



COVID's contribution to forming young minds through exposure to the Internet

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Abstract

The enhancement in technology since generations and its up-gradation has made our lives turn into an easier phase. We step out of our work and take the help of technology which is supported by the internet and get off from that phase. who knew the time would take a major turn where we do not have to step out and rely on technology and surround ourselves with it. Surrounding oneself is fun but everything has a limit and when it exceeds and overpowers us it starts showing a negative impact on our day-to-day life. The same is the situation that we recently went through and along with us our children were submerged into the same. This has had a huge impact on their lives both physically and mentally.

Keywords-Internet, Covid, Corona, Young minds, Digital evolution

“INTERNET” this term has never been stable in terms of its contribution to our society and also to our personal lives. The digital world is playing a major role in our day-to-day life. The pendulum between its pros and cons keeps swinging and with each step, our technology is taking forward the swing and increasing its energy from left to right. The Corona period that emerged out of nowhere was taken over by this web technology and it proved to be a boon to many sectors all over the country. Work from home culture took place which was not possible without the internet, Virtual meetings, Virtual functions, study, plays, meetups, and breakups all took place virtually without letting people move out and yes ‘with utmost safety.

The children who just met this technology (in abundance)-

Looking forward and talking about the young minds that are freshly at their framing stage they also had to accommodate their minds to this technology way before they should and also way too much according to their usage and consumption. This exposure now will have an impact on their whole life and they won't be able to step out of this hole. We can say this digital exposure will go hand in hand all their entire life in and out of their homes.

The evolution of the Internet came in the 90s when it fascinated the users with its newness and the ease it provided. People across the country were excited and keen to see all the dynamics of this new technology.

The technology was enhancing itself with the new build-outs of machinery such as modern computers, laptops, tablets, etc. and this digital and social evolution worked as a fuel to help them run more smoothly. In an article from *OECD iLibrary* it was stated that by the end of 2017, there were more broadband subscriptions than people in OECD countries.

(Organisation for Economic Co-operative and Development (OECD) means an association of 38 countries in Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific. It helps member countries to formulate economic and social orders^[1])

The youth are completely running their lives socially and along with that the elder group that can be considered about 45 is also using this with full involvement. These categories can be stopped and made aware of the amount of usage to be done and also their work will help them to divide the time accordingly. The new terms such as Gen Z are used to address the new age of the country but considering the age groups, they also have not devoted themselves in the growing years of their life. Talking about the kids born after 2010 which are also called 'Gen A' these are somewhere hit hard by this technology as they've started their life seeing this hi-tech evolution. Also, these children are called 'digital natives. What does native mean? It means the one born in that particular place or surroundings. Can these children be considered to have the actual knowledge of their origin? This definition of the digital native, however, is critiqued (Helsper and Eynon, 2010[16]; Selwyn, 2009[17]; OECD, 2012[18]); just being online, or having access to online tools, does not mean children have the skills or knowledge to be safe and effective Internet users or to exploit the benefits of being online.

In psychological terms, if we study, dopamine is a motivating brain chemical that is released after overstimulation relating to this if we try to connect our study we see that kids are handed the device to access and the urge to use anything fancy automatically spins up and so they just use the technology without considering the fact what's good for them and what's not.

Referring to a very recent report of 'The Times of India' which was published on February 15, 2022, this report was all about the ill health effects that are caused by this tech rise. The doctors stressed the full stop that was put to physical activity along with mental health, showing how these children are virtually surrounded and locked. Several case studies were told by some doctors of prominent hospitals about the sufferance caused not by CORONA but by the Internet. A noticeable fact was also stated that in the pre-pandemic era, internet addiction in schoolchildren was a reality. "During the pandemic, however, the problem increased multiple times," pointed out Dr. Sameer Parikh, head of mental health and behavioral services, Fortis healthcare.

The usage has left children carefree regarding their physical health and this Covid period has given it a push, observing the timetable of several students from preschools it is seen that kids start their day with online classes continuing to that they are exposed to gaming and then to social

media. Keeping in mind that social media is not constrained to just one platform they end up surfing different platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, and other such platforms like YouTube, and the most popular the OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney Hotstar, etc. leading to an internet engagement for the whole day. In a report from India Today, it is printed that around 87% of children had screen time exceeding the recommended time.

This was a report when covid just crawled in and then the rest you can witness the change. A change of concern from the parents whose children are driven by these smartphones with smart technologies.

A report of 2020 from the Times of India states that due to the Internet children are becoming more and more tech-savvy but are badly hit by the malicious side of the Internet. With the exhibition of a vast variety of options given by this technology the interest areas vary and also the engagement according to it varies.

Internet as a choice maker-

Once you start using a technology that makes your work any easy there is no going back. 'The Internet' has played the same role. Joining hands with technology acts as an option giver as well as the decision-maker. Looking deep we see there is one platform and then there are several activities that can be done for example – there is Youtube and then there are options on YouTube like the vast category of channels that have a vast category of content to offer, One can upload their creation without any time barriers and for that, it also has its section like normal YouTube video and Youtube shorts for a limited time or short videos.

Another example of the same is gaming. Gaming was always considered to be an activity that lightens a mood and gives a sense of relaxation. It has turned out to be one of the most dangerous and addictive activities if not monitored well. There is a whole new gaming world that offers you enough options to get into. The gaming technologies have immensely increased leading to the addiction to this. Activities help us make decisions between right and wrong but there's always age to this. With instant exposure one is not able to filter things out and gets involved in it badly. The U.S. National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health (NIH) reports teens between the ages of 8 and 28 to spend about 44.5 hours a week in front of a digital screen, according to another report. 23 percent of kids have reported that they feel that they are addicted to video games.

Keeping in mind the question that is repeatedly heard and asked "Is the Internet good or bad"? Here is a little reframing to the question." Is the Internet proving good or bad for the younger minds"?



A small online survey was conducted for the same to check the usage status of the children and what parents think about the change in lifestyle due to this usage.

The question included in the survey were the age of children; the standard they study in; hours of Internet usage; Do they own a phone of their own; Are parents working (to know the lifestyle and involvement of adults in the house and children); increase in usage is due to what factor; what site are these children surfing the most; the content they are watching is worth or not; how are lives affected after Covid.

These were some kind of questions asked in the survey that was framed on Google form and were distributed online and the responses collected from them were noted accordingly.

The sample size was 30 for the concerned online survey and the answers received are as follows-

Most families now are nuclear with a maximum of five members and a minimum of three. Students with the maximum usage of the Internet are studying in classes four five or six through which the age can be detected that these children are not more than 13 years. The medium used by them to watch the internet is mobile phones which belong to their parents and the rest 22.2 % of children also own their mobile phones. The easiest way to use these services is found to be mobile phones and less number of children use laptops, Tabs, and desktops. The number of hours of watching varies from two to four hours and for some it is noted the whole day long(3.4%). It is also noted that the internet is mostly used for studying and then surfing social media and gaming. The main reason that parents feel that leads to the involvement of their children towards the Internet is the online classes that were conducted during this covid period. Many parents think that online classes were beneficial but also a good percent denied them and felt that it was of no use. Approx seventy percent of parents think that their children were exposed to unnecessary content that is not suitable for their children at this age. The main reason to use the internet at this age was due to the online mode of study that came into force and along with that, the usage of social media increased. The most used social media platform came out to be Youtube among these children followed by Instagram 45.5% and then Facebook 36.8%. Regarding the change in Lifestyle to be witnessed, it was seen that children have been more towards a casual approach, the level of education due to this mode has dropped as there is no all-round activity to build up the kids. They have become lazy and an increase in anger is seen in their attitude. Physical deterioration has also taken place. Eyes are badly affected and due to lack of physical activity, different health issues are also arising with the increase in obesity. Another major reason for the stated deterioration is the online gaming scenario which also is a concern of parents.

Abstract/Overview-

The Internet has become an integral part of our lives. We can clearly say that our lives revolve around this technological advancement. On the whole, it has been very beneficial to us in all the

areas and sectors. Concerning the education sector, even that was possible due to the online modification of technology but keeping in mind that the amount that is consumed needs to be under surveillance. It was found from the survey that families who have joint structures or the ones with grandmothers and grandfathers tend to keep a vigilance on the children's activities due to the reduction in screen time for these kids.

We need to find ways to get our children out of this web and enjoy the reel world. Also, a major thing of concern is 'digital Isolation'. The word seems to be fancy but the meaning and the outcome are vulnerable. According to an assistant professor from the University of North Carolina, at Charlotte "Digital isolation is when people find themselves in a position where they can't access the internet or digital media and devices as much as other people", explains Bibi Reisdorf. Referring to a report from BBC News Online, Media Isolation is growing rapidly in Western countries and the main driving force for this is the 'mobile dependency'. Since it's seen that most of the access that is done by children for various purposes is via mobile.

Digital Isolation is more of a choice that we choose on our own. Working in remote areas away from colleagues, sitting with the device in a room and not with family, playing games in a quiet atmosphere, etc. But it takes no time for a choice that we start enjoying to become a habit and with such possibilities around we can surely be hindered by such a cloister. For wisdom, the jury is still out and will probably be out a veritably long time, on whether there is a measurable net gain or loss in the development of youthful peoples' life chops and gestas as a result of social media. But what we do know is that the increased access to power is having just as important of a dramatic impact on the world around them as its youthful mind. So, we should brace ourselves and do the usage accordingly so that it doesn't turn out to be problematic for us as well as our little ones.

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