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The Repercussions Of New Media Over Children

Ekroop Kaur, Dr. Roop Kamal Kaur

Assistant Professor, Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology, Shri Guru Granth Sahib World University, Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab, India

University Constituent College, Chunni Kalan, Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab, India

Abstract - In today's world new media becomes an indispensable part of our lives. Social media handles such as: - YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and blogs are not only popular among youth but children are their frequent users. New media handles not only facilitate the children with an opportunity to interact with peers but also to enhance their knowledge by exploring informative content. Children spend excessive time on social media which not only hinders their growth, they also become prone to cyber bullying and face several health disorders such as: anxiety, frustration, etc. Parents need to monitor the activities of children so that they get a healthy and safe environment on social media as well as in real life. The main objectives of this study are to find out the most frequently used New Media platform by children and the type of content consumed by them. We need to understand how to reverse the negative impact of media on children and make it more positive. So, the present paper investigates the beneficial and harmful effects of media on the mental and physical health of children. It also suggests the methods to overcome it.

Key Terms – New Media, Children, Parents, Negative impact.

Introduction - Green has rightly said that "Socialisation is that process through which a man develops into a social being." It is a lifelong process in which human being learns know-how of the behaviour through different agencies of the society such as: - family, peer group, school, occupation, state, etc. The agencies of socialisation keep on changing and evolving from time to time. With the advancements in technology various new agencies had come our way. Media is one such agency where a person learns different modes of behaviour, actions and their reactions. Media is a platform through which different individuals interact with each other without any direct personal contact. For a long time, media was confined to newspapers, magazines, radio, etc. But the era of industrialisation brought drastic changes in it. The priorities of industrialisation were economic growth, effective division of labour and technological advancements. As a result of which the electronic gadgets were invented and got

instant popularity. With the popularity of mass media, especially new media a drastic shift was seen in the lifestyle of masses. To have a better understanding, we need to look at the order of development of mass media and new media from time to time.

History of Media – Mass media is designed for circulating information to the large audience at a single time. The term 'Mass Media' was first used in 1920s. The history of media ranges back to fifteenth century with the advent of handpress. It was during the 20th century, when the leisure activities of people took a shift with the invention of electronic media, especially television. People who use to chat with each other over a cup of tea, got confined to their household watching television. On **September 7, 1927** the first **electronic television** was developed in San Francisco and on **September 15, 1959** television was introduced to India. With the introduction of cable and satellite it became a very exciting mode of entertainment. Television provides variety of

programmes for people belonging to every age group, especially children. Children who use to spent their spare time with friends suddenly get stuck in front of their T.V sets. It was just the beginning of modifications in the lifestyle of children. On **January 21, 1961** the first **digital computer** got set up in Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in India. Until we reached in 1980's the home computers become very popular in India. They became available at a very affordable price. Both parents and children were excited to learn and operate this electronic gadget. To increase the engagement of children, some programmes such as: -drawings and games were installed in the software of computer. Then with the development of internet and social media in 1969, our technological advancement moved one step ahead. The dictionary of Merriam and Webster defines social media as "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which the user creates online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content (such as videos)." But the origin of social media is believed to be way back on May 24, 1844 as a telegraphic message sent in the form of dots and dashes. In **1977** the first **social media** platform was launched. On **July 21, 1995** first **mobile phone** was used in India by the chief minister of Bangladesh. The popularity and demand of mobile phone increased on a very fast speed and it became accessible to public in September 2004. In February 2007, a company named Jio Reliance deduce the mobile data prices to a very low cost. And on July 2007 they launched their first 4G mobile phone in the Indian market at a very affordable price. As a result of which India becomes world's 2nd largest market of mobile phone. The availability of mobile phones and mobile data at very cheap price results in the sudden rise of usage of new media by people. Children are the most frequent users of New Media platforms such as: -Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), Instagram (2010), Snapchat (2011), TikTok (2016) and so on. New Media captures the masses both mentally and physically. The viewpoints of different sociologists regarding the popularity and effect of new media on society are discussed below: -

Theoretical perspectives on Media – The development of a child's personality depends on the kind of atmosphere and knowledge provided to him by different institutions and agencies of the society. The major aim of the institutions and agencies is to inculcate good thoughts, norms, ethics and moral values in a child. Mass media is one of the most important formal agencies of

socialisation. Sociologists holds different viewpoints regarding the effects of mass media in society.

German philosopher and sociologist '**Theodor W. Adorno**' criticize the effect of mass media on the mass society. Adorno believes that mass media is a powerful tool that can make or break the ideology of masses. Movies, art, newspaper, new media, etc plays an important role in shaping the personality of an individual. At present times, the major aim of culture industry is just to earn profit. In "**Dialectics of Materialism**" Adorno and Horkheimer mentions about Mass media that '**Business is their Ideology.**' New media never monitors the negative outcomes resulting from its actions. It pays very less attention to make people aware about their surroundings. It is also evident in various studies that users of new media focus on presenting an ideal picture of life through videos, photos, reels, etc. New media is an inauthentic source of information loaded with fake news, fake followers and trolls. It is very difficult to differentiate the authenticity of information on new media. But it is wrong to say that new media is mere a source of propaganda for the sale of commodities by misleading the masses. New media also provides various opportunities to its users to share and gather knowledge from people with common interests and hobbies. It was found that a child visits new media websites for more than 10 times a day. The social and emotional growth of a child depends on new media much more than other institutions of the society.

'**Kornhauser**' in his 'Mass society theory' believes that all innovations and developments are not always useful for the society. Many advancements of modern world sometimes segregate and detach the members of society from each other. New media is an example of such kind of innovations. Smartphone through which we operate social media accounts, connect us with people throughout the world. Still, according to a global survey by 'Statista Research Department' 33% percent adults suffer from loneliness and sadness in their lives and India stands on 3rd rank in it. Thus, it is very difficult to digest that while having a continuous connection with people through social media all around the world how come people become lonely and stressed.

The constant exposure to new media was beneficial for some like: - movie stars, cricketers and people belonging to fashion industry because they gain popularity worldwide which automatically increase their desirability. But the

common public started judging their worth based on the approval of followers on new media platforms. The number of likes and followers become the criteria for evaluating value of people. Shockingly, this situation is not only confined to adults but children are the major victims of it. It is badly impacting young minds of the society. To understand the scenario of media and children's relationship various studies have been conducted both nationally and internationally. Some of which are given below: -

Singer and Singer (2002) in their book "Handbook of Children and Media" discuss about the relationship between children and media. They conducted research in United States and Canada in which it was found that the regular use of media increases the violent attitude among children due to which it plays an important role in negatively shaping the personality of children.

Buckingham, Whiteman, Willett and Burn (2007) in their research report "The Impact of the Media on Children and Young People with a particular focus on computer games and the Internet" states that the focus of internet and media is to commercialise the products by capturing the young minds. Media provides numerous opportunities to children for learning, having social interaction and experiencing different cultures. But media keeps on promoting violence and sexual content among children which affects the personality and behaviour of children.

Pandit (2021) in his article "37% of 10-years-olds on Facebook, over 24% on Instagram: Survey" states that in a survey of school students it was found that 42.9% have new media accounts. The content on new media is never 100% authentic and accurate. Children face abuse and bullied on internet. There was a hike in use of internet during global pandemic but we are lacking in providing safely measures for children on internet.

Srinivas (2022) in his article "10,000 cases booked by Centre for posting child porn, abuse content on social media in A.P." throws light on the number of child abuse and child pornographic cases registered by Ministry of Home Affairs. The online business of sexual content and pornography is huge. The pictures and videos related to rape, gangrape, adult content is exploiting the minds of children.

Objectives of the study –

1. To know about the most frequently used new media platform by children?
2. To know about the type of content seen by children?
3. To know about the online activities of children monitored by the parents?
4. To know about the behavioural changes noticed by parents in the children?

Research questions –

1. Which new media platform is most frequently used by the children?
2. What is the most frequently accessed content on new media by the children?
3. Do parents monitor the online activities of the children?
4. Do parents notice any behavioural change in the children?

Research Methodology – The present study focuses on the repercussions of new media on children in Punjab. The research is primary in nature. The area of research is Punjab. Sample will be selected based on the convenience of the researcher. Two Interview schedules were prepared, one for the children and other for the parents. Sample size is 100 out of which 50 are the children and 50 are the parents. The age group of children is 3-12 years and there are 27 boys and 23 girls. Only those children will be selected who use new media. Both open ended and close ended questions were asked to children as well as the parents. Face to face interviews were conducted to present the clear picture of the repercussions of new media on the children.

Results

Children's response – There are 74% children who like to spend their spare time on new media rather than doing any other activity (table 1).

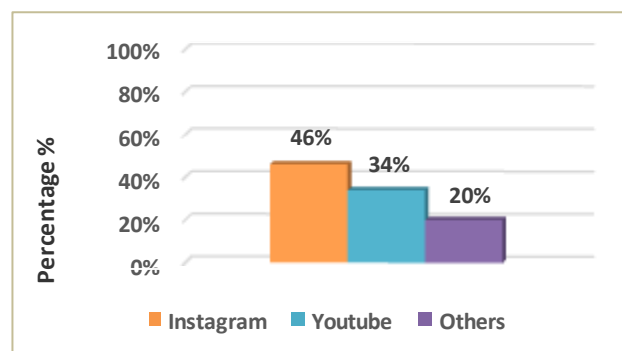


Figure 1. Favourite New Media of Children

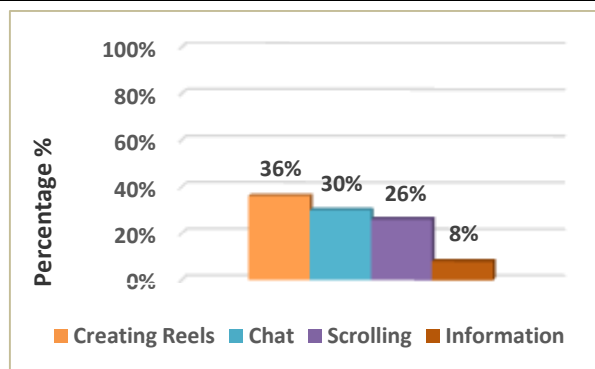


Figure 2. Favourite activity of children on New Media.

As per figure 1, Instagram is favourite new media handle of 46% children, followed by 34% children whose favourite new media handle is YouTube and 20% children like to use other new media handles such as: - WhatsApp, Snapchat, Twitter and Facebook. As shown in the figure 2, the favourite activity of 36% children is to make and post reels and videos on their new media accounts while 30% children like to chat with the friends followed by 26% children who like to scroll the search feed on new media and only 8% children use new media platforms for educational purposes.

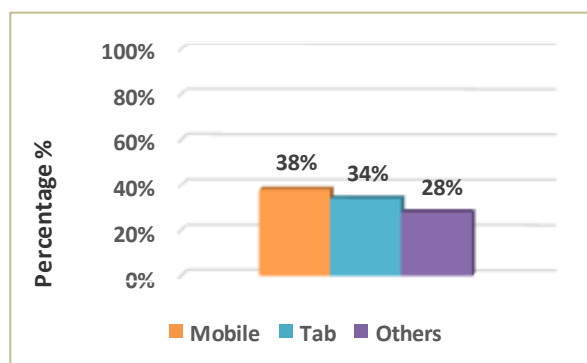


Figure 3. Source used by children to access New Media

Table 1. Children's response regarding New Media

New media is favourite pastime of children	74%
Have public account on new media	84%
Friends with strangers on new media	54%
Met strangers personally	14%
Experience online bullying	38%
Share bad experience with parents	14%

It is clearly mentioned in figure 3, that 38% children access the new media through mobile phones, 34% children access the new media through tablets and 28% children access new media through other sources such as: - laptop and common computers. The new media account of 84% children is public. There are 54% children who agrees that they are friends with strangers on new media, out of which 14% children met some of these strangers personally. There are 38% children who were bullied online and out of these only 14% shared their experience with their parents and friends (table 1).

Parent's response – There are 88% parents who has their personal new media handles and out of which 59% parents are friends with their children on new media (table 4).

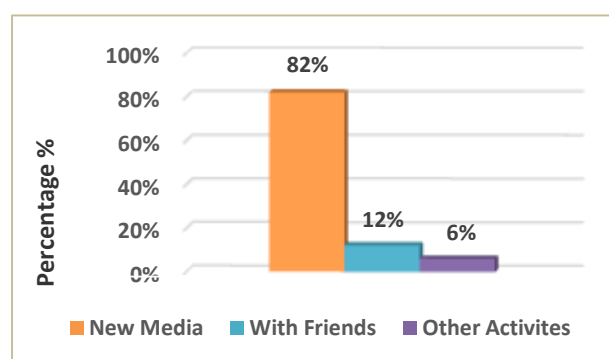


Figure 4. Favourite pastime of child

As shown in figure 2, 82% parents respond that their children like to spend their free time on new media followed by 12% parents who respond that their children spend the free time by playing with the friends and 6% parents respond that their children spend the spare time by doing activities like: -reading books, helping parents, painting and so on. There are 82% parents who limit the usage hours of new media for their children. There are 42% parents who monitor the online activities of their children. There are only 16% parents whose children share the experience that they were bullied online. There are 86% parents who feel behavioural changes in their child as an effect of new media (table 4).

Table 2. Parent's response

Parents use new media	88%
Friends with their own children on New Media	59%
Limit usage hours of children on New Media	82%
Monitor online activities of children	42%
Children experience online bullying	16%
Notice behavioural changes in children	86%

Discussion - This research paper clearly indicates that majority of the children spent their spare time on internet. They avoid playing outdoors with friends, breathing fresh air in the parks and open fields. They sat on their couch, scroll the internet for hours and avoid doing physical activities which affects their health very badly. After the ban on TikTok in India, Instagram make a smart move and add the feature of Insta-Reels which is quite like TikTok. This feature attracts the users on a large scale and Instagram become one of the most popular new media handles among children. In order to gain recognition and become viral on new media, children are under constant pressure to post their pictures, videos and reels. Children spent most of their time in chatting online with their friends and avoid talking to their family members. This increases privatisation in the households. Only a small number of children use internet and new media for enhancing their knowledge most of them use it for entertainment purposes. New media is very distracting because when a person opens any web page, eye-catching content keeps on flashing here and there. New media somehow captures the mind of its users and make them to open certain links. A person never realises that how much time he/she wasted by scrolling the useless stuff over internet. Some children make public accounts on new media handles without even realising that this hinders their privacy. They share some of the serious information which can be used by anyone to threaten them. They have number of friends and followers on these handles. Many the followers are the strangers who can use these platforms to manipulate and exploit the children. It is the biggest mistake of parents who does not bother to maintain the privacy of the children. It is quite surprising to know that parents themselves make

new media accounts of the children because they generate revenue by doing paid promotions of brands, songs, movies and other businesses through the new media accounts of their children. Children who face any form of molestation on the internet hardly share their experiences with anyone. Only a few of them talk to their parents and friends regarding such problems.

Most of the parents use new media and some of them are friends with their children. Children does not bother to spend time with their family rather they get engage on new media. Children keep on forgetting the rich cultural values of our society. Those were the past times when children listen stories from their grandparents before bed time. Now a days children does not care to have a chat with their grandparents. The relationship in the families keeps on fading day by day. Mental and physical activities are very important for every person and children keep on avoiding these. Due to which some parents limit the usage hours for their children and try to engage them in other activities like: - reading books, painting, dancing, yoga classes, gymnastics, etc. New media is not very safe for children because some alien substances keep on spreading hate, anger and violence. It is not easy to identify the authenticity of content posted online due to which without even realising the rightfulness, children got affected by it. Moreover, children are very curious to know everything at a very young age due to which they keep on watching and reading stuff which put a very bad impact on their minds. New media Parents need to monitor the online activities of their children because new media is shaping the personalities of the children. Thus, it is not wrong to say that new media becomes one of the most important formal agencies of socialisation.

Suggestions – Following are some of the suggestions we would like to give after recognising the repercussions of new media over children: -

1. Parents should not allow their children to use new media at a very young age.
2. Parents should monitor the online activities of their children.
3. Parents need to build a strong connection and spent time with their children.
4. Parents should listen to the all small and big details given by their children.
5. Children should discuss with their parents if they face any problem on new media.
6. Children should not meet any stranger and give them any personal detail.

7. Government should put a strict ban on new media accounts for young children.
8. Government should improve the security measures over internet.
9. Government should aware people regarding taking help from psychiatrists if their children face molestation over new media.
10. Government needs to identify alien substances on new media and punish them strictly.

Conclusion – In this research paper we come to know about the repercussions of new media over children. We also recognise the parental participation in awaking the children about good and bad things over internet. We came to know that the craze for new media is seen among everyone especially, children. But children are at great risk while accessing new media platforms at a very young age. In the end, we suggest some measures to make internet, new media and world a safe place for children.

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