A Review of the Book: Online Children and Their Right to Comprehensive Security in the Virtual Space

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Introduction

Today's children are the digital native generation and owners of the virtual space. With advances in technology and increased use of the internet, children are increasingly present in the virtual space. However, like any other phenomenon, the virtual space presents numerous challenges for children. Considering the importance of children's rights in the virtual space, the author aimed to examine this topic from various dimensions. In this review, we analyzed and reviewed one of the books that examine children's presence in virtual spaces from a legal perspective (1):

Book Title: "Online Children and Their Right to Comprehensive Security in the Virtual Space"

Author: Mohammad Mehdi Badami with the supervision of Mohammad Abdolsaleh Shahnoush

Publisher: Research Institute of the Judiciary (Tehran, Iran), Center for Printing and Publishing of the Research Institute of the Judiciary

Language: Persian; Publication year: 2020

Thesis

The book *"Online Children and Their Right to Comprehensive Security in the Virtual Space"* addresses the issue of children's presence in the virtual space in six chapters and 128 pages. The book, which is also described in the introduction, moderately and debate-like, examines the positive and negative dimensions of the virtual space for children from the perspective of "rights". Although this book is written from a legal perspective, given the interdisciplinary nature of the subject of children in the virtual space, it can also be studied and considered from psychological and educational perspectives, as well as in schools and the virtual space. The author discusses the virtual space for children as a right and examines the positive and negative consequences of children's presence in the virtual space.

Book Body

In the first chapter of the book, the author discusses the concepts and characteristics of the virtual space in two speeches. In the first speech, the author introduces the concepts of violence and security in the virtual space. Although the concept of "security in the virtual space" is implicitly derived from the United Nations Development Program report (1994) (2), and the concept of "violence in the virtual space" is derived from the Global Report on Violence and Health (3), perhaps the most ambiguous definition in this regard is the concept of "child". The author mentions that determining the age of a child in the virtual space has not yet reached a collective convergence in legal sources. In addition, in Islamic texts and the laws of Iran, the issue of the legal age is also discussed, according to which the legal age is less than 9 years for girls and less than 13 years for boys. The age definition is one of the main challenges for regulation in the virtual space due to children's widespread access to diverse content. Furthermore, the author has addressed the characteristics of the virtual space. The four major factors include widespread access, the speed of information transfer, the irreversibility of information, identity concealment, and the permanence of information published in the virtual space, all of which exacerbate the consequences of children's data dissemination and misuse in the virtual space (1).

In the second chapter, the author considers children's presence in the virtual space as a right and examines it from the dimensions of the right to freedom of expression, the right to education and learning, the right to civic participation, and the right to children's health. Since in international human rights texts, the "right to freedom of expression and thought" is referred as a civil and political right (4) for human beings, this right also exists for children, and they cannot be prevented from accessing the virtual space. The author refers to Article 19, paragraph 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which includes freedom of search, reception, and dissemination of any opinion (5). In addition, Article 13 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that "Children must have the right to freedom of expression, and presenting their ideas in any form, written, oral, or any media, without limitation, is possible" (6). Also, the 12th paragraph of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: *"Everyone has the right to a private life, free from interference by others, and no one has the right to arbitrary interference with their self, family, or communications"* (7), and in Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, it is prepared: "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home, or correspondence, or unlawful attacks on his honor and reputation" (8). Although at first glance, the virtual space may seem to provide the grounds for the disclosure of individuals' privacy, some believe that the concept of privacy in the virtual space and the real world are different from each other, and unlike the real world where privacy is the main principle, in the cyberspace, the principle is the dissemination of information in the public space (1), and in fact, it is this public nature of individuals' privacy that leads to the development of access to information and increasing awareness. The author refers to the impact of the virtual space on educational justice and creating access to education and learning for all children, especially disadvantaged children, by providing evidence from developing countries. The existence of e-books and online infrastructure has provided access to education and learning for children, especially underprivileged girls (1).

Chapter three of the book discusses examples of violence and violation of children's rights, including sexual exploitation of children in virtual spaces, child pornography, cyberbullying, and violence in online games. The most significant challenge highlighted in this chapter is children's unawareness of the risks associated with sharing private information, which creates a platform for exploitation and cyberbullying (9). The

author also discusses the sense of shame and humiliation experienced by children from sharing personal information and images, as well as depression resulting from rejection or ridicule by peers at school, which are among the consequences of violence in virtual spaces for children, even leading to suicide (10).

Chapter four examines the role of parents, government and non-governmental organizations, coaches, and teachers in protecting children in virtual spaces against instances of violence towards them (11). The author emphasizes the importance of paying attention to regulatory laws that protect children, citing international treaties and conventions. The Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly addresses the role of legal and psychological counseling for children and their families as primary prevention and mitigation measures against the consequences of virtual violence. The author then examines the relevant laws on violence in Iran and the world, suggesting that many countries, both developed and developing, are focused on the issue of violence in virtual spaces and the need to pay attention to children and schools in this regard. It seems that the laws of Iran need serious revision in regulating these laws.

In chapter five, the author reviews the new laws of different countries regarding the protection of children's rights and presents practical experiences from the United States, Europe, and other developing countries regarding punitive measures against violence. In addition to legal and regulatory measures, family empowerment, child awareness-raising, infrastructure policies, and digital literacy are among the measures discussed (1).

Finally, in the last chapter, the author reviews practical solutions for controlling and preventing violence against children worldwide and examines Iran's actions in this regard. The author cites some measures, such as providing the National Information Network, which calls on all countries, including Iran, to regulate laws on virtual violence and explain its examples.

Conclusion

The presence of children in the free virtual space has always been a concern for parents, schools, and governments. Virtual space provides equal access for everyone, regardless of location and time, by creating access to information and facilitating the promotion of individuals' awareness and the convergence of thoughts. However, the endlessness of information and the lack of control over access to it always poses threats to children. Therefore, the question of whether virtual space is a right or a threat is always challenging. This book highlights the positive and negative consequences of virtual space from a legal perspective, drawing the attention and support of all individuals involved with children, including parents, teachers, education officials, psychologists, and governmental and non-governmental organizations to pay attention to and protect children in virtual space against violence. It seems that this book has been successful in expanding the conceptual understanding of this issue and providing evidence of the actions taken in this regard to help program planners and responsible educators of children.

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

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