Example of research paper on sociology of the internet

Sociology, Communication

The internet is defined as a system interconnected globally using IP/TCP referred to as the standard internet protocol (Cavanagh 7). The origin of the technology was in 1960 where the US government partnered with commercial entities to build networks that were faultless, robust, and distributed. However, since the sixties the technology has transformed the social life of humans. Nowadays, the internet is a common technology at home and work. America online recorded that 76% of people use the internet at home, while the rest at work. These have resulted in both negative and positive changes in social life (1). The aspects that have been influenced include interactions, and numerous activities. Furthermore, the internet has altered the way humans communicate, learn, and even carry out business. Therefore, this research paper will analyse how the internet has resulted in changing the social aspects of humans. Both positive and negative changes will be highlighted before coming up with recommendations in proper using the technology.

Human interactions and communication

Interactions in the 21st century have been influenced by social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace. Users of the sites have an account where they can add common interests, add information pages, and connect with other people. People can quickly connect with past friends, and acquaintances. Interactions have been changed by these websites as nowadays one does not have to physically meet people, but one can just meet new people at the tap of a button. Greengard (17) posited that the trend has a potential of limiting human interaction. This stems from the fact that interaction is effective with non-verbal communication. Non-verbal

communication entails signs such as hand gestures, smiles, frowns, and verbal tones which are essential in determining the direction of the interaction—termination or continuation.

Furthermore, since the internet has majorly been used for communication, there are populations who speculate that it would have a positive impact on human social life because it increases quality and frequency of interpersonal communication amongst people (Nikolova 1). People who have connection because of the internet would feel strongly supported, engaged, and happy with each other. For instance, in long distance relationships both parties would feel happier and satisfied when the communication is very frequent as compare to the era of mail that was slow or telephone that was very expensive.

Internet activities

The internet has resulted in activities that have altered human life negatively and positively. The activities that can be identified include crime, porn, politics, games, and business (Cavanagh 11). Crime by the internet referred to as cybercrime have been on the increase because of the widespread usage of internet technology. Cybercrime is an activity that has no positive impact except on the perpetrators who would gain financially. The crime is divided into two categories such as crimes targeting computers directly such as viruses and malware, and crimes using computer networks such as fraud and identity theft (Cavanagh 18).

The crime has changed the societal perception of crime, which was categorized in the past as a physical entity. Therefore, technological crime

has resulted in complexities that have called for many governments to come up with legislations to counter the activity. There is even a belief amongst the youth that getting rich quicker and without repercussion is through cybercrime (Cavanagh 24). This is because there are currently no specialized authorities or distinct laws to investigate cybercrime and persecute it. In fact, many internet criminals are viewed by the society as talented and should be protected. For instance, Kelvin Mitnick who hacked into the Digital Equipment Corporation and stole software worth millions. After his sentence, the society has accepted him as a well-known security consultant, speaker, and author.

Pornography is also an activity that has developed with the help of the internet. There has never been any effective media for porn distribution except for internet. Wellman and Laythornwaite (42) recorded that 65% of porn is seen through the internet with 20% through video and compact disc players. This statistics has proven that the youth who are the major users of internet are subjected to the effects of internet. In this case the effects can be moral decay, high rate of pre-marital sex, and increased sexually transmitted diseases. However, in the business perspective, the internet has been a successful technological advancement in porn distribution. The trend has been that by 2015, almost all porn would be internet based, a trend enhanced by the strict legislation on porn distribution on portable discs (Wellman and Laythornwaite 44). Therefore, the internet has enabled porn players and supporters an avenue to continue their trade.

Gaming has also been revolutionized by the internet where multiplayer gaming has been anchored by the internet. In this design of recreation,

communities are created where people of diverse origins come together to enjoy a game at an instance. Before the internet, gaming was limited to less than ten people within a specific location, but nowadays numerous players from all corners of the globe can play a game at an instance creating a sense of community and positive interaction (Greengard 18). The demerit of this feature is that it erodes the physical contact of games that require activity, and gamesmanship. For instance, people would prefer to play a soccer video game amongst people in many countries as opposed to organizing a physical tournament which is financially intensive. Furthermore, certain games such that have parental guidance can be easily downloaded on the net by underage youth. The games which have sexual and violence elements have an impact on the future behaviour of the youth (Greengard 18).

The last activity influenced by the internet is politics where the technology is seen as a political tool nowadays. It has been so powerful that many governments have been toppled and many have been set up on a platform that was inspired through the internet. For instance in USA, Obama in 2008 came with a campaign that was entirely based on the internet. The effect was that he won and became the first Black American president. Similarly, revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt have been internet based, which have resulted in toppling of dictatorship governments. Therefore, the political impact of the internet has resulted in many governments: using it to educate citizens, restrict contents such as in China, and plan for missions (Greengard 18). Missions are planned through software that filters domains and content which make them inaccessible without an intricate bypassing (Greengard 19).

Lastly in business, the internet has resulted in changes that have resulted in both increased revenues and loss of revenues. Increased revenues come about through proper organization of various departments and people of different locations. Through the internet, globalization which was a problem was simplified. However, despite the merits, the technology has resulted in loss of corporate resources. The term is defined as Cyber slacking where employees spend office hours surfing (Cavanagh 67). The behaviour results in reduced productivity and efficiency. Other psychologists posit that the behaviour interferes with a human's deep thinking; hence limiting creativity (Cavanagh 72).

Recommendations

The internet was created as a system that would ease life; however, it has also come up with problems that have altered the social life of humans. Therefore, to reduce the negative impact of internet in the discussed aspects, it is recommended that:

Internet communication can be enhanced with video and audio chats to maintain the verbal and non-verbal elements of effective communication.

Proper security measures to deter underage internet users from accessing harmful games and porn.

The government to monitor and regulate internet information that might have political undertones or which might have messages of strife.

Work stations to block social websites or have systems to deter employees to view social sites while working.

Setting of legislations aimed at tackling cybercrime and its punishment.

Conclusion

The internet has numerous negative consequences despite its intention of solving societal problems. The negative consequences can be categorized into interactions and activities. In interaction, the internet reduces social interaction through reduced physical contact and unconventional meetings through social media. The absence of non-verbal and verbal communication makes the interaction artificial resulting in messages being unreliable and people prone to deception. In activities, internet influences gaming, business, politics, and even promoting porn and crime. People prefer to play group games through the net as opposed to physically; political revolutions carried out through the internet as opposed to verbally; crime taking a direction of cybercrime; businesses using the internet to connect with other cultures; and porn being marketed using the internet.

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