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Empowering People: Effective Social Work Approaches & Strategies



THE INFLUENCES OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICTS) IN LIFE STYLE OF PEOPLE: STRATEGIC INTERVENTION OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK

KEYWORDS
Technology, Information, Empowerment, social work, curriculum, society

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ABSTRACT *Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are act as magic bullets in human development in the present situation. They are providing remarkable development in social, economical, and political empowerment of people, also they have creating prominent changes in life style and communication pattern of the people. The changing life style of the people has created many issues in the developing countries like India. Nearly the half of the people in India facing the issues based on technological transformation. This will be created many inter and intrapersonal problems among the people. The first generation ICTs users are unable to control the extreme usage of ICTs and creating a lot of problems in the social and personal life. Therefore, the professional social work intervention is need of the hour to study these issues in the present situation. In addition the professional social work itself has full potential to use the ICTs for the empowerment of the discipline through changing of curriculum and research. In this milieu the paper would like to analyses the influence of information and communication technologies in life style of the people in the current scenario and strategic interventions of the professional social work.*

Introduction

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are act as magic bullets in human development in the present situation. They are providing remarkable developments in social, economical, and political empowerment of people, also they have creating prominent changes in life style and communication pattern of the people. The changing life style of the people has created many issues in the developing countries like India. This will be created many inter and intrapersonal problems among the people. The younger generation is very fond on using the ICTs specially the cell phone and internet. They are totally depending on these technologies nowadays. The first generation ICTs users are unable to control the extreme usage of ICTs. At same time the extreme accessibility of these ICTs are creating a lot of positive and negative impacts in the social and personal life of the youngster. In this juncture to study on influence ICTs and role professional social work in the present social circumstance is need of the hour. In addition the professional social work itself has full potential to use the ICTs for empowerment of the discipline through changing of curriculum and research. In this milieu the paper would like to analyses the influence of information and communication technologies in life style of the people in the current scenario and strategic interventions of the professional social work.

The Emerging of ICTs in the Community

ICTs are included device or application such as radio, television, mobile phones, and internet, computer hardware and software, satellite systems, videoconferencing, distance learning, social networking, cloud computing and more. The accessibility and reaches of ICTs are almost enjoyed by the all community in any one of the forms. They have played a significant role in changing the life style and communication pattern of the people in various time periods. The diffusion and usages of ICTs are differed, for example, the telephone took 75 years to reach 50 million people, radio took 38 years, television took13 years, the www(World Wide Web) took 4 years and but the cellular phone took only 3 years to reach the same number of the people. According to the World Information Society report 2013, there were 41% of the world's households are connected to the internet, in which half of them were in the developing world. The internet has penetrated in 28% household in the developed world. Similarly the mobile/cell phone penetration and usage in India have a good stage in the present scenario. There are around 77. 58 people per 100 people are using mobile phone. This number has stately increased in the rural community also.

ICTs and changing life Style of the People

The ICTs are playing a significant role in the changing life style of the people in the present scenario. The changes are started from the penetration and its availability of the technology in the society and further the accessibility of the technology by the mass. The current witness for this diffusion is that the 'www' (World Wide Web) and cell phone in the society. The 'www' took 4 years and the cellular phone took only 3 years to reach 50 million of the people respectively. Interestingly a study says that there is 44% of cell phone users have slept with their phone next to their bed because they wanted to make sure they didn't miss any calls, text messages, or other updates during even the night. Also there are 67% of cell users checking their cell phone for messages, alerts, or calls even though they didn't notice their phone ringing or vibrating. At the same time, even among seniors, this behavior is not unheard of. Nearly half of seniors 46% said that they have caught themselves checking their phone for messages or missed calls. Further 89% said that they never worry about the amount of time they spend using their phone'. In addition there are 29% of cell phone users described about their cell phone usage is that "they can't imagine living without the cell phone" The Internet facilities are used by individuals in many forms such via a computer, mobile phone, personal digital assistant, games machine, digital TV etc.

Table: 1
Worldwide Internet users

	2005	2010	2014
Using the Internet	16%	30%	40%
Users in the developing world	8%	21%	32%
Users in the developed world	51%	67%	78%

Source:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_Internet_users:

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The above table shows the number of internet users in world-wide from 2005 to 2014. It clearly shows that the upward increasing number of the internet users in the world. The number of internet users in the developing countries rapidly increased from 8 % to 32 % it has a significant and remarkable development in the field of information and communication technologies. Among the Asia Pacific region, India has reached second-rank (213 million internet user) as of January 2014. It is nest to China (591 million) internet users. There are number of benefits can be got from the internet, the following are some of the major benefits of internet: it is a process of learning by doing, here the users can learn how to use the computer as well as get information about various phenomenon in the world. Through the internet one can join as a member in the users communities such yahoo group, Gmail group, face book, twitter etc., and share their thoughts and ideas to others. Internet is one of the major sources of information; one can access number information from the internet and send as well. Additionally the internet is act as an advertising company. A lot of enterprises have a homepage with ads and support opportunities. The internet has opened a window to the home makers and those who wants to work in home itself through tele- marketing. Similarly it has immense benefited in the field of education, health, government, police, corporate companies etc. Equally the other ICTs like TV, telephone, radio, and print media are helping to receiving and disseminating information. However, the ICTs are creating many issues in the community when the people are using properly and improperly. Among the various types of ICTs the TV, cell phone and internet are creating many social, psychological, and economical problems such as inter and intra relationship issues within family and outside of the family members, uncontrolled emotional feelings, economical issues like unnecessarily spending money for the services, digital divide between the haves and have notes, rural and urban educated and uneducated people. Similarly the health related problems like frustration, depression, arthritic problems, loss of sleep and changing pattern of food and time of sleep, lack of concentration in work and studies, all these problems are changing the life style of the people in the present situation.

Scope of ICTs in the domains of Social work

The ICTs have a lot of scope in various domains of social work such as Community development, Human resources management, medical and psychiatric social work, youth development, women development and community organisation etc. Similarly the ICTs related issues are also emerging the society in the recent days. It is also a major research area in the discipline like community development and medical and psychiatric social work. These are significant fields for the social researcher and social scientists.

Community Development (CD): Community development is one of the key domains in the field of social work. This discipline almost is teaching by all the schools of social work in India. At the same time, it needs lots of changes in the way of teaching in its contents of the curriculum and field work practices as well as the nature of work in the organizational set up. A very few universities and colleges are having the ICTs in social work course as elective paper. But it should be a core paper in the present situation because the accessibility of ICTs and their social, medical/ psychological and economic issues are increasing extremely in the society. Therefore the curriculum should have change and to address the ICTs based issues in the society. Also another important need is that the community development based research should concentrate the ICTs related development and issues in the society. This field has a good scope in the research as well as the practice in the community based organizations.

Human Resources Management (HRM): The ICTs are making easier certain activities both academically in the discipline of social work and practically in the industrial settings. The training is one of the major components in industrials based HRM discipline. Nowadays the needs of the trainings have assessed through online with the help of the internet and they are conducted through video conferencing methods and Power Point Presentation (PPT). These are very effective methods and also the employees can easily understand the concept and other aspects of the trainings. The other activities such as pay role, employees performance appraisal, various communication about the work allotments, leave request and other day to day general information about the industries are displayed through internet and mobile phone.

Medical and Psychiatric Social work: It is another key discipline in the social work profession. This has both academic and practical scope in the ICTs. This is because the more accessibility of the ICTs by the people specially the internet, mobile phone social media, television are creating a lots of psychological, adjustment and relationship problems among the people. Therefore there is great need for the counseling and psychiatric related treatment for the people and the field of medical and psychiatric can be given remedies for these issues. With the help of ICTs, the professionals of the medical and psychiatric social work can be provided the counseling through video conferencing and the records are keeping and transforming among the professionals.

Role and Strategies of Professional Social Work:

- Including the ICTs related developmental activities and problems of the community in the curriculum of social work in all universities and colleges.
- Motivate the research scholars to do research on technology, ICTs and society related issues
- Organise national and international conference, seminars, workshops in the colleges, universities as well as in the open forums
- To write research papers on ICT related problems of the society. The research of this field should facilitate both the positive and negative impacts of human interaction.
- The field of professional social work needs to understand how ICTs related changes are influencing and will continue to influence all aspects of social economic and psychological life style of the people.
- The field work agencies need to concrete to address the issues of ICTs to the social work trainees.

Conclusion

Technological development is one of the means to social developments. In this connection the ICTs are playing key role in the social development in the present scenario. Due to this condition the people are facing a lot of changes in their life condition. These changes are creating both positive and negative impacts in the society. These impacts and changes are need to address properly and should be study systematically. Therefore the professional social work role is significant to facilitate these changes to the academic community and society at large. At the same time the scope of ICTs within the profession is also need to understand for the development of the discipline. Thus there is immediate requirement to include the ICTs bases social development in the curriculum of social work. It will help to enhance the social work profession to the next level in the academic scenario.

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