Abstract

New media has brought many changes to the individuals, family and the households in general. There are many advantages and disadvantages with regard to the New Media. It is impossible to reject and hide from this new form of media. It is not only important among the peer groups but also for sharing messages and information among families and social groups, hence it is an integral part of a larger community. Most social medias offer communication through Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and yet other applications. It is further enhanced with usage of smartphones for exchange and sharing photographs, videos and other digital materials. It also provide easy communication through editing and sharing. Apart from this usage, it has its own aggressive nature that capture the young children, who fall in to various kinds of violence. This paper is an attempt to capture the impact of New Media on children.

Key Words: Children, New Media, Namophobia, Positive Technological Development Framework.

Introduction

The introduction of press and invention of other media and mediums for communication has lot of impact within a family, society, country and the entire world. But the impact by the New Media on children is unlimited and it has its own negative and positive impacts. The New Media technology has caused lot of impact on the social interaction with families, households and with children. It is evident from literature, press and from other social media the impact of new media on children as well. It has led to growing privatisation among children within household. Because the new media are rarely used collectively, but most of the time it is used individually and more independently.

Hence, the paper attempts to analyse the major impact of new media on children in households. The impact created is negative or positive. How far it changes the character of children at home and in the society. This topic has more importance to the present world of New Media. It will also create awareness to the parents lead them to be cautious of various New Media programmes on children. It will also create understanding of the children by parents.

The method of study adopted is narrative from various press clippings and secondary sources. There are very few books on this topic, as it is an emerging need various journals and newspapers are now focusing to project the impact caused by New Media on children.

The book titled “The Impact of New Media Technologies on Social Interaction in the household” Siobham Mcbrath, was a push factor to writing this article on children and New Media. Because it is one of the kind that is more relevant to my topic. The book had clearly pictured the impact on non-interaction within households. The author strongly agrees to the negative impact created by New Media in the interaction of Households and said that it brings interaction among families and social interaction but not within the household. (Mcbrath, 2012).

“The impact of the Media on children and young people with a particular focus on computer games and the internet” David Buckingham, Natasha Whiteman, Rebekah Willett and Andrew Burn, has expressed the authors concerns about harmful effects of the media on children and young people which rarely or does not even appear on headlines. The book also explains about the different types of effects on the youth and children. It makes clear about the computer games that are primarily focused on the issue of violence. It focuses on the
commercialization of product and speaks about the intellectual property right, which affects large companies as well as individual users, and copyright theft, visual or violent. (Buckingham, et.al, 2007).

The edited book by Amy Beth Jordan, Daniel Romer, titled Media and the Well-being of Children and Adolescents, Covers a broad area of topics with regard to the risks and opportunities children encounter from the New Media. (Jordan and Romer, 2014).

Information the students obtain from social media are noteworthy with regard to higher education and the institution offering those courses during the hunt for their future career. Students need channels other than the classrooms to capture additional information. Social media provides ample scope for academic information. (Al-Deen and Hendricks, 2012) Though children hunt for their academic needs they are misguided or misled to various other channels of violence and entertainment. Media studies prove that media effects on children bring about change in knowledge, beliefs, emotions attitudes and behaviour. The effects of media are not simple and direct. (Valkenburg and Piotrowski, 2017).

In general, the world is witnessing violence. Usage of guns and other ways of violence has been highlighted in other countries. In this line, India is also undergoing a social transition; most of the youngsters are exposed to many kind of violent and aggressive behavior. It is to be noted “violent images make teenagers less sensitive to violence, but promotes aggressive attitudes and behavior”.

"With older children, we can no longer assume that intervention at thought level can change behaviour, and so we have to work at all levels. It is also important to intervene at younger ages,” says Dr. Swati Yashwant Bhave, Executive Director, Association of Adolescent and Child Care in India (AACC). In 2012, Mumbai-based AACCI surveyed schools in Mumbai and Gurgoan, and found that aggression was on the rise among children exposed to new media. (The Hindu, 2012)

The commercial programming in the entertainment shows also replete with instances of violence, the research in the United States and Canada proves that after the introduction of television shows is replete with instances of violence. (Singer and Singer, 2002).

There are many tragic events happening, all over the world. These tragedies are incidents that has direct effects of media on the children. We have rare incidents that happen directly but another part is the slow development of violence in the minds of children. (Gentile, 2003).

There are considerable researches done on the impact of media on children and the psychological impact in shaping the attitudes and affecting long-term behavior. But in spite of all these researches no effort has been taken to make a code of conduct.

“It is possible for children to perceive people as unkind after excessively watching violent television programmes and movies or playing games. This is because they may relate real people to fictional characters,” says Dr. Anjali Chhabria, consultant psychiatrist in Mumbai. (The Hindu, 2012).

In the process of playing a video game, there is a stage for winning or surviving. This automatically insist the child’s psychology to stress, and insist the child to understand that such people are ‘no good’. While these children grow up he or she will have difficulty in trusting people.

“If a child already has a propensity for violence, it only gets aggravated after watching violence. If a child has no tendency, even then excessive exposure helps him ‘learn’ a response”, says Varkha Chulani, clinical psychologist, psychotherapist in Mumbai. So, he tries fisticuffs to manage situations. Instead of learning coping skills, negotiation, ways to barter, he learns that ‘might is right’! (The Hindu, 2012)

Another character developed by children are, they admire the hero character and finally identify themselves with the hero. The hero is always exposed as a character that fight against villains and mostly a fearless character.

Either they consider them as hero seen on the video games or they consider the hero role model. The children tent to imitate the behavior of the role model not considering good or bad. Schools and parents must tell them and identify the real character and what made to believe

California State University in its research identified “narcissistic tendencies” which had the impact on their behavioural. The psychology professor Larry Rosen through his research found that students spent only 15 minutes useful and worthy for them.

The term Nomophobia (No-mobile-phobia) is another impact especially on children. This term was coined in 2010 by the U.K. post office. It is coined for children getting affected because of no-mobile phone due to various reasons like, loss of phone, running out of battery charge, or credit or network coverage. There is an addiction of Gadget on the children. Sometime the children start demanding mobile phones that are too costly,
which the parents cannot afford it. The children want it because the other children in the same class have it, which sometimes ultimately leads to even suicidal attempts. It is not happening in the city of Chennai but even in places like Trichy and Coimbatore.

In India, the internet generation has grown among children within a period of 5 years. The attitude of parents differ, for example a parent may feel that usage of Gadget is very important to learn the present technology or else he will be left out of his peer group. Some feel that the New Media can be used for a strict time schedule, which the parents have to be strict with the usage and time of usage. Yet another parent feels that nowadays homework for students are given based on net sources, hence automatically he need to use it.

The continues usage of smartphones, causes loss or weak eyesight, chronic upper body pain, and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS). These health issues are considered as common among youngster today.

The other important impact is loss of social skills, not able to interact with society, or the outer world. The other impact is the sleeping patterns changes their academic will also not be improved and has psychiatry issues not mingling with the other children in the school.

UNICEF, United Nations Children’s Fund has suggested increasing their access to safe online content. The data of UNICEF says, “One in three internet users in worldwide is a child”. In 2017 – UNICEF also reports that children are most exposed to vulnerability, of risks and harms, which finally leads to misuse of private information, accessing harmful content and cyber crimes.

It also further added that the use of mobile device is less supervised and hence become more dangerous. Based on the UNICEF report the African Youth are the least connected, the ratio is three out of five are not online but it is the just opposite when compared out of 25 children one is not online in Europe. The Report further reveals that more than nine in ten children sexual abuse URL’s are hosted in Canada, France, the Netherlands, Russia and the United States. It suggests by saying that only through collective action by parents, families, children, private bodies and the Government can make internet and New Media safer and more accessible for children.

“For better and for worse, digital technology is now an irreversible fact of our lives,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake. “In a digital world, our dual challenge is how to mitigate the harms while maximising the benefits of the internet for every child.” (The Times of India - 2018)

“The internet was designed for adults, but it is increasingly used by children and young people, and digital technology increasingly affects their lives and futures,” Lake noted. (The Times of India - 2018)

The Government Committee has dealt with and based on its recommendations 964 – social media URL has been blocked in the year 2016. This data has been increased to 1,329 in 2017. This action was mainly taken to deal with “objectionable content”. This action was taken from the ministry of Electronics and IT and the action was taken on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Most of the cases were filed with regard to publication of obscene and sexually explicit material.

The ministry has further said that any site that has to be removed or disabled that publishes unlawful information can be brought to the knowledge through a court order or by an appropriate Government agency. Information Technology (IT) Act 2000 enables this provision and the Indian Penal Code that deals with “Objectionable Content” posted online. Cyber law expert and advocate Pavan Duggal said, “Blocking is a sovereign power that is given to the government by virtue of Section 69A of the Information Technology Act. So under certain specified considerations, the power of blocking can be exercised… This power was inserted in the IT Act by virtue of the Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008, which came into effect from October 2009.” (The Hindu -2017)

In addition, there are many laws to curtail the wings of New Media that gives negative impact for our future India. Various law enforcement agencies notify social media sites for removal of content or disabling of content under Section 79(3) (b) of the IT Act 2000.

The data shows that in the last four years, the number of social media URLs blocked on the recommendation of the government committee under Section 69A of the IT Act were 10 in 2014, 587 in 2015, 964 in 2016 and 1,329 until November 2017.

Additionally, 432 URLs were blocked through court orders in 2014, 632 in 2015, 100 in 2016 and 83 until November 2017.

Until November 2017, a maximum of 588 URLs blocked were from Twitter, as compared to 196 in 2016 and 27 in 2015. 530 URLs were blocked on Facebook till November 2017, as against 363 in 2016, and 352 in 2015.
For YouTube, it was 123 URLs blocked till November 2017, 3 in 2016 and 125 in 2015. (The Hindu-2017)

The usage of mobile phones by children was for playing games, car racing, fighting games and shooting down the opponents. Dr. G. the chief psychiatrist, Sowmanasya Hospitals and Institute of Psychiatrist remarks. He also explains the symptoms of addiction to a gadget are anxious, irritable, feel upset, hard to face the people, and watching gadget at late nights, and some children are ready to kill themselves, if they do get a gadget of their wish. (The Hindu, 2015)

Physicatrist Sumedha J. contends, “In a connected world, people crave for attention and seek validation by frequently posting images, selfies and updates. This impacts social skills and could result in major issues among addicts in the long term.”(The Hindu 2016)

The parents need to take care of this by spending long time with the children, because lonely children are more prone to the gadgets for seeking a companionship. The limits of using gadgets have to be fixed or even can be written as agreements to avoid later arguments; we also need to instruct the Tec-free zones at our house and in the schools also. The parents have to be a role model. It has been identified that the brightness of the screen of a computer, or portable device, playing video games suppresses melatonin production. Melatonin is a hormone that aids in making you sleep.

New Media technologies are playing an important role in the lives of children and the youngsters. In this digital world or era, it is most important that children should have the competency to stand by the domain, the awareness and confidence to use computers by children is a necessary step but it cannot become the goal. This developing character will serve the child in a safe journey of the children and to be connected to the people. It also help children to improve their computational skills and thinking of ways will differ. Hence, the ultimate use should be to promote positive development with technology.

The Positive Technological Development Framework (PTD) is the extension of computer literacy and it is the technological fluency movements that had influenced the world of education. Hence the goal is to mentor children in the positive uses of technology and hence makes the world a better place.

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