

Effects of Internet on Children's Socialization: A Survey of Gujrat

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Abstract

This study investigates the effects of internet on socialization of children. Internet is known to have changed the world into a perfect global village and it has become most potent socialization agent in present era. The study addresses the effects of internet on children socialization in comparison to popular media. Researchers used survey method for data collection and selected uses and gratifications theory to investigate the phenomenon and support the study. Results indicate that children spend more time on internet. They use internet mostly for educational purpose and playing games and in the process are also socialized although importance of family and peers is still prominent. It is significant that internet helps a lot in social development and personality building of the children.

Keyword: Children, Socialization, Internet, Effects, Agents, usage, chatting, Net surfing

Introduction

Media have powerful presence in people's lives. In the early part of the 20th century telephone has changed the lives of the people. And in 1950s and 1960s television brought change in lives of people. Similarly internet drastically changes the living pattern of people, specifically youth. As they spend most of their time on internet. Even children are not saved from its effects. Internet has a mass audience. It has covered great distances and makes the world a "Global Village". The internet was officially launched in 1989, but its origins can be traced back to 1969.

Previously the children spent their time in social activities, they are more socially involved. But now it was replaced by the internet. Children uses internet for various purposes either to increase their academic performance, to play games, browsing different websites or for chatting. This chatting may be either with a family member, friends or with strangers. If it is used to keep in touch of with your close family members and close friends then Sociologists termed as "Strong ties". But if it becomes the reason of keeping your children away from social interactions or social activities then it is weakening the strong family ties.

Internet is incredible source of information and it also provides all types of entertainment. It is seemed that internet instead of creating socialization and enhancing human connectivity (interaction), it is causing isolation among the children. This has weakened strong family ties. Children spend most of their time in using computers; this displaces many other activities that have more development value. They stop participating in sports and other social activities

and this affects their physical and psychological well being. Before internet children prefer to spend their time in playing cricket, football and other physical activities with other children. This keeps them physically fit. But now they just wanted to play online games, do chatting on internet and spend their time on surfing different websites. By using internet they are being socialized and being alone at the same time. A computer also decreases reading habits among the children.

Existing research suggests that the social effects of children's computer use vary widely, depending on the amount of time spend, type of activity engaged in and the nature of content or information delivered.

The effect of internet can be good or bad depends upon the consumption of internet among children. Children learn a lot through internet. They learn many things to meet their academic needs as well as the needs of the society. But all of these positive aspects depend upon that how it is used by the children.

Objectives:

- To understand the consumption pattern of internet in children.
- To find out that internet as effective agent of socialization in children.
- To measure the other factor's role in children socialization.

Literature Review

Kaveri et.al (2000) conducted a research that how home computers effect physical, cognitive and social development of children. Most children in America have access to home computers and they are

using them for many activities e.g. they play games, do school homework and they also do chatting with friends through email to surfing the Web. The researchers conducted a survey research. It is divided into four broad areas about the effects of home computer use on children's activities and development. These four areas are; physical well being, cognitive and academic skill development, social development and relationships and perceptions of reality. There was a risk of obesity, because children spend most of their time in front of screen, either on TV or computer.

Computer use increases the academic performances especially in these areas such as mathematics, science, language, arts and writing. This increases their cognitive skills. It is confirmed by a study that most of the children spend their computer time alone, and this decreases their interpersonal communication skills. Research shows that moderate game playing does not bring much change in children's social skills and relationships with family and friends. Spending much time on any activity on computer will slow down educational and social development. Because of computer or internet games children feel difficulty in understanding that what is real life and what is artificial (fantasy) life?

More research is needed on the four broad topics that are discussed in this article. Hence we will be better able to understand the impact of internet on children. There is still a need to explore and find out the impact of excessive computer and internet use on their loneliness, social relationships and psychological well-being. Parents must take steps in order to maximizes the positive steps and minimizes the negatives effects of internet in their children lives Researchers collected data from adolescents and children from age 8 to 18 through Probability sample. And for data

collection telephone survey is conducted. They tried to find out that how personality traits (i.e. perception of aloneness and age identity gratification) along with motivation for internet use have impact on internet habits and social support (in getting advice, suggestions and sharing private worries and problems) of children and adolescents. Children who want to be alone preferably use internet to discover social world. This article focuses that if the age identification among children and adolescents is strong, then they are more motivated to use internet for social compensation and mood management. Through research, the researcher found that when the adolescent are in bad moods, then they use internet, for entertainment. Children also use internet to fulfill their desire of aloneness, and make online companions. Instant messaging is generally used for gossips and to pass time. And for entertainment, escape and diversion; online games are played. The concepts discussed in this article are difficult; therefore further research is needed to make their scope clear.

Leung (2009) conducted a research on relationship between stressful life events, motives for internet use, social support (love, care, affection, encouragement, emotional concern etc) and the use of new media among the people. Data was gathered through telephone survey and by using probability sampling from adolescents and children of age 8 to 18. According to the researcher the stressful life events are closely linked with the internet used for mood management (entertainment and information seeking) and social compensation (recognition gaining and relationship maintenance). Stressful life events among children may come from complicated family dynamics, academic pressure and hectic daily routine. In past when children feel stress they started using cigarette, alcohol or drugs. But now when they feel

stress they start using new technologies (internet, online games, mobile phones, iPods, MP3 Player etc). There is a relationship between the motives for internet use and stressful life events and this can be understood by the concept of mood management.

The results show that the people who are more socialized, they feel less stress as compare to those who are less socialized. This article concludes that children are engage in internet activities and on same side they often spend time with their family and friends. Mostly people use the media in order to regulate their mood.

Catherine and Anne (2003) conducted a research on Canadian children, to come to know that how internet influence the lives of Canadian children. As internet has some benefits for the youth and children, on the other side it also has some risks (i.e. exposure to pornographic, violent and hateful material and sites).

The researchers are of the view that young people and children use internet for many purposes that includes socialization through email, instant messaging and chat rooms, and for entertainment, information and homework. For this purpose they conducted two surveys; one in 2000 with parents, and the another in 2001 with children and youth. Research concluded that Canadian children and youth are big users of internet. Survey results show that parents consider internet as an educational tool whereas the children use internet as a communication tool for e-mailing, surfing for fun, downloading music, playing games, information and for chatting. There is a need that parents should keep an eye on their children, and what they are doing on internet.

Hing (2011) examined and discusses that how addiction of internet causes antisocial behavior among Chinese adolescents. Internet

addiction is in following forms; cyber sexual addiction, online relationship, online gambling and shopping, information overload and online computer games. Due to excessive use of internet the person may have pleasant feeling, entertaining, interactive and relaxed. But in actual they spent less time with their parents and family members and have less friends and romantic relationships. Hence they are lonelier than others. They are unable to stop them for using internet. There is a strong need to educate adults for the use of internet.

Theoretical Framework

Wimmer and Dominick (1994) suggested that uses and gratification theory started in 1940s when researchers developed interests in the area why people involved in variety of media contents and their influences on behaviors, like listen the radio or read the newspaper and other channels. Some researchers argued that the individuals who have high needs they have greater exposure of media or media contents.

In 21 century media have convergence and after emergence of new media, researchers are busy to apply this theory to online media at broad level. New technologies are providing a wide range of contents and Variety of channels to their users and individuals select contents according to their personal interest (Ruggiero, 2000). Some of the communication capabilities of the medium in terms of academics strengthen both the individual and individualism (Singer, 1998). Conversely, others had not been possible with traditional media. Users can create relationships in ways that build communities online and enrichment through which we see finally the Web. Despite this optimistic portrait, Rafaeli (1986) suggests

that computer-mediated communication claims by individuals can lead to loneliness and isolation. Furthermore, Young (1996) points out that extreme use of new media develops internet addiction as technological dependence raised concerns against expose users.

Methodology:

Methodology is crucial part of research which facilitates the researcher in data collection. In present study researchers used the survey method to collect data from children of Gujrat city. The target population of this study is school going 15 years' old children and they are the users of internet.

Elements of study: There are two elements of this study 1) Children (internet users), 2) Effects on children

Sampling technique: Probability sampling procedure is followed in this study. And in probability sampling, purposive sampling is done to select the individuals, as we need and include only those children who use internet.

Sample Size: Sample size of this research is 100. And among those 50 are males and the rest of 50 are females. The questionnaire is to be filled by the children up to 15 years.

Tool of data collection: The method used to conduct this study is "survey". And the instrument of this research is "questionnaire". Data is collected through questionnaire.

Variables:

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1994) variables are most significant part because it connected observed reality with

theoretical frame work. It is phenomenon and set of attributes that are calculated or operated in research; they can have more than one value along a continuum. Independent variables are varied by the researcher, whereas dependent variables are observed and their values depend on the effects of independent variable. In this study independent variable is internet usage and dependent variable is socialization of children.

Research Questions:

- Do children more consume internet?
- Are children more socialized because of internet usage?
- Do other factors less contributes in children socialization?

The term socialization means that how people function and interact in the social worlds. Children learn how to socialize with other people, through their family and peer groups. There are also some institutional agents that help the people how to behave within the system. These agents are; school, workplace, religion, government and mass media. And today mass media have become a great source of socialization among children. In mass media, now internet is an active agent of socialization for children. The term 'internet usage' means the consumption of internet by the children. Mostly children use internet for these purposes 1) Information, 2) Net Surfing, 3) Chatting

Analysis:

The analysis was done in SPSS. The researchers analyze effect of internet on socialization of children. Either the internet has made children more socialized or not.

Q: 1 How old were you when you started using internet?

	Frequency	Percent
Up to 10 years	28	28
11 to 15 years	72	72
Total	100	100

Majority of the children i.e. 72% says that they started using internet when they are between 11 to 15 years. Whereas 28% says, that they start using internet when they are up to 10 years.

Q:2 How much time do you spend in surfing internet?

	Frequency	Percent
Up to 1 hour	37	37
2 to 3 hours	38	38
Not daily	13	13
Just on weekends	12	12
Total	100	100

As we can see from table that overall 38% of the respondents, that is the majority of the respondents say that they spend approximately 2 to 3 hours daily in surfing internet. Whereas 37% of the children say that they spend up to 1 hour in browsing internet. 13% of the children do not use internet daily. And 12% of them say that they use internet just on weekends.

Q:3 Do you use internet for information seeking?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	52	52
Agree	21	21
Neutral	8	8

Disagree	11	11
Strongly Disagree	8	8
Total	100	100

In this question 52% of the respondents strongly agree that they use internet for information seeking. Hence majority of the respondents strongly agree with this statement. 21% of the children agree to this, whereas 11% disagree with this statement. 8% of the children are neutral regarding this statement and 8% of them also strongly disagree with this.

Q:4 Do internet increases your academic performance?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	30	30
Agree	39	39
Neutral	15	15
Disagree	8	8
Strongly Disagree	8	8
Total	100	100

Maximum children i.e. 39% agree that internet increases their academic performance. Second most preferable choice by the children is that 30% of children strongly agree with this. 15% of children are neutral about this, that internet increases their academic performance. 8% of children disagree and 8% of them strongly disagree to this.

Q:5 Do you use internet for chatting?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	38	38
Agree	23	23
Neutral	18	18
Disagree	11	11
Strongly Disagree	10	10
Total	100	100

In the response of this question majority of the respondents i.e. 38% strongly agree that they use internet for chatting. In second place 23% of children agree to this statement. 18% are neutral in the response of this question. 11% disagree and 10% strongly disagree that they use internet for chatting.

Q:6 Do internet effect your social development?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	36	36
Agree	38	38
Neutral	13	13
Disagree	9	9
Strongly Disagree	4	4
Total	100	100

38% of the respondents agree that internet increases their social development. Second most preferable option by children is that 36% of them strongly agree to this statement. 13% expresses neutral behavior regarding this question. Whereas 9% disagree and 4% strongly disagree that internet effects their social development.

Q:7 Mass media is effective agent of social learning

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	22	22
Agree	44	44
Neutral	28	28
Disagree	4	4
Strongly Disagree	2	2
Total	100	100

Mass media are effective agent of socialization, 44% of the respondents agree to this statement. Secondly rated option by the children is their neutral behavior. 28% of the children show that they neither agree to this nor disagree. 22% of children strongly agree with this statement. 4% disagree and 2% strongly disagree. This table shows that children agree, that mass media is effective agent of social learning, but they are not as strongly agree as in the case of school and family. Many children also show neutral attitude regarding this statement.

Q:8 School is effective agent of social learning

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	42	42
Agree	27	27
Neutral	12	12
Disagree	16	16
Strongly Disagree	3	3
Total	100	100

School is effective agent of socialization, most of the children i.e. 42% strongly agree to this statement. 27% of children agree to this

statement. 16% of the respondents disagree to this statement, whereas 12% of children give neutral response regarding this statement. Only 3% of children strongly disagree to this. Means majority of the children realize the importance of schooling. It not only helps them in their education. But also builds their personality and helps the children to interact with the social worlds.

Q:9 Family is effective agent of social learning

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	58	58
Agree	32	32
Neutral	9	9
Disagree	1	1
Total	100	100

58% of the people that is the majority of the people strongly agree that family is the effective agent of socialization. 32% of the respondents agree to this statement, whereas 9% of children show neutral behavior. Only 1% of them disagree to this statement. It is the family which helps the children and teaches them the way that how to interact with the other people of society.

Q:10 Do you prefer to communicate with your family and friends instead of using internet?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	46	46
Agree	26	26
Neutral	9	9
Disagree	5	5
Strongly Disagree	14	14
Total	100	100

Majority of the children that is 46% strongly agree that they prefer to communicate with their family and friends instead of using internet. Second most preferable choice is that 26% of children agree to this. 14% strongly disagree whereas 9% are impartial and 5% disagree to this question.

Summary

In this research, the researchers analyze the trends of internet usage in the school going children of Gujrat. Now-a-days children mostly prefer to spend their time on internet. The researchers want to analyze that how internet effect the socialization of children.

Through this research the researchers came to know that 72 % children started using internet between 11 to 15 years. And 38% of the children spend approximately 2 to 3 hours daily in surfing internet. It is a good sign that majority of children has started internet at younger stage. Uses and Gratifications theory argued that the individuals who have more needs than he/she more consumed the media. More media consumption influences the cognitive process as well as set new goals.

Most of the children (52%) say that they use internet for information seeking. Maximum children (i.e. 39%) agree that internet increases their academic performances. As the result analysis shows that children 38% prefer chat on internet using different social web-sites. And 38% agree that internet brings positive effect in their social development.

Most of the respondents (i.e. 42%) strongly agree that school is effective agent of social learning. Overall 58% of children strongly agree that family plays an important role in social learning and

44% of respondents that is the majority of them agree that mass media is effective agent of social learning. In the end, maximum numbers of respondents strongly agree that they prefer to communicate with their family and friends instead of using internet.

Conclusion

Children are the future of our country as well as our world. With the growing time internet is becoming popular not only among youth but in children as well. This study investigates that how internet effects the socialization of children. Despite of the fact, that internet is becoming popular among children, but the value and importance of television cannot be denied.

The focus of this research is to find out that how often children uses internet and what is the effective agent of socialization. By getting survey through the children, the researchers came to know that school, family, mass media and peers are effective agents of socialization. Among media, children mostly spend, maximum of their free time in watching TV. But with the passage of time internet has an immense impact on young minds. While doing survey the researchers came to know that now maximum number of children use internet for 2 to 3 hours, which is not a lesser time. Mostly children use it for educational purpose. But they also play video games, do chatting and browsing.

This is also a fact which is proved from this research that children learn a lot through internet. It also helps them to increase their academic performance. Some of the things they learn are beneficial, others are not. They learn about the world and the ways

of the society. Parents can control the time their children spend in internet. Somehow children are also socialized because of internet but the importance of family and peers are still there. It helps a lot in their social development and personality building and the children also agree to this.

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