Internet is not safe for adolescents.

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The internet has continually evolved over the years to become an important tool for most activities in the globe. Arguably, the internet is one of the most important creations of mankind (Singh, 2018, p. 119). In the last few decades, this technology has changed the ways of communication and information-sharing among billions of people throughout the globe. Internet is defined as, “A global network of interconnected computer hardware and software systems, making possible the storage, retrieval, circulation, and processing of information and communication across time and space. (Slevin, 2007, p.77). From economy to entertainment and education, contributions of the internet are immense in all major aspects of modern life. However, the internet, like other modern technologies, is not free of drawbacks. Today, children and adolescents are exposed to fast speed internet at a very young age. Easy access to nearly all sorts of data, information and material over the internet may not be desirable for the development of immature minds. It may be argued that the internet is not safe for adolescents because of exposure to violent and sexual content, increasing trends of cyberbullying and addiction due to its constant use.

Adolescents get exposed to violent and sexual content with the prevalence use of the internet. Video games have always been most popular among young children and adolescents. Ninety-seven per cent of American adolescents play violent video games (Lenhart et.al, 2008). Due to easy availability of 4th Generation (4G) and broadband internet technology and easy access to computer and mobile gadgets, a majority of games are played online today. The huge popularity of online games like Player Unknown’s Battlegrounds (PUBG), Fortnite and Call of Duty among adults is evident of the fact that online video games that involve violence, war and fight are most loved by the young generation (Pontes, Macur, & Griffiths, 2016, p.305). This increases the risk of adolescents engaging in aggressive behaviour (Rowell,2007). Bojčić has cited Anderson et al. (2010) to argue that “playing violent video games is associated with higher levels of aggressive behaviour, aggressive cognitions and physiological arousal, exposure to violent video games was associated with desensitization and lack of empathy”. As the availability of the internet becomes easier everywhere, there has been a growing demand for video games (Pontes, Macur, & Griffiths, 2016, p.308). From Apple and Android stores to Facebook and Google, such video games are easily available everywhere. If findings of the above-mentioned research study are to be considered true, then there is a high chance of unprecedented levels of violent tendencies among adolescents in near future, unless appropriate checks are placed on the use of internet among this particular age group.

Video game addiction is an emerging problem among adolescents today. This involves playing video games uncontrollably for long hours without considering the daily responsibilities one has to do. The major downside of video game addiction is that it causes isolation and withdrawal from social activities. According to Lin et al, (2013), adolescents who play online video games, usually lock themselves in their rooms to engage in these games for an extended period. They are kept isolated from the rest of the family and social activities. Effects of this isolation are immense, with less social skills and breakdown in communication (Eshrat et al,2010). When adolescents spend much of their quality time behind the computer screen playing video games, it affects their focus and deters them from studying (Lin et al, 2013).

The widespread use of the internet among the adolescents has exposed them to sexual content thus, increases the probability of engaging in sexual activity. Most adolescents are curious about sex and end up on the internet to discover. The internet, despite having simple regulatory measures to prevent implicit sexual content, is unable to curb the vast number of sites allowing individuals to have access to the sexual content. Furthermore, the internet is unable to regulate the websites posting such content and this means more adolescents can access the inappropriate content from different devices that are connected to the internet. Viewing of this inappropriate sexual content has a potential negative consequence, adolescents become sexually aroused thus end up engaging in unsafe sex which puts them at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Furthermore, these adolescents have access to multiple sites with which they can organize sexual-meetups, which increase the rate of unprotected sex.

Bullying has always been a very serious problem in schools and colleges and may even lead to self-harm or suicides in extreme cases. While a lot of efforts have been made in last few decades to discourage all sorts of bullying and educational institutions have formulated strict policies in this regard, it has been noted that the internet has provided new space to adolescents for bullying. Cyberbullying is quickly becoming the most popular form of bullying. Price and Dalgleish (2010) studied the prevalence of cyberbullying (bullying over the internet) among adolescents and found that depending on the age group, twenty-nine per cent to seventy-two per cent students experienced some form of bullying on the internet. According to Machimbarrena (2018), cyberbullying is “the most prevalent single risk” on the internet (p. 12).

Bullying can have diversely negative developmental and personality impacts on individuals’ life, such as antisocial behaviour, social anxiety, depression and low self-esteem, the strain of which may remain for a lifetime. Research backs this statement by showing that over 50 per cent of adolescents who have been bullied tend to be socially anxious, have lower self-esteem and are generally depressed (Pontes, Macur, & Griffiths, 2016, p.309). The Internet seems to have exacerbated this social issue. As tolerance level for bullying is decreasing in most countries, cyberbullying may take the form of an alternate delivery platform for bullying and related activities. This may happen because it can be far more difficult to track down the originating source of bullying on the internet, if one chooses to remain anonymous, for example with the help of a proxy server or fake username/ profile. Furthermore, any bullying material, such as text, Email image or video, can spread far quicker over the internet. Hence, cyberbullying can be categorized as one of the major demerits of the internet, which creates the need to educate adolescents on safety concerns on how to use the internet.

Easy access to pornography and sexual content is another major social issue that needs quick remedial measures. Mowlabocus and Wood (2015) observed in their study that “children in the playground are googling ‘porn’ on their smartphones and, in only a click or two, viewing pornography featuring surgically altered, coerced women performing ‘unthinkable’ acts, and assuming that this is what ‘normal’ sex looks like” (p.51). Such behaviour can fundamentally change children and adolescents’ perception of sexual activity and raise unrealistic expectations about the natural process.

As adolescents get exposed to sexual content at a very early age with the help of the internet, soon they tend to find more extreme content to seek pleasure since their relevant brain parts become desensitized to normal sexual content. What’s worse is that they may look to perform similar sexual activities in their relationships. Moreover, such content and unrealistic standards of beauty and body mean young girls are constantly looking to beautify and improve their bodies as opposed to putting their energies at the right places, such as education and career-building. In short, adolescents are being exposed to undesirable sexual content with unimaginable ease and at the wrong age. Data suggests serious negative implications of this phenomenon.

Excessive exposure to sexual content is also directly linked to violent and extreme behaviour, as per various research studies. Horbath et al. (2013) concluded in their research study that “exposure to sexualized and violent imagery affects children and young people and that there are links between violent attitudes and violent media” (p. 65). This shows that continued viewing of violent sexual content affects the behaviours of adolescents at their tender ages. As a result, they adopt violent behaviours observed in the sexual content, which is attributed to increased violence at older ages. Once attained at an early stage of life, it becomes very difficult to correct such violent attitudes and tendencies.

Addiction to sexual-content and pornographic is a major challenge that adolescents face when they misuse the internet. Research indicates that exposure of adolescents to pornographic sites increases the likelihood of these individuals becoming addicts to these platforms (Patton, Eschmann, & Butler, 2013). With such addiction, sexual expectations by the adolescent's increase and this cause problem when these individuals are in a marriage setup. Unless large-scale initiatives at the right level are taken to counter this crucial problem, it may be extremely difficult to reduce such undesirable exposure due to the lack of obstacles and checks. All this happens because of the easy and free availability of sexual content on the internet.

Earlier, it was discussed that adolescents may learn violent behaviour as a direct result of internet consumption, especially video games and sexual content. A separate but related aspect is that the internet has made it easier to incite violence, trade illegal material and spread propaganda. According to Patton, Eschmann and Butler (2013), “individuals that are associated with gangs or neighbourhood factions use social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to incite dares, trade insults or make threats of violence which may result in homicide or victimization” (p. 54). Secure and private chatrooms are often used for such purposes.

Recent trend related to the emphasis on ensuring online user privacy means that it becomes impossible for local law administrators to track down small-time drug dealers, violence inciters and propagandists on the internet as huge legal and technological resources may be required for it. Apart from the above-mentioned ills of modern-day internet technology, certain other undesirable activities and behaviours among youth may be associated with the use of the internet. One of these activities involves excessive use of social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Serious privacy and data security concerns may be linked with uncontrolled social media use. Since young adults are not aware of the security and privacy issues, they may readily share private data and photographs, which may end up in the wrong hands. Similarly, various health issues, such as weak eyesight and back pain, may also be linked with immoderate use of personal computers, laptops and mobile phones, the gadgets use to access these internet-based platforms.

Owing to these dangerous implications and lack of content filtration, various experts and scholars have presented different proposals to curb undesirable uses of the internet, especially among the youth. However, there has been a serious lack of progress in this regard, often due to social, legal and political pressures. Since the internet is global, finding a solution that is acceptable to all the stakeholders may be extremely difficult. Any effort in this regard should involve major governments, inter-governmental panels, technology giants and representatives of the civil society.

Today the internet is considered as one of the largest sources for information and entertainment. Unfortunately, adolescents are addicted to the internet to the point that they neglect other priority areas such as studies. Adolescents send an extended period daily on the internet by surfing or updating their social media pages for likes. The internet has not only affected their social life but also their health at great length. Most od adolescents stay till late into the night chatting on social media. This affects their eyes due the long hours of exposure to the screen light, they have fatigue due to lack of adequate sleep and become easily irritated and depressed. The rates of internet addiction have grown up to eight-point two per cent and the majority at risk being adolescents. (Hilarie,2012).

However, the internet has the primary benefit of providing a pool of vast knowledge that is useful to adolescents. Studies show that the use of the internet by the adolescents has led to increased understanding of their body, its development and some of the key activities that these adolescents can take to improve their health (Singh, 2018, p. 120). The internet has also been used by the students to understand ways they can improve their learning and concentration skills. Research carried out on some of the most asked questions on google indicate that there is high traffic of questions asking about ways to become successful, how to improve concentration span and strategies of learning, among other positive queries that the adolescents ask. This is an indication that the internet is a good tool that adolescents can use to enhance their academic performance, health, and overall knowledge.

It is evident from the above discussion that while there is no denying of the benefits of the internet, it may expose adolescents to seriously undesirable and dangerous violent and sexual content. The worst part is related to how easily and freely such content is accessible. Internet is also becoming a popular platform for bullying activities. All these implications, especially when combined, may result in serious personality and behavioural problems among millions of youths in the future. Based on these arguments, it is right to say that the internet is not safe for adolescents, because of exposure to violent and sexual content, increasing trends of cyberbullying and addiction due to its constant use. Thus, there is an urgent need to put appropriate measures and checks in place to limit exposure to sensitive material on the internet

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Annotated Bibliography

Patton, D. U., Eschmann, R. D., & Butler, D. A. (2013). Internet banging: New trends in social media, gang violence, masculinity and hip hop. Computers in Human Behavior, 29(5), A54-A59.

Internet banking is a term used to describe a pattern in online behaviour by people perceived to be associated with gangs in the United States. Many reporters referred to this activity as ganging banging on the internet or cyber banging, but it is sparse to write about the subject. Generally, in recent years young people have been spending more time on the Internet. In fact, from their bedroom, more than 66 per cent of 4 to 9th-grade students access the Internet. Research on the Internet, social media and computer-mediated communication (CMC) has grown over the past two decades. The online disinhibition effects lead to a decrease in behavioural inhibitions, and toxic disinhibition refers to actions that harm the self-image of one's own or of others. Cyber-bullying is a CMC phenomenon modelled after real-world bullying, which remains distinct. Often cyber-bullying takes place during puberty and in settings where there is less regulation. There is some consensus that cyber-bullying is a paragliding term that includes online bullying, electronic bullying and harassment by the internet. Gang members now share two spaces: the Internet and the streets. Most educational institutions have integrated web-based technology into their curriculum, and many students at school now have access to the internet and are technologically savvy. The cyber gangster who operates on social networks like Twitter, Facebook and Myspace use the internet as the perfect tool for communicating a diverse collective group that has been formed over time. While it may be true that individual actors have specific and unique facets of their roles and personalities, individuals often communicate and learn a lot from the collective identity about who they are. We define the hip hop identity as the rebellious, assertive voice of predominantly urban youth, especially males. It is important to describe hip hop as an art form that explains urban pathologies as we advance. The alternative is to sell out and strengthen their music to raise mainstream appeal and financial gain. Only a few years ago, web-gangsters were seen as a joke. The online disinhibition effect was perceived to result in hyper-aggressive content online. Today, many have been persuaded by the internet-banging trend that social media is indeed where gangsters live.

The author of this article aimed at explaining the observed phenomenon of social media that is internet banking. However, it is arguable that the internet banging phenomenon is a manifestation of the principle of adaptive structuration. To incite, perpetrate and publicize violent acts, social media outlets intended to build and sustain social and professional networks are used. In my opinion of this article and the study of social media and rap music, I found many factors that may lead to banging the internet. First, gang-related violence spread through social media seems to be a male-dominated activity, embedded in a historical context formed by shifts in employment status or colour urban men who have established an alternate identity to cope with their lack of economic market position. Second, developments in online behaviour and use have created new and expedient ways to develop social networks, allowing individuals to construct alter egos and pose in ways that mimic hyper-male behaviours in urban communities. In this regard, it is important to reconsider the study of the social phenomenon of urban people, social media and violence to include a proper cultural analysis of Black men, not to rely solely on the exploration of values and norms, but to ask extensively how these men formulate world views, philosophies, and belief systems concerning their circumstances in life. Knowing this new trend in social media needs an approach that places urban men's interactions and their social reality in perspective.

Mowlabocus, S., & Wood, R. (2015). Introduction: Audiences and consumers of porn.

Pornography accounts for several alleged social ills. Afterwards, young and teenage men claim and exploit female sexual partners into acts that are taken from their desired porn scenes. Women having breast implants, remove their body hair, bleach their anuses and undergo cosmetic genital surgery, all in search of the 'ideal' porn star image. What this media coverage constantly shows us is that the viewers are being 'warped' by what they see, their brain chemistry is fundamentally altered by these 'addictive' scenes and their perceptions about 'good' sex and relationships are irrevocably tainted and sullied by porn. Such arguments are based on an especially reinforced form of 'common sense’, loosely based on anecdotal evidence and partly investigated statistics while relying on hegemonic expectations of sexual 'purity'. The numbers of porn users who are also porn makers are still comparatively small. Thus, while not wishing to downplay the importance of 'post-porn' cultures and DIY porn, the editors contend that these modern 'agentic' producer/consumer relationship structures fit alongside a more conventional user conceptualization.

There have been countless studies on pornography that have sought to endorse or criticize this political stance. Many of the more complex and insightful answers to the porn controversy have admitted that pornography is a bunch of inconsistencies. Nevertheless, as is evident from the recent resurgence of Western feminist anti-porn activism, focusing on the impact of men's porn consumption on women remains a key focus in the public sphere.

We claim that for every instance of a boundary that bleeds, there are countless others where these boundaries remain firmly etched. Tube cultures illustrate this well; although listings on such sites contain ' genuine ' amateur content; this material sits alongside professional studio content, whose audience seldom, if ever, uploads anything beyond a comment or rating. This ongoing discussion fails to recognize the fact that women themselves are pornography consumers, and that social stigma, restricted access modes, and a lack of ‘women-oriented’ content were reasons why women were not such obvious porn consumers. This research is under-represented in the field of porn studies and is arguably where some of its time and resources should be spent by the discipline.

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