

New Media in the Lives of Adolescents in Mysore city: An Evaluation

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ABSTRACT: This study is part of my Minor Research Project funded by University Grants Commission on Impact of Social Media on Adolescents in Karnataka State : An Empirical Study. Internet is a powerful communication tool which connects adolescents to others. The new media technologies offer several opportunities to the young audience to build the electronic network that connects people and information via computers. The advent of new media technologies has changed the lives of adolescents. The crucial importance of information access and acquisition among the adolescents needs to be scientifically examined by the researchers. The present study evaluates the role of new media in the lives of adolescents of Mysore city. The present investigation was carried out in Mysuru city. Primary data were collected from about 120 adolescents studying in both public and private schools. The study reveals that adolescents have made use of new media for variety of purposes. The study emphasizes that new media were not used primarily by the adolescents of Mysuru city especially for educational endeavors. The study envisages that the Internet access, contents, uses and gratification among the children and adolescents should be subjected to healthy norms and guidelines. The study recommends that the tendency of using new media for constructive educational and developmental purposes should be encouraged among the adolescents in modern times. This study is part of a Minor Research Project funded by University Grants Commission on “Impact of Social Media on Adolescents in Karnataka State”.

Preamble: The new media have grown remarkably across the globe and changed the cultural landscape. They have introduced a range of ideas, deeds, food habits, life styles and socio-economic transactions. Internet, computer and mobile phones have become sensual gadgets across urban and rural environment. New media revolution has resulted in the globalization of knowledge. The present study evaluates the role of new media in the lives of adolescents of Mysore city.

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I. NEW MEDIA IN THE LIVES OF ADOLESCENTS

The proliferation of Internet and other new media has changed the media scenario completely in India. A rush of new media technologies has re-oriented the media habits of children and other young generation. The pace of development of new media has both encouraging and alarming consequences according to empirical evidence. The present generation of children and adolescents has the world at their fingertips because of new media revolution. The Internet, computer and mobile technologies have created new vistas of learning to the young generation all over the world. The new media are no more luxuries in the present times. The use of new media has become a basic necessity for students who have acquired mental maturity much before the physical maturity. The young students have become eager to explore the world of new media technologies. The advent of new media technologies has changed the lives of children and adolescents.

New media today are indeed a ubiquitous feature of the lives of adolescents. The adolescents consume media services considerably to fulfill their multi-purpose needs in modern society. A great majority of adolescents spend longer hours of the day at home and outside, watching television, playing video games, surfing the net or using mobile and other forms of new media gadgets. The adolescents' new media landscape has become a subject of great concern for the contemporary researchers across the globe. In reality, the technological breakthroughs in the new millennium have completely changed the new media landscape.

Accounts in which technological innovation is the cause and society is the effect according to empirical evidence (Lievouw and Livingstone, 2006:17). The technological developments and social practices are entwined. The new media have brought about a new digital era. The distinctive characteristic of new media is interactivity. The ongoing development and new invention of media technologies also offer exciting ways of communication for children and adolescents. The young people grew up surrounded by, or submerged in the world of computer networks and information technologies.

There are millions of websites created on the World Wide Web. They are designed with different purposes and audiences including adolescents. The Children and adolescents can communicate in real time with their counterparts through chat rooms and instant messaging. They play games with their counterparts in the other side of the world. They have gained new friends and harmed soft skills (Biggins, 2007:05). The computer, Internet, mobile and other gadgets are opened a new way into the world of knowledge and activities. Scholars have also cautioned that children and adolescents must be given immunity from the negative effects of new media. The parents must become new media literates to place certain checks and balances and protect the young audience.

New media technologies offer several opportunities to the young audience to build the electronic network that connects people and information via computers. The new media have brought about globalization (Fleur, 2003:10). New media are communication technologies that enable or facilitate user-to-user interactivity and interactivity between user and information (Rice, 1984:18). The Internet replaced the 'one-to-many web of communication'. The new media have enabled the people to produce individual online media including images, text and sound of their choice. The children and adolescents have also learnt the basic skills of computer use which has become part of their curriculum. The Internet has provided adequate social space for children, adolescents and others. The Internet offers new opportunities for inter personal relationship.

Anonymity and its associated lessening of social risk may allow people to be more honest and take greater risks in self disclosure than they would offline. The Internet provides Anonymity to the users and enables them to reveal more about themselves (Baym, 2006:03). New media technologies have enabled the children and adolescents to grow up with digital media technologies such as computers, Internet, videogames, iPods, cell phones and other electronic gadgets. Experience reveals that the younger generation is very technology savvy, very adept and enthusiastic about using the new media for personal and academic purposes. Today the new media including Internet are used to seek information, exchange ideas and make decisions. The new media have become a part of young generation's lives as schools, books and television. The new media have created a new virtual world where the audiences enjoy freedom of expression.

The mobile phones have well established as a technology which has bridged the social divide in modern society. The next generation mobiles are expected to become further miniaturized, converged and interactive with each new development and model. The use of mobile by the children and adolescents has been observed by scholars. The mobile phone penetration is increasing at a remarkable speed all over the globe. Even though the advantages of mobile phones to children and adolescents are many and obvious, there are many different and often valid viewpoints or discourses expressed as to their disadvantages, harms and potential and actual abuses. There is a need for examination of all issues related to mobile phones. This would help users, society at large and its institutions to examine measures to optimize the advantages, and minimize the disadvantages of this useful and ubiquitous technology.(Weerakkody, 2009:27).

The video gaming habits of children and adolescents are increasing in modern times. But the video game console market is still very low compared to cell phones and PCs in India, The young audience use computer to play video games. Video games were overwhelmingly the primary use of the computer (91%) and the primary purpose of Internet usage was fun and games (75%). The users play games and also use game consoles and hand-held gadgets (Gustin et.al, 2002:13).

The children spent playing games ranged from two hours per week to eight hours per week. The boys spend substantially more time playing video games than do girls, according to a recent study. The new media impact the lives of the adolescents in terms of physical health, displacement of activity, video game addiction, educational impact, social involvement, pro-social behavior, gender stereotyping and violence in video games. The parents are required to take advantage of new technological tools to protect their children (Walsh et al, 2006:26).

The adolescents have grown up in the digital era. India is in the forefront in respect of new media applications. The children are introduced to new media in their very engage since they cannot escape from the digital media (Sunderaj, 2009:22). The adolescents are also exposed to new media which are informal centers of learning in modern times. The Web is accessible to the world to the greatest possible extent. The young students require guidance and supervision of their parents and teachers to avoid harmful effects of new media. The urban-rural gap and male-female gap also exist in the use of new media according to review of literature. The new media are known for positive and negative effects. The parents, educators and manufacturers have to be sensitive to these issues and change their mind set in order to make new media true instruments of people connectors, communications and collaborations devices in the new millennium, state past researchers.

Internet is a powerful communication tool which connects adolescents to others. They use e-mail, chat rooms and instant messaging to connect with other people. Girls use the Internet for education and boys use the Internet for entertainment and games according to empirical evidence. The participatory quality of new media makes the adolescents active gainers of knowledge and recreation facilities. In reality, the adolescents and other young people experience various ways of learning through their consumption and production of digital contents.

The new media enable the young generation to learn soft skills, team work skills and creative methods of learning. They also develop a sense of personal identity and establish social relations across the world.

The new media have created a new electronic generation which is more democratic, imaginative, responsible and skilled by nature. They have overthrown traditional hierarchies of knowledge and power. The new media have also attracted the adolescents better than other traditional media of communication. The economic status and educational progress of family members matter most from the point of view of new media habits of young generation of students. The new media habits have also impacted other activities of the young generation. The children and adolescents use the new media for multi purposes.

The new media have created networked societies which provide linkages that benefit the mankind including the young generation. The new digital media have revolutionized the lives of young people. Other activities are also replaced by computer-based activities. The surfing of Internet is more interesting than television to the PC owners. The youngsters normally consume a wider variety of media for longer (Tungate, 1999:23). In particular, the adolescents are attracted by the new media power as a prominent source of information, education, entertainment and advertisement. The new media offer even more possibilities of multitasking. The children, adolescents, parents, teachers and other stakeholders of human resources development need to be sensitized on issues concerning the positive and negative impact of new media. Adequate studies are required to create suitable checks and balances and safeguard the interest of young generation.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The new media have attracted the attention of researchers all over the globe. The new media access, uses, gratifications and effects are subjected to systematic research in the field of mass communication. The scholars have examined the impact of new media on society. The adolescents have become active users of new media over a period of time. Prominent studies carried out by the past researchers relating to new media and adolescents include - Bowden et.al. (2001:06), Bhat (2001:04), Gustavo (2001:12), Gross et.al. (2002:11), Bryant (2004:07), Doreswamy (2004:09), Balasubramanian (2004:02), Kumar and Kaur (2006:16), Allen (2007:01), Sridevi (2010:20), Sukanya (2012:21), David (2012:08), Rudrayya (2013:19) and Urs (2015:24).

Social Significance of the Study

The crucial importance of information access and acquisition among the adolescents becomes highly relevant in the present times since the world moves towards the knowledge-based society. In developing countries, the emphasis is on inclusive development through active participation of all sections of society in the mainstream of communication and development. There is growing recognition in educational institutions, training centers, research organizations and development institutions of Karnataka on the crucial role of new media which is required to provide a solid basis for education and to enhance quality of life of the students in schools, colleges and universities by providing information resources via ICT based tools. A perusal of available literature on the impact of new media on users clearly reveals that limited investigations are carried out in Karnataka on the impact of new media on adolescents.

Objectives of Study

The present investigation was carried out in Mysuru city on the basis of the following objectives:

1. To analyze the new media use pattern of the respondents.
2. To study the impact of new media on adolescents.

Research Design

The present investigation was carried out in Mysuru city. About 120 adolescents were selected for the purpose of primary data collection.

Distribution of Study Area and Sample

Type of School	Number of Boys	Number of Girls	Total Respondents
Public School	38	28	66
Private School	30	24	54
Total	68	52	120

N=120

Statistical Analysis

The primary data were analyzed on the basis of certain standardized statistical tests which include – percentage analysis, graphical representation, Chi-square test and cross tabulation.

III. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

New Media Access among the Respondents

The distribution of response regarding the new media access include - Desktop (62.08%), laptop (70.34%), i-phone (08.36%), Smart phone (71.45%), Tablet (52.38%), Net book (12.34%), i-pad (54.76%), Mobile phones (92.18%), Search engine (13.84%), Blogging (24.62%), Web chatting (32.63%), Social network (62.56%), e-mail (52.48%), online video (71.32%), audio/Skype/ video chatting (14.56%), online gaming (56.94%) and audio streaming (38.63%).

New Media Uses

The distribution of responses regarding the uses of new media among the adolescents include - education (62.46%), entertainment (78.34%), online friendship development (72.06%), advertisements (82.08%), social network development (58.67%), better career opportunities (62.43%), emulation of success stories (63.36%), emulation of role models (78.67%), communication skill development (70.84%), use of search engine (69.42%), use of blogging (66.34%), use of web chatting (58.52%), social networking (76.04%), use of e-mail (64.78%), use of online video (66.28%), use of audio/Skype / video chatting (78.86%), use of online gaming (68.26%) and use of audio streaming (72.14%).

Testing of Hypotheses

H1. The new media are not accessible to the high school students.

The data analysis clearly states that most of the new media are accessible to the adolescents of Mysuru city. Hence, the hypothesis stands disproved according to the data analysis.

H2. The new media are not used primarily for academic endeavors.

The data analysis reveals that the new media were not used primarily by the adolescents of Mysuru city. Hence, the hypothesis stands proved according to the data analysis.

Implications of the Study

The implications of the findings of the study with reference to the impact of new media on adolescents of Mysuru city in general terms are given below.

- The Internet access, contents, uses and gratification among the children and adolescents should be subjected to healthy norms and guidelines.
- The codes of practice should be developed in consultation with media experts, jurists and activists.
- The adolescents should be protected from exposure to adult programs and other unsolicited material which adversely affect their health and progress.
- A new virtual environment should be created in the educational institutions for the development of adolescents.
- Series of research activities, extension programmes and publication programmes are also required to sensitize the parents and adolescents.

IV. CONCLUSION

The use of new media for educational use and their impact on adolescents needs to be understood by the various stakeholders of development of adolescents. The young generation of new media users needs proper orientation on the judicious access, uses and gratification of new media on the basis of meaningful research, extension and developmental activities. The state, civil society, educational institutions, media institutions, law and order organizations, non-government organizations and other agencies should facilitate the constructive use of new media by the adolescents for their personality development. The study emphasizes that the tendency of using new media for constructive educational and developmental purposes should be encouraged among the adolescents in modern times.

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