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UNDERSTANDING THE MOBILE PHONE USES, GRATIFICATION AND ADDICTION AMONG TEACHING FACULTY IN BENGALURU

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ABSTRACT

Mobile internet has altered the way in which the mobile users communicate. The gadget that was once used to make wireless calls and send texts messages today, allows its users to perform multifaceted tasks like mobile banking or video calls that simplify life. Internet could be a boon or a bane to mobile phone users depending on the level of dependencies that users have over their mobile phones. The dependencies on mobile phones in the urban community especially amongst the youth is high and several research works has proven that mobile phone addiction is a real concern amongst this population. Since, mobile phone anxieties and addictions are a real problem, the issue needs to be analysed at various levels. This paper examines the uses and dependencies of mobile phones among professors in Bengaluru. This study is relevant in learning about the impact of phones use in various aspects of life – both personal and professional and to understand if smart phones have transformed their lives. To do so, interview and survey was conducted over 108 professors in Bengaluru urban district. The results of the study contribute to gaining insights about mediated learning and its impact on diverse population.

KEYWORDS: *Uses and Gratification, dependencies, mobile phone addiction.*

MILIEU OF NETWORKED AUDIENCE

Telecommunications expands the boundaries of the classroom, bringing together people with different perspectives, promoting collaboration. Students can explore relevant problems from geographically dispersed classes. For teachers, telecommunications can be an important way to decrease isolation and build support with other educators. (Lenk, 1989, p. 1)

The possibilities of the internet are limitless in the present scenario. The internet opens doors to outside world like never and with that comes dependencies of audience. Internet is instrumental in providing opportunities to all segment of audience by providing infinite information that adds to the information pool on an everyday basis. According to DiMaggio, Hargittain, Neuman, and Robinson (2001) the Internet is defined as the 'electronic network of networks' that links people and information through computers and other digital devices allowing person-to-person communication and information retrieval.' The advent of the computer and the Internet has brought a whole new world in terms of gathering, disseminating, creating, and criticizing information and communicating with people. The multimedia available over the Internet is surprisingly varied. The Internet is the latest revolution in communication technology.

Internet is used extensively by the urban population for various reasons alike by students and teachers both for information and entertainment. Several studies have been conducted by various

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researchers on students use of internet. The Internet as new media technology may enhance and help our lives or prove harmful to people. The Internet now is becoming an important research topic in various fields, including communication, sociology, psychology, public health, political science, education, computer science and so on. Studies about the Internet started from investigating who had Internet access. Researchers then moved to investigate actual Internet use, including how much time people spend on the Internet and what they are doing. The Internet is a global, liberally available series of interconnected information sources with the aid of computer networks that transmit data in the form of video, audio, images, text, computer program files, or in other formats (Kubey 2000).

One of the internet studies conducted titled Internet Use by Teachers: Conditions of Professional Use and Teacher-Directed Student Use. Teaching, Learning, and Computing: 1998 National Survey reveals an interesting scenario way back in 1999 about the use of internet by teaching faculty in American schools. Along with word processing, the Internet may be the most valuable of the many computer technologies available to teachers and students. In its first few years of existence, the World Wide Web has become one of the most frequently used computer technologies in schools. In addition, hundreds of thousands of teachers have become regular electronic mail users, although that same degree of taken-for-granted access has not yet been provided to many students. Even in its most obvious manifestation as "the world's largest library," teachers find the Internet to be an incredibly useful technology. Moreover, current applications only scratch the surface of the capabilities that the world-wide digital communications infrastructure will eventually provide for teachers and their students. In thinking about how to extend Internet use to larger numbers of teachers, it is useful to examine the conditions that our research identified as most consistently facilitative of greater levels of use high levels of classroom connectivity; computer expertise; constructivist pedagogy; participation in staff development; high frequency of informal contacts with other teachers; involvement in professional leadership activities; being a young teacher; and not being a mathematics teacher. The importance of "age" may diminish over time. What makes young teachers more likely to be Internet dependants is not their age but their greater comfort as a result of having grown up with ever-changing computer technologies. Second, the relationship between Internet use and professional leadership suggests that if leaders among teachers can be encouraged to share their enthusiasm and knowledge of the Internet with other teachers, this will also have an effect of diffusing use more broadly within the profession (Becker, Henry Jay 1999). It is in this context the development of internet use by teaching community becomes relevant to society.

Another study titled – 'Teachers Would Have to be Crazy Not to Use the Internet' reveals unless the current state of professional development (both preservice and Inservice) in this area focuses more on the development of meaningful social studies pedagogy and curriculum, the Internet or www will continue to be underutilized in social studies classrooms. This powerful medium may then suffer the same fate as "the computer, the television and other technological 'silver bullets'...gathering dust in the back of the classroom (Weihenmayer and Meadows, 1997, p. 333).

There have been studies that reveal age as a determinant in usage of mobile phones in the class room. A paper titled Teacher perceptions of using mobile phones in the classroom: Age matters. This study examined the digital native–digital immigrant dichotomy based on the results of a study involving 1095 teachers from two states in the southeastern United States. The study focused on age as it relates to the relationship between the type of mobile phone they owned, their support for the use of mobile phones in the classroom, their perceptions of the benefits of specific mobile features for school-related work, and their perceptions of instructional barriers. Some of the highlights of the study indicated that teachers over 50 are less likely to own smartphones. Teachers over 50 perceive that mobile phone are less fervent about the usefulness of the mobile phone.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on understanding the mobile phone uses by the academic community. The study was conducted to understand the level of their dependencies on phones. The study also attempts to assess

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the severity of smart phone uses which in other terms justifies the concept of mobile phones uses, gratification and addiction among professors in Bengaluru.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) was adopted to provide a comprehensive understanding of addiction and its impact on academic community. Focus group interviews were adopted in qualitative study while questionnaire method was adapted as part of quantitative study. The questionnaire was administered to over 108 professors in Bengaluru urban district. The population consisted of teaching faculty of various degree courses across of Arts, Science and Commerce in colleges and universities in Bengaluru urban city.

The sampling method was stratified. The sample group of the present research was selected from different universities in the city of Bangalore – both Public and private. Academicians from Bangalore University were selected as part of Public University. Six universities located in Bangalore namely - Alliance University, Christ University, Dayananada Sagar University, Jain University and Presidency University were selected for data collection as the listed private universities offered courses in Arts, Science and commerce. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part had 20 statements that focused primarily on uses and gratification approach based on Gerlich, Drumheller, Babb, and De' Armond (2015) study that revealed application of mobile phone to satisfy needs such as social integration needs, information-seeking, pass time, knowledge and education. The second part of the questionnaire included 24 statements to study mobile phone addiction on based on usage of the respondents. The duration of smartphone ownership, average time spent daily using the smartphone, frequency of checking, number of phone calls made/received per day, number of text messages sent/received per day, number of email messages sent/received per day, number of applications on the smartphone, purposes for which the smartphone is used, and contexts in which the smartphone is used were some of the statements in the questionnaire.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The study revealed that of all the motivations that were mentioned in the questionnaire the respondents used mobile to attain social integration needs the most to reach out and to stay connected with people. This was followed by leisure and knowledge. To understand the level of dependencies and mobile phone addiction all the interviews with the respondents were recorded and transcribed verbatim. These transcriptions were analysed following the phenomenological data analysis steps as described by Moustakas (1994). Four themes were recognised from the interviews as the dimensions of nomophobia that helped to study the mobile phone addiction amongst the concerned population. This study proves relevant because Nomophobia is recognised as one of the serious issues in the current time. Nomophobia studies are useful in studying the internet addiction levels among smart phone users. Some of the dimensions that are appropriate to this study are as follows:

(1) Unable to communicate
(2) Unable to access information and
(3) Causing in convenience
(4) Psychological impact

A chi-square test was used to compare between two variables such as gender and private versus public university. The test reveals the following outcomes:
1. 89.11% of the women find more difficulty going without a phone as opposed to 70% of men.
2. 74.19% of the academicians in public universities felt anxious about not being able to use the phone while 94.54% of the private universities felt anxious about not being able to use the phone.
3. 86.78% of academicians of age group 24 to 35 felt it was inconvenient without a phone while 68.23% of age group 36 to 60 felt it was inconvenient without a phone.

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Some of the experts of the respondents used for the focus study are mentioned the following paragraphs. The participants expressed their anxiety of unable to communicate while they did not carry their phones.

A 47-year-old Assistant Prof said:

The days I forget to carry my phones, I feel lost and anxious. I keep worrying about the people trying to reach me over the phone and that really bothers me. As I call and check on my mother every day, it is a hassle to go without it.

Another respondent, age 30, a research scholar at Bangalore University said:
I use my phone mostly to make calls specially to make calls home. I would be lost without it.
A few other respondents felt that they relied on mobile phones to lectures.
Murali, a 30-year-old professor at college said:

I use phone mostly for preparing for lecture. Internet helps in finding most appropriate materials relevant to the time.

Another senior Professor from Dayananda Sagar University stated:
We depend on mobile phones so much that we communicate to our students through WhatsApp group and inform the parents regarding college fee payment, holidays, exams and students' performance on WhatsApp group. It is a convenient tool.

Vasundara, a Professor at Christ University said:
I use phones on the way to work to prepare to my classes and also access my e-mails. It helps me carry out my personal and college activities without much trouble.

Another Assistant Professor aged 27 from Science department at Jain University stated:
Phone is everything to me. I cannot imagine my day without it. I can forget my house keys to work but never my phone. It's an extended part of me. I check my emails, read academic articles, pay my bills and keep my students posted about assignments through mobile. A lot of students reach out to me on WhatsApp to ask queries and it's easy for me to answer these questions even during non-working hours as most students need clarifications at all most every stage of their assignments despite explaining it clearly in the class. Also, I check their assignments before submission on phones to correspond to them. It makes my work convenient. Gone are the days when we had to wait for the teachers to make time for us in person. A good teacher-student relationship can surely better the performance of the student.

It can be noted that a large majority of the academic community find smart phones to be useful and that it has become an integral part of personal and professional life. It could be understood from the study that it is difficult for the participants of the study to be detached from their smart phones and being away from it did cause a certain level of anxiety and unease amongst them. The study clearly indicates that irrespective of age, gender, social and economic background some level of anxiety is bound to exist.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study reveals that there is high level of dependencies on mobile phone even amongst teaching faculty if not at the same level as students of Bengaluru. In the light of recent guidelines that have been issued by universities across the states to ban mobile phones in the campus, mobile phone addiction must be taken into consideration. As respondents of this study are largely dependent on their smart phones, ban of cell phones is likely to cause some serious repercussions both amongst the youth and the academic faculty. There is a scope for studying internet habits amongst rural Bengaluru and other districts of Karnataka to determine digital divide in internet usage amongst academic fraternity.

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