Influence of Internet Websites on Children Study

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Abstract: The Internet is a medium that is growing rapidly. Children, to a certain extent, may have been exposed to the Internet, where they may have learned using it an early age. Many of the children may have used the Internet without being guided and supervised by their parents and teachers. This makes them susceptible to the negative effects of the Internet. Parents' involvement in monitoring their child's behavior and relationships and ensuring a safer use of the Internet is very important. This paper focuses on the Internet usage of children, the negative effect of using the Internet and it summarizes several approaches to foster safe Internet behavior and highlights some studies done in different countries about the negative impact of the Internet on their studies and other activities. However, parents could play an important role to control their children's activities that have anything to do with the Internet and further protect their children from the danger brought about by the Internet.

Introduction

Two decades before there was no Internet access in various developing countries. Therefore the lack of the Internet has made a lot of problems. As time passes, the Internet one of the best way of communicate and transferring the message by email to each other's without any problems in our daily life. Nowadays Internet is playing important role in our daily life, such as in electronic banking, education, medicine, agriculture and in teaching. Early on, many children were no availability of Internet in their home and also in schools. However, having made it available and accessible, the attraction of the Internet has changed the mind of the Youngsters, especially children. Furthermore, the exposures of the Interne children have made relationship with the Internet.

The Internet has connected people all over the world and turned the world into a global village. There is no doubt that these technologies were emerged as best medium of communication with different organizations globally. The Internet has made life easy for people, as you can find any information within seconds through hassle-free mouse clicks.

According to the Internet world statistics, 1076.7 million of the users originate from Asian countries. This amount exceeds those in Europe, 518.5 million users and Australia 24.3 million users in June 2012. China is the first user of the Internet while Malaysia was the last to use the Internet out of ten Asian countries. In the perspective of Hong Kong, the digital divide is never an issue, as the family of low income also tends to have Internet connection at home. It was showed that many children have needed to get information for homework by internet as early as the primary school years [1].

The Internet has given new approaches and opportunities to search new things from world especially the young generation, who have a lot of new ideas and skills that can benefit the society and the country. However, family and parents are facing new challenges with regards to the "carefree" access of communication technologies among children. Although there is a range of methods and techniques to check by parents to monitor, protect, and supervise their children's use of the Internet, many parents feel that they are not properly-equipped to do so [1]. The Internet has become important element of life for the people and in this era children are not excluded. The availability of the Internet and its access in schools, colleges, universities and libraries also created various problems related to the fact that children are very close to this Internet technology. In this commercialized and digitalized society, young school children have to be exposed to the Internet but there is a need for them to use this technology properly [2, 3, 4].

1. Internet usage of children

People use media within their social perspective, but children have no proper knowledge

in their social context on how to use the Internet at home or in school. In the social context of the communication technology, parental influence is very important in the social development of the children. However it is indicated that in the social perspective, the use of the Internet is still very low among people [5]. The research was conducted in different developed countries where results clearly indicated that there is a big problem for parents to find out that how their children use the Internet in a safe way. Results showed that the majority 91% of the primary school children use the Internet at home and it is indicated that due to the lack of adequate and level of maturity, children are not able to manage the risks associated with the Internet [6].

Another research was conducted in the USA where 99% of public schools have access to the Internet and around 64% of children from 5 to 17 years old have access of the Internet at their home [7]. It is also indicated in the research that from age of 13 to 17 years old, children spent more time online than watching television three to five hours versus three to one hours per day and these children use the Internet to surf. In this context, many children listen to the music, play video games and do their homework. The children's favorite place to use the Internet is at home, rather than at a library or school, while about 20% of the children from 8 to 16 years have computers in their bedrooms, and 54% of the children have Internet access [8].

Similarly, another study was conducted in Britain where 78% of the children from 5 to 7 years old have access to the Internet [9]. However another research is conducted in Australia where it is found that 80% of the children from age 7 to 8 use the computer and the Internet, in specific, on a daily basis. In the context of Canada, 48% of the children from the age of 6 to 8 use the Internet to play video games and listen to the music. Furthermore 33% are reported to use the Internet and play online games often. It was also observed that the number of children accessing the Internet serve most time on Internet online is growing day by day in different countries [10].

As the Internet becomes widespread, it is observed that the user's age tends to be lower than before. Studies on Taiwan elementary school students show that most of the children were very fast learners, as they search and browse for the information about different related issues in light of their problems. Parents also unhesitant give the permission to their children to play games online, and this has also created a big problem among children [11]. Commonly it is described through different researches that students mostly prefer to use the Internet at home [12]. It could be concluded that

Internet addiction among children is a very serious issue for parents to address and overcome [46]. The use of the Internet depends on the age of both boys and girls, as one research suggests. It is observed that there is no significant difference found between boys and girls of the seventh and tenth grades. Meanwhile, it is noted that young boys use the Internet more than girls. However, the girls resort to the Internet for social contacts, chatting with boys, playing games and indulging in various entertainment-related activities [13, 14].

There is no doubt that children have access to the Internet at home, schools and in the community this condition opens up many doors for the children to the Internet [15]. Children spend most time online at home and parents typically report that their children serve many hours on using the computer in general, and playing computer games in specific [16]. In the development perspective, the Internet provides children with many opportunities to share and communicate by email, social networks, messages, and to access information. Such uses of the Internet encourage cognitive and social development [17]. The growth of the social media have provided new explorative activities like sharing pictures and videos, and the use of webcams is one of the many activities quickly picked up by children. The children use the Internet because it provides them with the entertainment, education and other related information, which is why games become the first priority of the children on the Internet. Young children are also known to be the more active users and they engage a lot in e- commerce and e-advertisement [18, 19, and 20].

2. Negative Effects of Using the Internet

The use of Internet is increasing day by day and has ultimately changed the parenting scenario. Parents should be vigilant about their children's venturing into the Borderless World. Some precautions and safety measures need to be taken to protect these youngsters from the negative impact of the use of the Internet at home and in schools. It can also slowly become an addiction and therefore, strikes as a bad impact on children. To cater for the growing demands of education, children are given the opportunity to penetrate into the computer technology at such an early stage [21].

The Internet has not only provided new information to children but has also brought about some negative impacts on their health and education. Internet has easy access and it can lead the children to distraction without them or anyone realizing it. . Most children do not mind spending hours chatting with their friends for passing the time purposelessly [22] the bad impacts of some of the things they watch online can create a great psychological impact on

children [23]. Online chatting, gambling, gaming and watching violence movies have seriously disrupted the children's routine, like sleeping and studying [24].

The report shows that around 25% of the children get some exposure and manage to access various erotic materials online, while 20% of the children have even gained access to X-rated online movies and materials. The Internet not only provides important information and knowledge such as issues or points that they can use in their research, materials for entertainment, socialization and other communication tools but at the same time it also provides some negative information for instance, violence pornography as well as uncensored websites [8, 5]

[26] The benefits of the computer among children have left many negative impacts on their attitude as well as on their behavior. It has been observed that many research studies have shown that many children have access to the Internet in their own homes and most of them use have spent so much time online which adversely affects their studies and sleep [27].

The Internet has an influence on the social life of the people as well as on children. The Internet has also provided open access to search for materials and to communicate with each other, therefore most of the children have been impacted badly by this free access and the Internet has been misused and abused. Most of the youngsters prefer to use it for games, social and sexual websites and only few children learn about online abuse. The educators, psychologists, teachers and parents are very concerned about this issue and they are forced to think of ways to reduce children's time online especially ways to address children's watching of the pornography movies and other sexual related websites on the Internet [28, 29, 30, 5].

Violent online games are another serious concern. It is known that violent computer games increase children's physical, verbal, relational, and antisocial aggressions. Internet fears such as the violation of copyrighted materials, sexual solicitation from Internet contacts, identity theft, the availability of undesirable web materials, family or personal information being revealed, and more recently, cyber-bullying, as frequently reported in the media have all added to the worry over the extent of danger that the Internet can pose to the users, especially the young [31, 32].

It is easy to observe that the bad content have a negative impact on children's overall development and academic performance; increased violence, anxiety, poor performance in study and antisocial behaviour [31, 33, 34]. In terms of the sexual-related materials, they can demoralise the children [35]. Children who spent hours in chat rooms looking for friends or just passing time can be easy targeted and can be abused by unknown adult sexual offenders [22].

3 Towards safe Internet use

The different rules and regulations were adopted for safe Internet use among children. In 1998, the Federal Trade Commission questioned the treat to privacy of children on the Internet [16]. There were many laws being implemented and a lot of rules and regulations have been made to protect the children from pornography and other sexual-related websites, and these rules were published and pasted on school libraries' walls, among other places. . The developed countries have also applied to a proper legislation on the safe use of the Internet. In short, the threats of the Internet are a global issue so there is a need to adopt regulations for all nations [36].

The authorities are creating the awareness among the public about the safe use of the Internet and they have started campaigning about this global issue and also begin to take some active measures to protect children from negative websites. There is a global need for these campaigns to make parents and teachers, as well as children, aware about the danger of Internet addiction. Existing approaches can be structured into three categories: awareness campaigns, parental supervision strategies and school-based approaches [12].

3.1 Awareness campaign

There are many programs started under the European commission with regards to the safe use of the Internet. The purpose of such programs is to make Internet safe for children and youth. Some important action lines are adopted such as looking into and banning illegal and harmful content of the 'hotlines', also promoting different non-governmental organizations to help work for safer Internet use and raise awareness to society. This campaign had been made effective from 2009 and will try to achieve the target until 2013 [37].

In Malaysia, Singapore and China there is a lot of undesirable information being spread and disseminated including anti-government's obscene and prohibited materials on the Internet. Different developed countries, including the United Kingdom and Australia have regulated and adopted the rules and regulations in the use of the Internet but each country has established different approaches. Especially Singapore and Malaysia, the governments have adopted a light approach where it mostly depends on the industry's self-regulation ISPs and ICPs. However, China has set a very strict rule to control the information flow [38]. At the national level, such campaigns should start from the local

level to make the people such as teachers, parents and children understand better about the safe use of the Internet and its content. Similarly, this campaign can give good benefit with the help from the media to disseminate information about Internet safety [39].

3.2 Parental supervision

Parenting is one of the most complicated life components that are given the responsibility to determine the specific performances and behaviour to influence children's outputs. There are two types of strategies used for handling the children- one is restrictive mediation and another is active mediation. The restrictive mediation suggests the rules and information regarding Internet use. This rule is related to the time and use of Internet applications. By contrast, the restrictive mediation precedes the actual Internet usage. Active mediation is related to the Internet use, therefore parents adopt an active role where they try to pass their time with children as much as possible, and during which, discuss with their children over the use of the Internet [41].

[42] Research shows the differences in perceptions regarding Internet rules and regulations between parents and children. It is indicated that around 30% of the parents and children agree that there should be some rules and regulation between parents and children concerning the use of the Internet, while according to 31% of the families, both parents feel that between parents and children, such rules are not necessary. However, 40% disagree about the existence of Internet rules. The study is conducted by [43] which shows that 53% of the parents said that there is a need to establish a ground rule over the limit of time on using the Internet, while 67% admitted that they did not prefer to give their personal information over the Internet, whereas 59% stated that they were forbidden to purchase goods online, 43% have their email blocked 13% ruled out access to chat rooms; and 7% admitted to have had a barred instant messaging facility.

According to the study by the [37] parents apply more rules when they use the Internet. For those who are less experienced about the Internet, they tend to use fewer rules. However, the mothers are the stricter parent when it comes to the rules and regulation of Internet use while it is also stated that the young parents should be more careful about using the Internet in front of their children.

The Eurobarometer-study [37] presents comparable findings, where 35% of the parents always, and 39% regularly, ask their children about their Internet activities; 30% stated 'always' and 31% stated 'regularly' with regards to accessing the Internet; 22% state that they always check the Internet history afterwards; 13% indicate they always and 23% reported to regularly, sit next to their children as they are using the Internet; 13% always checked their children's email and instant messages; 11% reported that they did this regularly. Furthermore, the study indicates that active and restrictive mediation supports the risky chances of online contact especially personnel information [41].

The parents' observation and perception can contribute to the better monitoring and understanding of the usage of Internet of children and of children's Internet usage patterns and behavior. On the other hand, the parents who are also active Internet surfers can share knowledge and information about the negative usage of the Internet, and its influence on children's education and health. More precisely, the high perceived control over children's internet usage can indirectly lead to a reduced number of children being exposed to negative Internet contents.

3.3 School-based approaches

The study was conducted by [44] and it is revealed that around 60% of the teachers provide information regarding the safe use of the Internet to children, while 11% do not provide any information to children on a daily basis; however 29% of the teachers stated that their schools had taken the step for a safe Internet policy. It is indicated that in many schools an awareness campaign had been launched about the safe use of the Internet to keep children away from pornographic websites [45].Another study shows that 35% of the children do not share their personal information over the Internet to their friends, 25% of the children did not trust everyone they met online. 20% of the children informed that they did stay away from some particular Internet websites and 10% of the children maintained that chat rooms can be unsafe. The children were also asked about the use of social networking sites and it is indicated that 32% of the children occasionally receive friendship requests from strangers while 22% of the children frequently receive requests from strangers while 27% of the children only occasionally form online friendships with people whom they have never met before [46].

Conclusion

The use of the Internet among children has a negative impact on their studies and other activities. In developed countries, some children use the Internet to watch pornography and take in it negative influences from these virtual media. It is easy for children to get distracted from their studies and other important life obligations, for instance spending time with their family. The parents have more responsibilities than ever, to keep watch over their children. However, in schools' computer laboratories, libraries and community Internet centres, it is very easy to gain access so it is the responsibility of

teachers and parents to monitor the children very closely. The parents should also avoid sharing their activities with the children for fear that they may directly or indirectly affect their children. There is a need to make rules and regulations that concentrate on safeguarding children from being exposed to the dangers of the Internet. In this context, parents should provide some time with their children and provide a conducive family environment to children, and this of course does not include providing a computer in their children's rooms.

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