

Social consequences of the internet for adolescents

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Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents The academic paper by Patti M. Valkenburg and Jochen Peter " Social consequences of the Internet for adolescents " tends to claim that adolescents are currently the highest number of users on the internet and that they use the internet mostly for social interaction (especially instant messaging) than adults do. It also claims that online communication enhances self-disclosure in comparison to face-to-face communication. The study says that adolescents predominantly use the Internet to maintain their existing friendships hence significantly reducing the negative effects of Internet, social connectedness and well being. He then tackles the hypothesis that online communication enhances self-disclosure; this hypothesis states that the positive effects of the Internet on social connectedness and well-being can be explained by enhanced online self-disclosure. The author supports this claim with different studies that were undertaken to demonstrate the improvement of social connectedness and the positive relationships between online communication (mainly instant messaging) and adolescent's social connectedness and well-being. He emphasizes that adolescents will tend to communicate about personal topics that may not be typically disclosed for example one's feelings, worries and vulnerabilities.

The arguments in this study are not backed up by solid research data; instead the author has relied heavily on other studies and assumptions. The research would have a better impact if the author had broadened their study using primary and secondary data hence getting a more accurate answer as to what how the Internet causes any kind of social consequences to

adolescents. The research does not appear to be well done because it does not rely on data collection, illustrations or analysis. It does not clearly portray the hypothesis with substantial evidence. The author tries to connect to other issues in previous studies for example the fact that some of the studies were carried out with a number of adolescents who had no internet access at all hence bringing out it's negativity making a one sided argument. The weak feature about the study is the use of assumptions throughout the research rather than facts. The author relies on studies geared towards the positivity of the Internet although he also considers the viewpoint that look at the negative effects of the Internet in a smaller dose. The author has ignored the point of view of the adolescents who have no Internet access whatsoever and may not even know about the Internet.

Psychologically, the author uses underlying issues that become a factor in determining the effects of the Internet. For example, the author highlights how attributes like shyness and self-consciousness are inherent to an adolescent's development. He also uses gender and its perception that boys are better at self disclosure online than girls, this is because girls interact better in face to face communications than boys do (perhaps that's where gossiping comes in).

From this article there is a key area that tends to have a downside all across the world; this would be the hypothesis that the Internet enhanced self-disclosure. This may be true and if that's the case due to online self-disclosure a life has been lost. This being the most severe out comes.

According to ABC news and the associated press, recently cyber bullying lead to the death of a teenage girl named Megan. She has a history of

depression and was bullied by a lady who posed as a 16-year-old boy who wanted to be with her, once the “ boy” gained her trust. He started sending cruel emails and electronic bulletins like “ Megan is a slut. Megan is fat”.

Most recent, on the BBC’s Webwise news report there was a blog (The web and young brains 3/10/2011). The blog reported that a British brain expert whose findings claim that the use of social media and online chat (instant messaging) could replace human contact. The article also highlights web addiction in south Korea where according to Dr. Lee internet addicts are experiencing similar symptoms to patients with ADHD hence he has been treating them with anti depressants. Both specialists tend to see the web as a means of escapism. However, another news article on courier press. com highlights that the overuse of the social medium has a negative effect on teens and young adults by making them more prone to anxiety, depression and other psychological disorders such as anti-social behavior and aggressive tendencies. However, with all the substantial evidence that the negative effect of the internet is out weighing its positivity the same article on courierpress. com highlights that social networking in particular Facebook has changed young people and all of us, the article says “ Facebook has served not only away to get connected but to stay connected”- explaining that many young people who may otherwise be introverted have found confidence and ability to interact with others behind the safety of a computer screen or a smart phone screen .

Today, social networking sites are very popular between the adolescent as well as adults. It is good to keep in mind the rapid growth of these sites, and the effects and benefits that they bring along. The study says that

adolescents predominantly use the Internet to maintain their existing friendships hence significantly reducing the negative effects of Internet, social connectedness and well-being. In my opinion the Internet is a reliable tool that should be used but in moderation. I consider it to be more like smoking, it possesses the power to get an individual addicted to it and the addiction can be so severe. However the internet, especially social media is what has turned the world into a global village, making it possible for friends who have parted ways, changed schools or even moved to different countries keep in touch. It has also eased calendars by reminding us of our friend's important dates. In this case it becomes the ultimate tool that could contribute to the wellbeing of an adolescent. Therefore, social networking holds massive powers in communications, especially with adolescents. The proliferation of cheap and readily available smart phones makes it unavoidable. On the other hand, even though social networking sites are providing a platform of encounter with others it has also served as breeding grounds for evil. We should not ignore the fact that it also carries major dangers from intentional criminal activities to accidental misuse (placing all your information in one site, making you vulnerable and an easy target - especially for young people who are unsuspecting of pedophiles and other criminals). Security not being among Internets strong sides, parents and other figures of authority that may not be highly familiar with the Internet are encouraged to be vigilant. Even advances in technology may not eliminate online insecurity the reason being there are other physical infrastructures connected to the virtual activities people often carry out online, the infrastructures include keyboards, cameras and doors.

References

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