A study on the internet communication - A pathway for social change

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Abstract: Present time is called as 'Information Age', 'Communication Age' and recently 'Cyber or Networking Age'. Day by day various technological telecommunication advancements are made in which physical presence is not compulsory; one can be miles and miles away and can stay in touch through the medium of sound only. It all started with wired telephone followed by pagers then mobiles and now through Internet. It is a basic human need, which can be traced all along the process of mankind's evolution from lower species. Sensory communication was not enough for men to survive. Hence the evolution of symbolic communication called language – from non- verbal gestures, grunts and grimaces to the verbal and then to the written and printed words took place. Two or three decades ago, the most commonly accepted definition of the computer was – "It is a data processing machine". But in today's age computer has occupied by and large, every realm of business. Similar is the case with the Internet. It started as a means of sharing information for academic & military purposes; however soon it became the backbone of business communications. The Internet is slowly but surely becoming an inseparable part of our lives, as it becomes our primary device for "ICE"-information, communication and entertainment. Internet is becoming imperative for everyone, be it a child or a grown up man. Human beings are social animals; hence the need to communicate to one another is a must for us. Earlier tools gifted by god i.e., grunts and grimaces followed by speech had their limits, were then followed by inventions by men. The ways in which we receive information, and the information to which we have access, are beginning to change the dynamics of social institutions.

The Internet with all its facilities is transforming the world into a global village. Now the individual at the same time can conceal his or her identity and can chat or share his or her views with others. Innovations in Internet and information technology are revolutionizing both entertainment and information delivery, altering their production and consumption, and transforming our social lives and behaviors as citizens. While many argue that the new technology surrounding e-mail, online discussions, web-powered information diffusion and interest aggregation will lead to a more informed, engaged and influential public, many are still pondering whether the Internet will launch us into a more engaged and participatory society or one comprised of easily manipulated and impersonal people.

This research paper tries to explore and highlight both the positive and negative dimensions of social change caused by internet communication.

Key words: Communication, Impersonal, Internet, Societal change, Virtual information diffusion.

INTRODUCTION

The basic need for anyone be that a human being or an animal is the need to stay in touch. If a person is not able to fulfill this basic need, he will not survive for a long period of time and will surely either become insane or die. Communication is thus 'both a natural individual demand and a requirement of social existence, to use communication resources in order to engage in the sharing of experiences, through 'symbol-mediated interaction'. The earliest form of communication was sensory for all. But that mode is not enough for human beings that is why a new mode of communication emerged called language. Language is inseparable from culture which is its very source of sustenance; language embodies and expresses a community's culture. The art have grown out from the same fundamental desire and need to reach out to others.

But relationships created through Internet discussion groups, web-based or otherwise, have been classified under two conflicting visions. One perspective asserts that online interactions liberate interpersonal relations from the confines of physical locality and create opportunities for new, but genuine, personal relationships. In contrast, others find that online relationships are shallow, impersonal or hostile. Whether an individual formed such a relationship depended primarily on the frequency and length of newsgroup participation. Online relationships often reached high levels of relational development and broadened to include interaction in other channels and settings. Internet newsgroups allow individuals to interact with others in a relatively anonymous fashion and even to conceal their identities.

The Internet has profoundly influenced our lifestyle thus making digital literacy as one of the prominent

elements of today's children's development. By having the Internet, it has become a wonderful resource for children in order to do research for their school works, socialize, play interactive games, access their favorite songs and movies and many more.

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Ju Young Lee, Kyoung Min Shin (2005) conducted study on adolescents in Korea to evaluate the relationship between depression and internet addiction. A total of 452 adolescents were included in the study. Evaluation primarily was made on the severity of internet addiction with consideration of their behavioral characteristics and their primary purpose for computer use. Secondly, on the correlations between internet addiction and depression, alcohol dependence, obsessive-compulsive symptoms. The study results revealed a significant association between depressive symptoms with support of temperament profiles of the Internet addiction group.

Sharmitha Krishnamurthy, Satish Kumar Chetlapalli (2008) conducted study on the impact of mobile phone and internet use on self-reported behavioural changes. A descriptive survey using convenient sampling technique conducted among 542 undergraduate students of Udupi district, to find the impact of mobile phone and internet use on self-reported behavioural changes revealed that, 78 (14.4%) subjects reported of having mobile phone problematic use and 39 (7.2%) with internet addiction behaviour. Also 146 (27%) subjects reported problem in their social interaction with the internet use. Gender was found to have significant association with internet and mobile phone use.

Staude-Muller, F. (2009) conducted study on Internet addiction can lead to poor academic performance in school and college. Excessive time spent online often results in the neglect of familial social activities and interest. The term cyber widow has been used to refer to the neglected partners of internet addicts. Internet addiction can lead to poor academic performance in school and college and impaired functioning at work. Employers have found that employees with access to

the internet at their desks spend a considerable amount of their working time in non-work-related internet use. Psychosocial consequences of internet addiction include loneliness, frustration and depression. Although not very common, some addicts who spend very long hours on the internet also experience physical problems such as fatigue related to sleep deprivation, backache and carpal and radial tunnel syndromes.

Arun Vijay Paul.R Chellavel Ganapthi.K Duraimurugan .M, Abirami. V, Elizabeth Reji (2015) conducted study on the excessive and inappropriate use of Internet is a growing concern in the current tech-savy World. The youth are particularly vulnerable to this problem which may ruin their very critical academic career. The aim of this study is to determine the prevalence of Internet Addiction pattern and to analyse the associated factors among the college students from various education field. The internet addiction problem among students should gain attention and it is time to evolve an comprehensive intervention approach to promote and safe Internet use.

Research Gap:

The fundamental position concerning online communication is that it has a significant impact on the emotional, social, and moral wellbeing of the users. In situations where children are much involved in different online activities, there is a high possibility that they could develop unique skills and acquire more knowledge concerning different aspects. However over reliance on online communication can have severe implications on the general development and well-being of an individual. The increased use of different social media or digital media platforms has continued to influence the establishment and maintaining of different social relationships. However, most of the relationships formed through virtual communication are considered unreal hence most of them have failed to help but rather lead to exhaustion of the involved parties. Social or digital media affects the general conveyance of different messages since on-line communication does not involve physical or face to face based conversations. However measures are still exchanged virtually via the phone hence an individual is still able to acknowledge the different dynamics of the voice and color in case of video calls. It is important to note that social networking allows internet users to establish a virtual self, which can be utilized to connect with other people of similar or

different beliefs. It is normally very difficult to resolve different conflicts that may arise during online interactions in a virtual world. This is majorly due to lack of body contact or body language and real tone of voice etc during the process of communication which tends to increase the chances of misunderstandings. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the social change internet communication is impacting needs to be ascertained. In pursuit of this, the present research work has been undertaken.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To know the impact of internet communication on human beings in general.

2. To highlight both positive and negative dimensions of internet communication on Humans.

3. To suggest measures to reduce the negative aspects related to internet communication.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design that involved using an online survey questionnaire to collect data from different participants selected from the different social media platforms particularly Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and Instagram. The study employed probability sampling techniques, whereby a simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the different study participants. The reason for using the different subscribers of the different social media platforms was because they possess enough knowledge on how online communication has influenced the social, emotional, and moral competences of internet users. A total sample size of 155 participants randomly selected from the target population of the different subscribers of the different online communication platforms. Data collection was conducted by availing the survey questionnaire through an online data collection platform, that involved engaging with the targeted sample size of participants. The questionnaire was mostly composed of close ended questions hence the study was much dependent on qualitative data. Data collected was analyzed using content analysis and the interpretation of the results was done through a narrative firm of presentation where direct quotes from participants were included in explaining results.

Social impacts:

The increased use of different social media or digital media platforms has continued to influence the establishment and maintaining of different social relationships. However, most of the relationships formed through virtual communication are considered unreal. Hence most of them have failed to help but rather lead to exhaustion of the involved parties. Virtual communication makes social relationships less risky and to a greater extent less painful, hence it is always very easy to withdraw from such relationships formed on the internet. However, in the real world, the establishment of genuine and long-lasting relationships is very complex hence requires more commitment and acceptance for both parties. This makes relationships in the contemporary world more real than those formed on the internet which makes individuals addicted to online 'communication less human'. The different social networks are developed to enable individuals to connect and interact easily among each other. Different studies confirm that most of today's young people, despite the increase in the connection though social networking, are increasingly becoming lonely in real life and fail to see any future aspects with online relationships. Studies indicate that online communications have increased the feelings of loneliness to a greater margin as compared to 20 years ago most especially among young people on the rage of 18 to 35 years.

Emotional Impact:

The use of different internet-based communication channels, devices or platforms has a great impact on the general development of both cognitive and emotional competences of the users most especially the young people. The interactions undertaken on the on-line communication platforms render a significant transformation on the level of thinking among the young. digital or online communications help in transforming the mindsets of people from an analogue, highly structured, sequential, and referential to a more specific, vague, global, and highly holistic mindset. Online interactions also tend to change the different experiences of internet users since the different aspects of internet or digital media bring closer all distant features and move away elements or things that seem closer. Furthermore the increase in the use of online platforms for communication has reduced the level of patience, the ability to face frustrations, and the desire to reestablish alternative strategies in case of new challenges or problems that need alternative solutions.

Moral Impacts:

The moral development of any internet user is greatly dependent on their ability to accord equal rights to other internet users. In this case young internet users

should be in position to acknowledge the fact the other person is also capable of offering highly valuable or reasonable thoughts during any online communication between two or more people. A moral personality is very instrumental in making different essential decisions whereby internet users with a high personality are able to undertake decisions in an autonomous, reasonable, and very responsible manner. Human behavior or character does not result from external impulses but rather from an individual's internal contemplation. A high moral personality is considered a great influencer of an individual's actions in society. People with a great personality are always in position to account for their actions in society as compared to individuals with a poor personality. Similarly the increased use on online communication has greatly affected the personalities of most young internet users especially concerning respect for elders, leaders and fellow internet users. Most children or young people using the internet are fond of progressively developing their ability of moral thinking and action based on the knowledge or information they access from the different interactions conducted online. The young are always keen to decide what is good for them though it is advisable that they seek guidance from the old concerning the authenticity of some of the information or data shared online. At the stage of puberty, the acceptable price among different peers is majorly to forgo different online based desires for the general benefit of the common good.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings for the current study clearly confirm the influence of online communication on the social, moral and emotional capabilities or competences of the different users of the internet. Despite the relevance of social networking through online platforms, online communication tends to negatively impact the general wellbeing of an individual, especially the young. Online communications or interactions are associated with several social based competences or implications majorly due to the diversity in cultural and behavioral trust of people involved in online interactions. The findings indicates that communication through emails, social media, websites, or mobile phones, helps different peer groups to share knowledge or experiences concerning different social dimensions. The study clearly revealed that online interactions can help in knowledge sharing which is essential for emotional development. These interactions are always executed at a relatively lower

cost since the general cost of internet has gradually reduced majorly due to different advancements in technology that have enabled internet providers to find cheaper ways of delivering services to internet users. However over reliance on on-line interactions for knowledge has had a very big impact on intellectual property. In this case most students tend to use the works of other people without their consent. This has greatly affected the moral wellbeing of most students. Despite the ability of online communications to virtually bring closer different groups of friends and families, scholars argue that over dependence on online communication affects the social life of individuals. Most youth who are addicted to interactions such as Facebook tend to feel depressed when they cannot locate time for such a communication. The results have revealed that the young people no longer involve in face to face communications but spend much time virtually engaging with other people on different online communication platforms such as Twitter, Skype, Snapchat, Instagram, Whatsapp, and Facebook, among others. Generally the dependence or over reliance on online interactions greatly affects the humanity aspects of the users. In this case, it renders several implications on the normal life structure or social well-being of the online users.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study confirms the impact of online communication on the general social, emotional and moral competences of the different users especially the young children. The study confirms that the increase in the use of the internet has greatly affected the strength of social relationships between different groups of people and also supports the business communications. In this case, most young people are no longer attached to the real world but are greatly attracted by the perceived realities of the virtual world. Based on the fact that the different aspects of digital or social media affect the social, emotional and moral wellbeing of users especially the young, it is advisable that educational institutions, parents or caretakers of internet users focus on promoting self-respect among young internet users. This should be in addition to enhancing the emotional development, community affiliation, creativity, and innovation of the different young people involved in online interactions.

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