasons), it is clear that children's curiosity about sexuality is normal [10, p. 30]. A study carried out in 1932 found that, by the age of five, over 50% of children had asked their parents questions about sex [3]. Later, it was proved that normal children's sexual behaviour included playing games with elements of "sexual exploration", such as 'mothers and fathers' or 'doctors' [4].

Moreover, researchers insist [11, p. 22] that keeping youngsters ignorant regarding sexuality puts them in greater danger of abuse.

Children who know about 'good touching', 'bad touching' and 'questionable touching' are more informed and defensively armed than those who do not know. Similarly, children who know the names of different parts of their genitalia appear to be less desirable and therefore vulnerable to child sex offenders [5, p. 59].

On the other hand, it is doubtless that sexual abuse of children is destructive. That is why it is crucial to distinguish between normal childhood sexual play and sexual abuse [6]. If curiosity expressed in looking at naked bodies and playing 'sexual games' can be a healthy part of children's development, any form of forced sexual practice is damaging. Being forcibly exposed to pornography or spamming with sexually explicit material are also forms of sexual abuse [11].

Nevertheless, pornographic content's harm should not be underestimated. Every fifth child aged 11-17 surveyed said they were shocked by pornography [14]. Overall, 70% of 18-year-olds confessed that pornography can have a negative impact on young people's views of sex and relationships [16].

However, [11, p. 29] is confident that "more people under the age of 16 are now seeing pornography than at any other time, young men have better attitudes towards women than at any other time".

Based on this evidence, it seems that although children need to be protected from harmful content, it is crucial to understand that ignorance about sexuality is more detrimental. Adolescents use information from online and offline media resources because of curiosity and such kind of content does not always harm them. That is why I suggest that placing age verification controls on all forms of legal pornography online with a rating of 18 or R18 is not a completely correct decision [8, p. 2] claimed that 'risk' is not the same as 'harm'. Watching pornography online may be harmful to children but it may not. It depends on the nature of the images and on the personal circumstances of the child. Therefore, this issue should be further researched, and appropriate studies need to be conducted.

Under UK law, UK-based pornography services are required to have age verification in place, meanwhile foreign sites are not. In most cases, a standard check requires users to confirm that they are 18 or over by ticking a box. However, this measure does not 'prevent under 18s from accessing the website, and therefore does not provide a satisfactorily robust age verification mechanism' [1, p. 37].

If the considered consultation will proceed successfully, and age verification controls will be required on pornographic websites, it is important to select the most effective methods of doing this.

For instance, in such a regulated sector as gambling, sites have implemented online age verification solutions with checking databases and government-issued documents [7].

This brings many extra benefits such as 'greater child protection and greater security for legitimate customers; better identified customers; brand credibility, revenues and thus value; less fraud; and, importantly, a regulated industry that is not blocked by ISPs and card schemes, and that can be heavily advertised to the 18+ community' [7, p. 4].

Users have to enter personal information to identify themselves: normally, name, address, date of birth, gender, and contact information. Clearly, when accessing adult content, the user may want to stay anonymous. However, it is not always possible due to online fraud and loss of users' data [7].

In addition, some adult content providers require providing credit card details in order to confirm a person's age. The effectiveness of this method is to some extent ambiguous. For example, in 2013, Ofcom fined Playboy £100,000 for failing to have adequate controls in distinguishing between credit cards (issued to over 18s only) and debit cards (that may be issued to under 18s). The system is not perfect, and its shortcomings allow children to circumnavigate obstacles.

Therefore, referring to other countries' practice might be useful. Germany has started to use an identity card. It is issued to German citizens by local registration offices and may replace the

passport. The e-ID card contains a security chip with personal information. Identity assurance is achieved through the use of a PIN. Service providers can accept the card as a means of identification. This method seems very effective, although there is some doubt as to whether the UK would implement Germany's example because it has no history of identity cards. The population would probably reject the idea of ID cards, considering that as a measure of excessive state surveillance.

Obviously, existing filtering tools for parents will remain a key tool to protecting their children from exposure to inappropriate content online. At the present time, filtering by ISPs and mobile network operators is one of the most useful instruments to limit children's access not only to pornography, but also other harmful content such as self-harm, extreme violence and pro-anorexia material.

In the last decade, mobile phone operators have had to apply default-on filters to internet enabled handsets [12]. These filters make pornography unavailable without contacting the operator in order to prove age eligibility: 'Since 2013, public WiFi is also automatically filtered and pornography blocked in many places where children regularly visit, and innovations in this area include the 'Friendly WiFi' scheme, operated by RDI (DI (UK) Holdings Ltd, which provides a clear indication to parents that the public WiFi in a specific location automatically filters pornographic content'' [1, p. 9].

Due to the fact that each of the offered options for protecting children from adult content is not flawless, it seems appropriate not to choose one only, but to implement a combination of them instead. Thus, the benefits of one method can overwhelm the disadvantages of another.

Conclusion. Diverse products and services work at different levels of assurance, depending on legislative and risk factors [1, p. 38]. Besides, a varied age verification process offers differing levels of associated costs. For instance, for online gambling both age and identify verification are required. The level of control for age verification on pornographic websites should be proportionate to the perceived risk or harm consequential from young people's access. It is crucial to understand that the main aim is only to confirm eligibility and establish that the user is aged 18 or above, not to discover the identity of service users. Ordinary people (adults) prefer to maintain their anonymity, especially when using pornographic sites, as well as protect themselves from fraud or misuse of their personal data [1]. I expect a regulator to determine satisfactory age verification controls.

The Government is responsible for preventing children from harm and that is why new initiatives seeking to restrict the law for inappropriate and insufficient age verification control seem extremely beneficial for British society in terms of safety.

However, there is a risk of intervention to market and censor the Internet, which also raises concerns. The owners of websites, profiting from having and providing free pornographic content, would probably resist the adoption of the new law.

"The leading pornographic businesses make their content available in two ways – by offering access to those who pay for a subscription and by providing unrestricted access for everyone to free clips, including on so-called 'tube sites' (such as Pornhub) which act as a shop window to promote the core subscription-based services. ...the provision of free unrestricted hardcore pornography is designed to generate revenue through associated pay services... It is clear that significant sums are flowing from UK customers to foreign websites which allow children to access hardcore porn. ...Without the money which flows to the underlying pay sites, the tube sites simply cannot exist'' [1, p. 23].

Ongoing heated debates prove that this sensitive topic requires thorough study and unbiased solutions based not on parents' aims to keep their children ignorant regarding sexuality, but on the necessity of making the Internet environment safer.

Already existing and carrying out measures should not be underestimated. All sex products are sold in special sex-shops or on the top shelves hidden from children's eyes. There is child-friendly Wi-Fi in public places that prevent underage users from accessing age inappropriate

content; special ISP filtering can be easily installed in houses.

It seems, that adolescents are sufficiently protected from harmful content online and offline and restricting the law might be an excessive measure. As I mentioned in my answer to the last question, the experience of other countries can be useful in considering this consultation.

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Цифрлық технологиялар дәуіріндегі журналистиканың даму үдерістері

Аңдатпа. Әлемдік жаһандануда Интернетті қолдану жүйесі басқару шегінен шығып, қоғамда тым бақылаусыз пайдаланылуда. Сөз бостандығы мен ақпаратқа оңай қолжетімділіктің болғаны құптарлық іс, алайда олар қоғамға, әсіресе, балалар сияқты әлеуметтің осал бөлігіне қаншалықты пайдалы болуы мүмкін деген мәселе өзекті болмақ. Бұл мақалада балаларды порнографиялық материалдарға шектеу қою арқылы қолжеткізу мүмкіндігін жоюға бағытталған ұсыныстар қарастырылып, сонымен қатар, мәселенің жаһандық маңызы айтылған.

Интернетті және мобильді құрылғыларды пайдалану біздің өміріміздің, атап айтқанда, балалар өмірінің басты элементіне айналды.

Интернет желісінің кейбір сайттарына қолжетімділікті шектеу бойынша шаралар қабылдауда, әрі, оның қадағалануын күшейту қажет. Сонымен қатар, бұл зерттеуде көптеген әлеуметтік маңызды тақырыптар қозғалып, бірнеше маңызды сұрақтарға жауап алынады.

Түйін сөздер: Интернет, сөз бостандығы, цензура, жаһандану, БАҚ.

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Тенденции развития журналистики в эпоху цифровых технологий

Аннотация. В глобализированном мире интернет становится чрезвычайно почти неконтролируемым. Свобода слова и легкий доступ к информации приветствуются, но в какой степени они могут быть полезны для людей, особенно для уязвимой их части, такой как дети? Эта работа вносит свой вклад в дискуссию о защите детей от доступа к порнографическим материалам, но и глобальное значение.

Использование Интернета и мобильных устройств стало центральным элементом в нашей жизни и, в частности, жизни детей. Принимая во внимание растущую доступность запрещенного контента, представляется целесообразным начать принимать определенные меры для того, чтобы ограничить доступ. Кроме того, это исследование затрагивает многие социально важные темы и дает ответы на несколько точечных вопросов.

Ключевые слова: Интернет, свобода слова, цензура, глобализация, СМИ.

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