Research Paper   **Home Science**

Influences of Internet on Social Skill Development of Rural and Urban Adolescents in Coimbatore District

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ABSTRACT The quality and availability of Internet facilities are differ between urban and rural regions. Urban adolescents enjoy the benefits of high-speed Internet facilities which enable them to develop various skills. Adolescents residing in rural areas are disadvantaged by low quality access to Internet services due to lack of infrastructure development. So both rural and urban adolescent Internet users have developmental differences of various skills. The main objective of the present study was to find out the influence of Internet on developmental differences of social skills of rural and urban adolescent Internet users. The study was conducted on 600 adolescents age group of 15-17 residing and studying in class IX, X and XI of two government and two private higher secondary schools in rural and urban areas in Coimbatore district, Tamilnadu. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample of one hundred and fifty students from each school. Survey based method and self–constructed questionnaire was used to collect the data. The main result from the present study is that the adolescents of urban areas were more positively influenced by Internet and developed more social skills than adolescents of rural areas.

KEYWORDS : Internet uses, adolescents, social skill development, rural and urban area

INTRODUCTION:

Elliot (2013) stated that the term social skills has been specifically defined as learned behaviors that allow an individual to engage in socially acceptable interactions with other individuals such that the interactions lead to positive responses from others and aid in the avoidance of negative responses. Adolescents use these skills to deal with other people, either as individuals or in groups. All individual have these skills but some are better than others at utilizing them.

Internet usage allows adolescence to use social networking sites such as email, chat rooms, instant messaging, facebook etc. which help them to develop communication and social skills. As adolescents uses social networking sites on the Internet to connect with places around the world and exchange mail with electronic pen pals, they are able to share different cultures and traditions. Social networking sites can create bonds for adolescents struggling with problems with their relationship (Scoter, 2010).

Damer (2003) said that Internet usage is potentially a strong agent of socialization. Adolescents experience the Internet as a physical and social space, allowing them to talk, form relationships, discuss issues and work, play games, train and perform many of the social tasks normally in the physical environment.

Buhrmester (2009) stated that by using Internet adolescents try to establish their identity and self-esteem in the relations with friends. They develop and practice advanced social skills within their peer groups, while being involved in many activities in Internet, particularly something new and popular among their friends.

Kraut (2002) found that Internet use is associated with better outcomes for extroverts and worse outcomes for introverts. For extroverts, using the Internet is related to increases their well-being, self-esteem, and decreases loneliness. In contrast, introverts showed declines in well-being associated with these same variables.

The quality and availability of Internet facilities are differ between urban and rural regions. Urban adolescents enjoy the benefits of high-speed broadband Internet access which enable them to develop various skills. Adolescents residing in rural areas are disadvantaged by low quality access to Internet services due to lack of infrastructure development. Since rural regions have relatively low population density, topographical barriers, and greater geographical distances compared to urban settlement, service providers typically focus on urban settlement in order to serve a larger group of Internet users. Therefore differences in broadband Internet availability are evident between rural and urban areas (Choudrie, 2014).

Expansion of Internet access in rural areas is facilitated mainly by arrangements for public use, such as community service centres, Internet kiosks or multipurpose community tele centres. Most of the rural adolescents access Internet facilities in Community Service Centres. They need to travel a long distance to reach a common service centre for Internet connection. There are no alternative Internet access facilities for them thereby the resulting in difference of social skill development among both rural and urban adolescent Internet users. Therefore, the present study is made to explore developmental differences of social skill among both rural and urban adolescent Internet users.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:
Hence this study was planned with following objectives:
➢ to study the effect of Internet on social skill development of the selected adolescents
➢ to study the efficacy of Internet on development of social activities among the selected adolescents

HYPOTHESES:
($H_0$1) There is no significant difference in development of social skill and social activities of rural and urban adolescent Internet users
($H_0$2) There is no significant difference in development of social skill and social activities among rural and urban adolescent boys and girls

MATERIAL AND METHODS:
The present study was conducted with 600 adolescents age group of 15-17 residing and studying in class IX, X and XI of two government and two private higher secondary schools in rural and urban areas of Coimbatore district, Tamilnadu. One hundred and fifty students from each school were selected as sample. A survey based study and a set of questionnaire was specifically designed for collection the data from the respondents. The questionnaire covered aspects of Internet usage and development of social skills and activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The collected data is analysed and discussed as below.

1. Internet use and development of social skills of adolescents:

One of the major developments of adolescent's life is social skill, from early childhood through adolescence, social skill development occurs through a reciprocal and bidirectional relationship between a child's individual characteristics and the environment. One of the consequences of the introduction of the Internet to the society has been a change in social dynamic. The Internet offers social-skill enhancement opportunities for adolescents.

Table No. 1. Internet use and development of social skills of adolescents

Sl. No.	Statement	Rural N:300			Urban N:300		
		Girls N:150 (%)	Boys N:150 (%)	Total (%)	Girls N:150 (%)	Boys N:150 (%)	Total (%)
1	Able to understand and share own feelings	55	57	56	50	58	54
2	Power to establish relationship with new people	50	55	53	50	60	55
3	Capacity to exchange ideas	40	49	45	58	65	62
4	Ability to give advice/help others	44	45	45	60	60	60
5	Capability to understand people	36	35	36	57	64	61
6	Develop negotiation skill	25	42	34	57	60	59
7	Improved good intimacy skills	15	30	23	40	52	46
8	Quality of socially assertive	15	25	20	35	45	40
9	Capacity of conflict management among friends	15	25	20	20	32	26

It is heartening to express that more than 50 per cent of both rural and urban adolescents were able to understand and share own feelings and also they developed the capability to establish relationship with new people after spending time on the Internet. Internet usage helped forty per cent of rural and around 60 per cent of urban respondents to improve their ability to exchange ideas and to give advice/help others. One third of rural adolescents and two thirds of urban adolescents expressed that they developed ability to understand people and also upgraded their negotiation skill by the use of Internet. Here Internet usage and development of social skills among rural adolescents were less less than urban adolescents because of relatively low population density, topographical barriers, and greater geographical distances, broadband Internet service may be more difficult to obtain in some rural areas. Hence the null hypothesis $H_0 1$ can be rejected. Among the rural respondents itself there are differences of social skill development. Only few (25%) girls and more (45%) of boys from rural area opined that that they developed negotiation skill after using the Internet and the null hypothesis $H_0 2$ can be rejected. Only very few (20%) adolescents from rural residence were agreed that Internet usage enhanced good intimacy skills and produced quality of socially assertive and for the same urban adolescent's responses were more (40%) than rural adolescents thus null hypothesis $H_0 1$ is disproved. Although urban areas are more strongly associated with the availability of the highest speed levels of Internet service than population density, still only very less per cent (26%) of them have learned to manage conflicts among their friends after accessing the Internet, and for the same rural adolescents responses were almost similar (20%) to urban respondents.

2. Internet use and development of social activities of adolescents:

Social activities mean the involvement of more than one person, interacting in a friendly and positive way. Generally social activities are considered appropriate on social occasions. By spending time on the Internet, adolescents can participating in different social activities and communicate with distant families and friends.

Table No. 2. Internet use and development of social activities of adolescents

Sl. No.	Statement	Rural N:300			Urban N:300		
		Girls N:150 (%)	Boys N:150 (%)	Total (%)	Girls N:150 (%)	Boys N:150 (%)	Total (%)
1	Develop interpersonal relationship	55	62	59	62	77	70
2	Potentiality to involve in social events	50	60	55	69	70	70
3	Power to solve social problem	52	58	55	65	80	73
4	Ability to work within group	50	57	54	62	77	70
5	Able to communicate with friends, family members	50	55	53	60	60	60
6	Power to lead a group	40	42	41	50	75	63
7	Capacity to share different cultures and traditions	40	40	40	32	25	29

It is evident from the above mentioned table that more than 55 per cent of rural and a large majority (around 70%) of urban respondents developed interpersonal relationship, able to involve in social events and improved the power to solve social problem by using Internet. Among the urban adolescent girls and boys itself there are differences of Internet usage and social skills development, only 65 per cent of girls and a majority (80%) of boys were able to solve social problems by using Internet. Hence the null hypothesis $H_0 2$ can be rejected. More than 50 per cent of rural and 60 to 70 per cent of urban adolescents expressed that after accessing Internet they developed the ability to work within group and able to communicate with friends and family members. Due to the less facilities of Internet connection in rural areas only forty one per cent of respondents could lead a group. Here rural and urban respondent's developmental differences of social skills are around 20 per cent. Thus the null hypothesis $H_0 1$ is disapproved. Although both girls and boys from urban area have high speed Internet facility but its impact was different on both of them. Only half of the girls and a highest per cent (75%) of the boys from urban residence revealed that Internet usage developed power to lead a group and the null hypothesis $H_0 2$ can be rejected. It is pleasing to note that Internet usage helped more adolescents from rural area (40%) to share different cultures and traditions than adolescents from urban area (29%).

CONCLUSION
From the present research study it can be concluded that there are significant difference in development of social skills and social activities among both rural and urban adolescent Internet users. Majority of the urban adolescents are advanced in using Internet and their development of social skills and activities are higher than rural adolescent Internet users. There is a significant difference in development of social skills observed in gender wise category. Most of the boys from rural and urban area are more influenced by Internet than girls from both rural and urban area.

RECOMMENDATIONS
It is necessary to provide more cost effective easily available high speed Internet connection to the rural areas. If there are proper Internet facilities in rural areas then rural adolescents will be able to utilize the Internet appropriately and they will improve not only social skills but also other skills which needed to succeed their life. Hence, it is suggested to government and private company to arrange for easily available high speed Internet facilities for rural Internet users.

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