

Digital Natives: Impact of Technology on Young Generation

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Abstract – In the digital age, electronic communication has become an integral part of adolescent life. Adolescents get into social interactions through various apps, Facebook, Twitter and so on. Smart Phones and digital platforms are widely used to maintain their peer relationships, family interactions and works related to academics. There is no doubt, technology has enhanced learning experience. But at the same time children are using apps more frequently which is adversely affecting their social relationships, mental and physical health, and even performance in academics. Social skills, interpersonal relation, emotional exchange, intelligence sharing and empathy cannot be learnt through technology, digital platforms, networks, emails or text messaging

Keywords-Digital Age, Mental Health, Emotional Exchange, Empathy

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INTRODUCTION

With the development of technology, use of digital devices has increased rapidly among teenagers and youth in recent years. In the digital age, electronic communication has become an integral part of adolescent life. Mobile phones, tablets, laptops and desktops are considered must for development and growth. These tools are now turning from technological instruments to socio-economic enablers, determining and shaping personality, social wellbeing, health and education. Once considered a boon, these can easily be turned into bane when misused or overused.

Teenagers spend a lot of their valuable time communicating and chatting on phone or sending text messages to their friends and family members. Internet gives an access to information from around the world in few second and teenagers find it convenient to do Google search for everything instead of reading books or doing mathematical calculations. Adolescents get into social interactions through various apps, Facebook, Twitter and so on. Smart Phones and digital platforms are widely used to maintain their peer relationships, family interactions and works related to academics like videos, presentation and so on. Inquisitive by nature, teenagers try to explore everything and even find it difficult to resist from exploring what they are not supposed to explore at their age. Children are using apps more frequently which is adversely affecting their social relationships, mental and physical health, and even performance in academics.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF DIGITAL USE

There is no doubt, technology has enhanced learning experience. Children in the schools are taught with the help of digital devices like Smart boards, sound and audio recording, document cameras and 3D printers. The schools fully equipped with digital apps and technology are well advertised and do attract rich parents who can afford their fees and it is also considered as their status symbol to send their children to these schools. During the time of Nursery admission, Schools even demand for computers or digital help instead of donations to enrich their educational environment.¹

All these tools are used in the classes to make learning interesting as audio visual tools invariably turn out to be more powerful pedagogical tools more than conventional lecture methods. These techniques are very useful for generating creativity, project based learning opportunities and creating environment for participative learning and collaborative working culture. These technology friendly devices help them solve many conventional problems of reading, writing, storytelling and mathematical learning.

World is changing fast and online learning is becoming a global phenomenon. There is a more deep-seated reason for the rapid adoption of digital technologies by today's youth. It is the prospect of employment. There will hardly be a white collar job

¹Author's personal experience during the time of Nursery admission of her own child.

out there that won't require digital skills from the incumbent. So our children and youth are being prepared to meet the challenges of employment in future. Techno savvy candidates will be preferred by every employer – from small start-ups to large MNCs in near future. To meet the future prospects, with the expectation of tech jobs, youth of today is adopting technology eagerly. With the use of technology younger generation feels empowered to express their ideas through blogs and other social media platform but devoting too much time on these digital platforms and not interacting with the society around them-family and friends, may well lead to imbalanced development of the personality. Social skills, interpersonal relation, emotional exchange, intelligence sharing and empathy cannot be learnt through technology, digital platforms, networks, emails or text messaging.

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON YOUTH

It is becoming increasingly clear that virtual connection of youth and teenagers with family and friends is diminishing their physical connection, adversely impacting their bonds with them. These adolescents always engaged with digital devices are miserably failing to learn to solve their disagreement with parents, friends and other personal conflicts. Person to person social communication is under threat today. Teenagers are losing interest in interacting with friends, family members, relatives and even parents. They don't want to interact with their friends face to face. They are not able to express their views and feelings. There is lack of facial expression expressing their sorrow or happiness and inability to reach out to the listeners. In the absence of eye contact with the listeners, there is communication gap while expressing their emotions, and feelings. Interaction on the screen also stops their respectful gestures and affectionate languages while greeting someone. These basic humane social traits are learnt when we interact personally with family members and socialize with our friends on day to day basis

Socialization is an art to learn how to interact with others, how to initiate talk and respond to questions asked. It helps the youth to learn and interact in a positive manner but children are now confined to their homes and to their rooms especially. Intolerance, aggressive behavior, reluctance to socialize are some of the major concerns discussed among parents today. They also admit that their children are having digital devices in their hands spending hours in a single day.² Face to face socialization is negated by these children. Socialization always helps in developing thought process, creating awareness, about your surrounding and generate sympathy or empathy for others. But finding socialization as wastage of time, they prefer

to be secluded, sit-alone and spend time with digital apps. Many mishaps take place due to their over indulgence in mobile phones while walking, driving and spending hours being unaware of their surroundings.

HEALTH PROBLEMS

Physical and mental health problems are increasing among teenagers due to overuse of electronic devices. Over indulgence in these devices minimizes their physical activities. Uncontrolled eating and other unhealthy practices, while being online, are causing weight gain, irritable behavior, stress and anxiety among children. Media device before bed time is the main cause of disorder in sleep patterns. We generally ignore the fact that proper sleep of 8-10 hours depending on the age group is important as it promotes mental growth, heart growth, nervous systems, attention span and capacity to learn. Compromising with sleeping time, adversely affects performance in the school and at work place. Everything should be acceptable in moderate quantity, for fixed time and fixed hour.

All cell phones emit low levels of radio frequency radiations, which are very harmful for all age groups and can damage and heat tissues around the eyes. Constantly using phones, laptops results into headache, memory loss, neck and back pain, hypertension and even cancer.

INVOLVEMENT OF YOUTH IN THE MISUSE OF TECHNOLOGY

Many services are now available online such as matrimonial, shopping, medicines and education facilities. Almost all sites have reported of misuses, fraud and cheating by its users, and unfortunately many a time the younger generation are caught for such online unfair practices. Service providers are also cheating customers who are not very techno savvy. Existence of Porn and many other undesirable sites and involvement of youngsters in these sites have been a concern among parents. Today, cybercrime has been on the rise and the younger generation is easily trapped in it, knowingly or unknowingly. Many times interfering with other's privacy has been reported and FIRs are lodged against the youngsters for blackmailing others. Young girls are generally blackmailed for text messages and photographs. Thus cyber bullying is a result of the abuse of technology by youth today. Due to these devices, family dynamics has changed from parental safety and surveillance to negotiated freedom to the children.

It is known to all that use of mobile phones while driving has caused many road accidents and deaths. Due to the use of phones during examination for cheating, government has banned its use during examination.

²Interaction with Parents of School Children.

CONCLUSION

Technological devices are boon in the age of technology provided, they are not misused or abused. It all depends how a user is making use of digital instruments or misusing it. Intensions of users can very well decide use or misuse of technology and devices. Digital technologies embody the progress of civilization and appear unstoppable and irreversible. We must welcome them with open arms in view of the transformational changes they can bring about in society and economy. But equally important will be our ability to expose the young adolescent to these technologies in a calibrated fashion that allows them to learn and sharpen their digital skills to make the best use of them to improve the overall quality of life not make life complex and difficult.

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