GENDER EQUALITY AND YOUTH IDENTITY IN DIGITAL AGE

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the gender equality on men and women, and diverse challenges to fight to keep to its standards and live at par with the society and its broader growth; the identity of the youth in the global digital world. The role of youth in strive for their identity through hands-on milestones to achieve.

Gender equality is a practical norm which lives active when it is achieved and exercised equally by both men and women through every opportunity that comes their way across all sectors of society, which encompasses economic participation and decision-making at large, and when both the genders are valued equally and favored with their diverse needs, behaviors, and aspirations.

Gender equality can be measured by looking at the representation of men and of women in a range of roles. For Ex: Maternity leave is applicable differently in different countries. In UK its different and in Sweden its different. The wages paid during the maternity leave is different for me and for women.

Each index in international comparative gender equality indices looks at a distinct list of parameters and the choice of parameters affects the outcome for each country.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) EU Gender Equality Index provides an easily interpretable measure of gender equality in the EU across 6 key policy domains –

- Work
- Money
- Knowledge
- Time
- Power
- Health

Also, *adolescence* has long been viewed in Western cultures as a period of individual self-searching. Newly aware of a world beyond their immediate sphere of experience, youth begin to contemplate :

- What role (or roles) they will assume
- How they will be recognized by others
- What contributions they will make to society.

In the rapidly changing, interconnected, and technological world, the number of roles open to today's generation of youth has never been greater. Digital media technologies have expanded adolescents' range of self-expression, as well as the potential audiences for those expressions.

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality, also known as sexual equality, it is the state of equal ease of access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, the concepts like economic participation and decision-making involved creates a better hue in the radiance of equality and the state of valuing different behaviors, aspirations and needs equally, regardless of gender.

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Definition of Gender: Gender refers to those characteristics and distinctrole of men and women that are socially constructed on their diverse behavior's, activities and attributes that are accepted appropriate for men and women. Gender is aset of mixed social roles and relations between men and women of the same society. It affects all facets of human life like social, economic and political arenas and so on. It is about the power entity exercised by both in the society.

Gender Analysis is a methodology that both:

- Describes existing gender relations in a particular environment, ranging from within households or firms to a larger scale of community, ethnic group, or nation. It involves collecting and analyzing sex-disaggregated data and other qualitative and quantitative information.
- Organizes and interprets the information about gender relations in making clear importance of gender differences for achieving overall development objectives.

AIM OF THE STUDY

This study explores how the youth can promote gender equality in their daily access to life. It enables the youth to know to correlate themselves at par with each other, without any gender discriminations and to co relate to the gender stream and to consider equal opportunities for men and women.

Objectives:

- The main objective of the study is to know how youth perceives the Gender equality and concerns regarding its promotion and contribution. And to inflate gender awareness and knowledge among the Youth
- To allow the youth to explore on practical gender oriented projects and to gauge the gender and power relations.

EXPLORING GENDER CONCEPTS

Gender-integrated approaches treat women and men on variety of arenas such as relative, social, political, economic, educational, and health statuses which are interrelated, intersectional and interdependent, and are changeable to a larger extent. Consequently, to be successful, gender-focused health programs often have to be multi-sectorial and engage a wide variety of women and men stakeholders, regardless of whether the focus of the program is on women's, children's, or men's health.

Gender Equality

The state or condition that offers women and men equal enjoyment of human rights, socially valued goods, opportunities and resources, allowing both the sexes same opportunities and potential to contribute to and benefit from all sections of the society.

Gender Identity

The basis of the very birth of this gender is the difference in the genes of a man and a woman respectively. This brings in the idea of the mater- fraternity and the pater – fraternity to rule the society with the utmost importance in their living vicinity. There are many different gender identities, including male, female, transgender, gender neutral, non-binary, agender, pan gender, gender queer, two-spirit, third gender, and all, none or a combination of these accepting the bare fact the man and women rule it all.

- Male is used to refer to men or boys, or the sex that fertilizes eggs, and does not produce babies or eggs itself.
- Female, a woman or girl can give birth to young or lay eggs.
- Transgender a person with gender identity or gender expression that varies from their assigned sex at the time of birth. With medical assistance they can change from one sex to another.
- Gender neutral means that something is not associated with either women or men.
- Non-binary people do not identify with traditionally understood gender binary. They don't identify as a boy or girl.
- Agender is being gender less. It means without a gender identity or gender neutral.
- Pan gender is a non- binary gender defined as being more than one gender.
- Gender queer also known as non –binary. These people may express a combination of masculinity and femininity, or neither, in their gender expression.
- Two-spirit is a modern, pan –Indian, umbrella team used by some indigenous North Americans to describe certain people in their communities who fulfill a traditional third gender ceremonial role in their culture.
- Third gender is a concept in which individuals are categorized, either by themselves or by society, as neither man nor woman.

Gender Sensitization

Gender sensitization refers to modification of gender behaviors through rising awareness of gender equality. It is continuous learning process in which all genders are taught to respect each gender irrespective of their own personal gender.

Gender & Society

Every society has its own set of gender regulations that can help in the foundation of the formation of a person's social identity amidst the members of society.A gender role also known as sex role which socially encompasses diverse behaviours that differ the masculine and feminine categories respectively.

Whereas society is the medium where it expects different genders to act differently and live differently. Sometimes it treats a particular job as gender specific and if the other gender performs the task it starts humiliating the act of that gender irrespective of the need of the moment. Participation of men and women in different fields of work determines the outcome of the results of their actions. If it has a positive result then it is appreciated else it will be taunted for the rest of their lives.
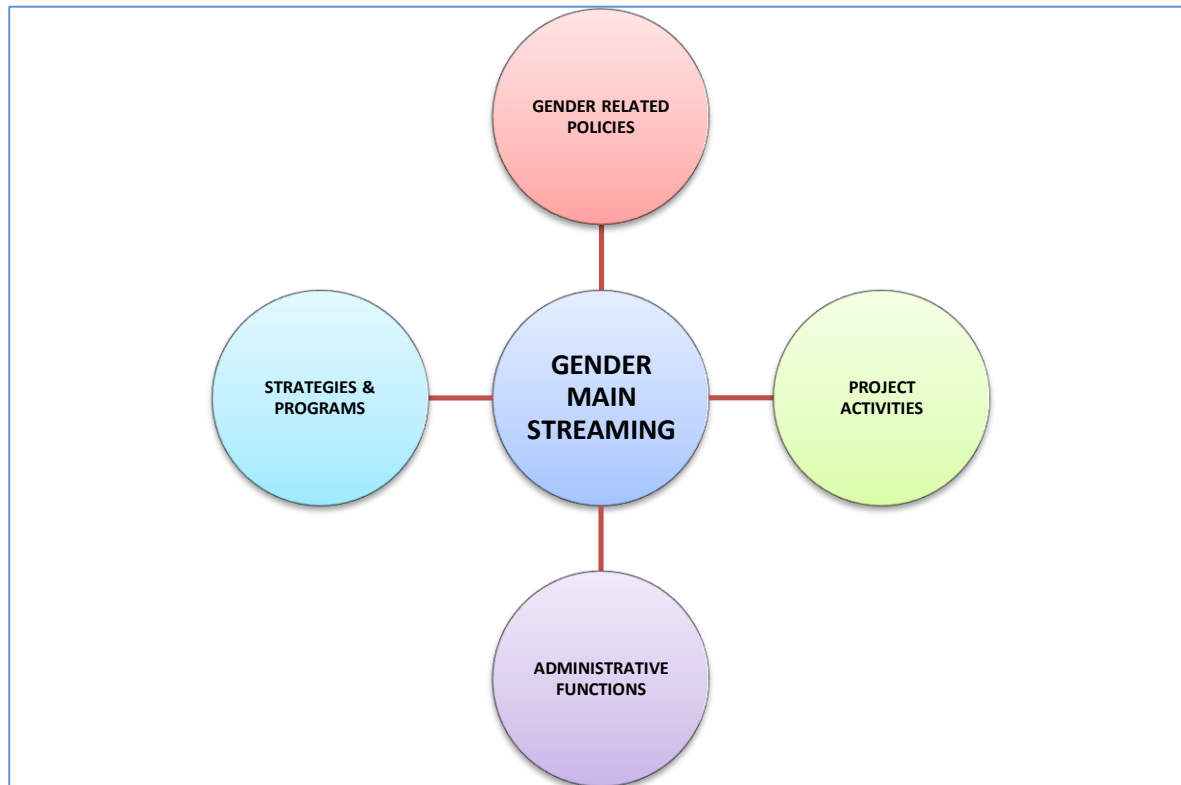
Gender perception in digital age – How digital age impacts Gender

New digital tools are empowering. Gender gap in science, technology , engineering and mathematics field grows with the age. Software development seems to be more dominated by the male genders rather than their female counter parts. The digital platforms offer men and women with various opportunities to browse more information and know more things which are deprived from the non-usage of the digital technologies.

Digital technologies have vast potential to improve many aspects of day to day work life all over the world. The use of ICT improves businesses by ensuring better communication and information. Differences in resources and ability to access to different digital technologies available all over the world , made way for the digital gender differences. Especially in emerging economies women have been deprived from usage of technological advancements happening worldwide. Because, some regions in the world consider women as a weaker sex in the society and hence not been exposed to different fields of study irrespective of religion, caste and creed; and digitization is far away from the reach of people living in remote places. There are some encouraging signs in this area of late, but the road is still very long. The career paths for boys and girls have started to diverge. They both have become more participative due to technological advancements happening and hopefully the gender gap reduces.

Gender Mainstreaming:

A tool kit for creating agents of change :**Gender Mainstreaming** is the process of incorporating a gender perspective into policies, strategies, programs, project activities, and administrative functions, as well as into the institutional culture of an organization.

GENDER RELATED POLICIES

STRATEGIES & PROGRAMS

GENDER MAIN STREAMING

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS

REPORT ANALYSIS - METHODOLOGY

A number of different methods, ranging from quizzes and group discussions were used to analyze the gender related issues. The main topics included gender concepts, exploring how gender is related to inclusion and exclusion and how to ensure a gender focus in both projects and programmes.

- Qualitative research
- Interviews with experts in the field of digitalization , youth and gender equality
- Focus group interviews with young people aged between – 15-18 yrs

Target group Profile:

- Aged between 15-18 yrs
- Must have active social media accounts and use them daily
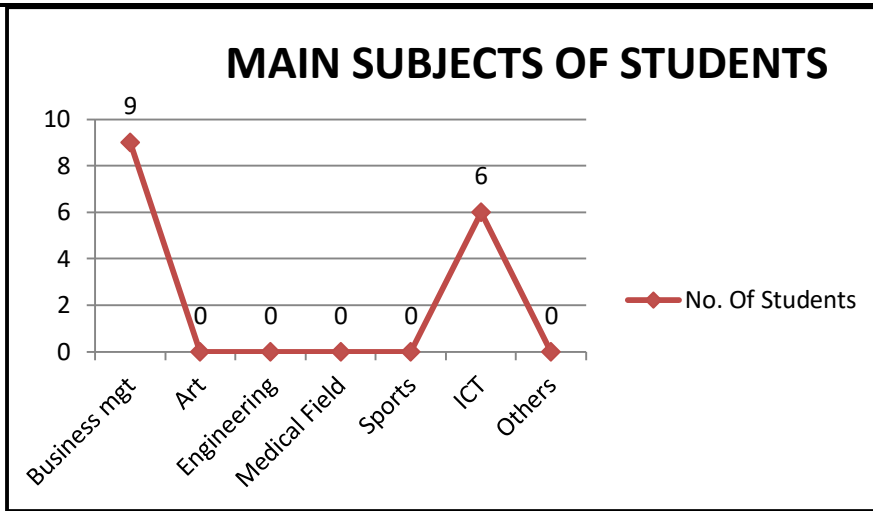- Maximum of 3 to 4 participants from the same school

The study is based on the opinion of kids from different backgrounds. Some of them come from the families of teachers, chartered accountants, engineers, health field, etc.
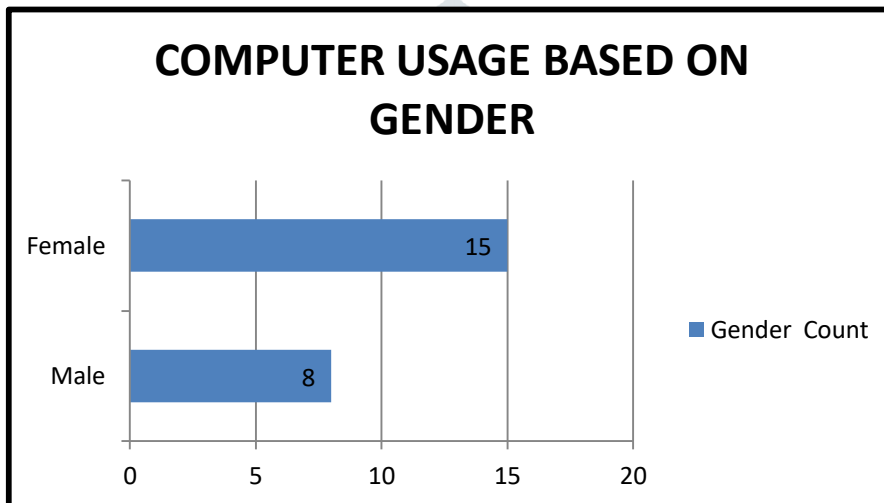
ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY:

The research is based on the age group of 15yrs and over kids who are in college studying their under graduation and graduation courses in the metropolitan cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The study reveals a lot of things and insights into what exactly the present generation perceives about the existing gender gaps at home as well as work and study places. Target group is 15 households and students have been taken into study for the research. It has been observed that most of the families are nuclear families and most of the parents are working. They have sufficient exposure towards the latest technologies available at their workplace as well as their homes. Most of the students are well equipped with the latest technologies present and having good number of accounts on the social media websites.

DATA INTERPRETATION:

For the research work opinions of students from various disciplines have taken into study. Majorly the respondents who were able to give their opinions were from mainly 2 streams: Business Management and ICT. As the report clearly shows the penetration of ICT in student life. The subjects of the students who have been taken for the sample study is as follows:
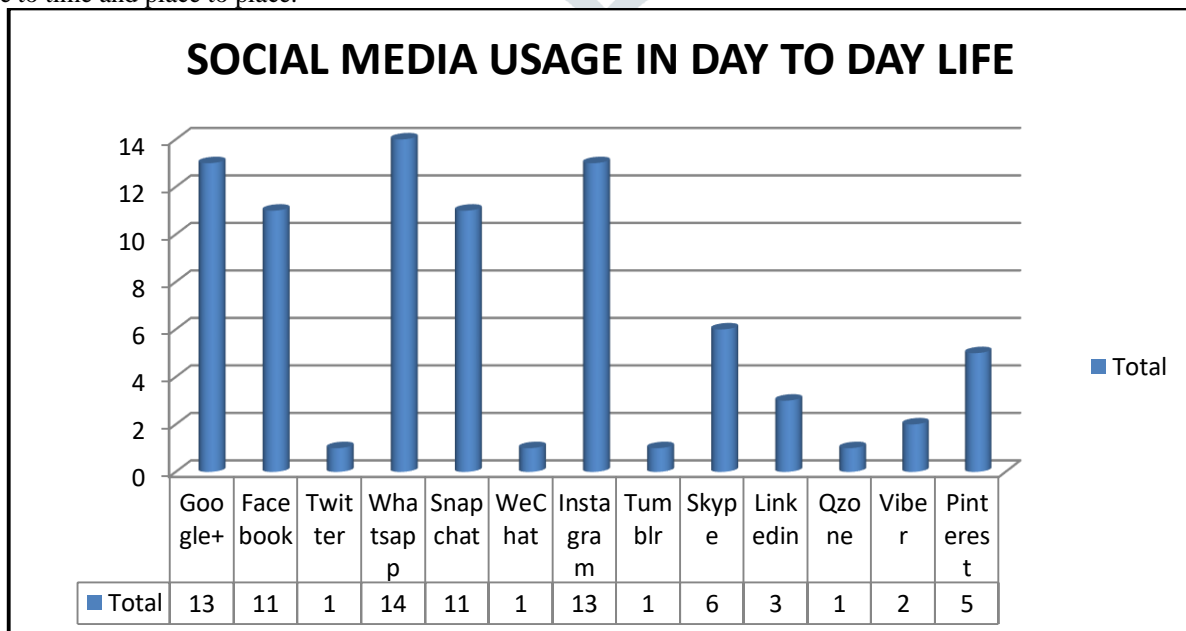
MAIN SUBJECTS OF STUDENTS

As such the research displays the effective usage of computers at home, school, work place. The usage of ICT and being digital is not based on gender at all. The ability of being aware of digital technologies is irrespective of the gender they are in. The below graph shows clearly the same:

COMPUTER USAGE BASED ON GENDER

The most populous social media websites which are preferred by the current generation is as follows:

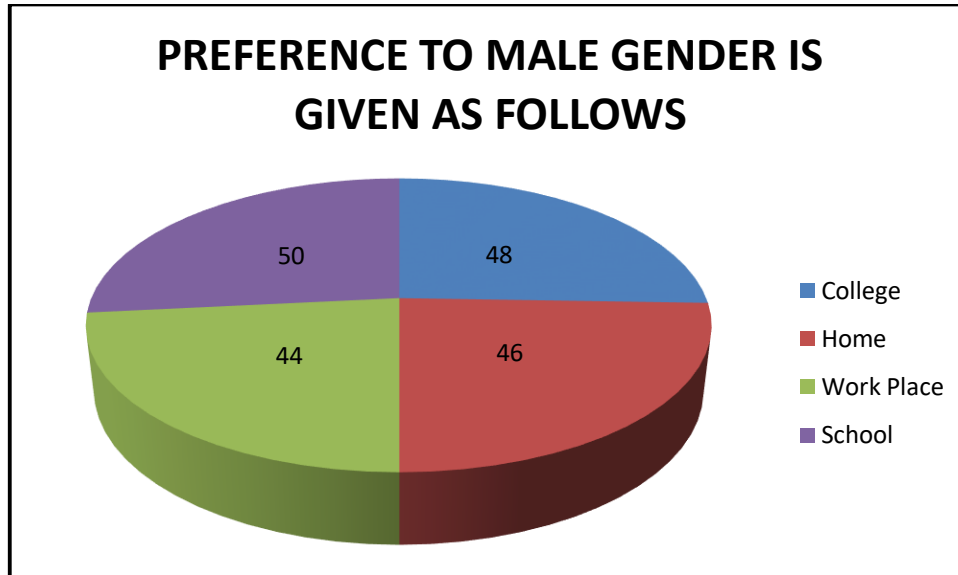1. Google+
2. Facebook
3. WhatsApp
4. Twitter
5. Snapchat

The below is the graphical representation of usage of social media in homes on day to day basis. It can be said that the social media has paved way even for a non user to spend time on the laptop or a personal computer and be connected with the world. Most of the social media accounts for spreading news, happenings in their city, in a way as a means of extending information from time to time and place to place.

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN DAY TO DAY LIFE

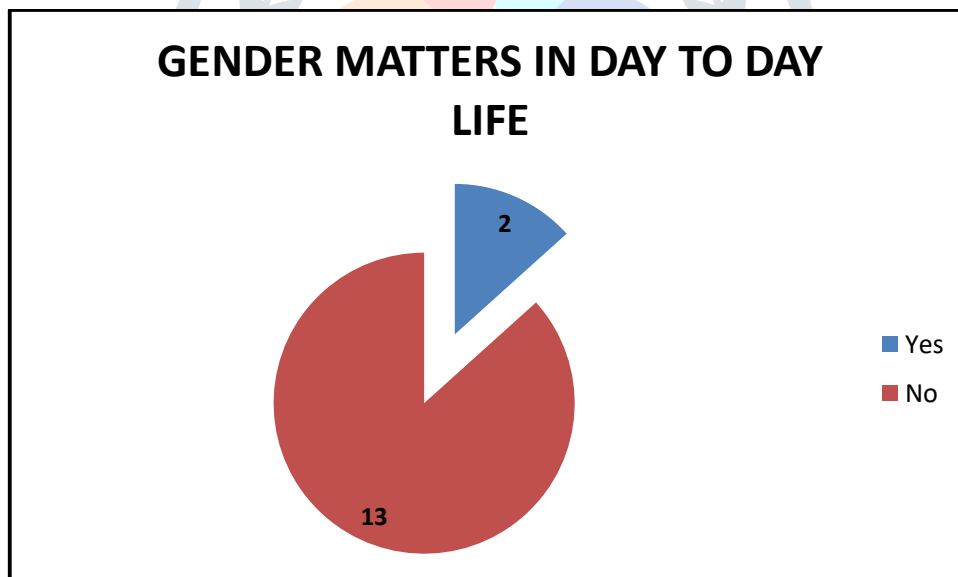|	Goo gle+	Face book	Twit ter	Wha tsap p	Snap chat	WeC hat	Insta gra m	Tum blr	Skyp e	Link edin	Qzo ne	Vibe r	Pint eres t
Total	13	11	1	14	11	1	13	1	6	3	1	2	5

Presently most of the homes are equipped with a computer and it is used on daily basis irrespective of the person's age, gender, qualification. We come to know through the study that the usually the MALE gender is given more preference in different spheres of life. It can be clearly seen in the below graph. Different areas of the study to know which gender is preferred mostly is as follows:

- School
- Work place
- Home
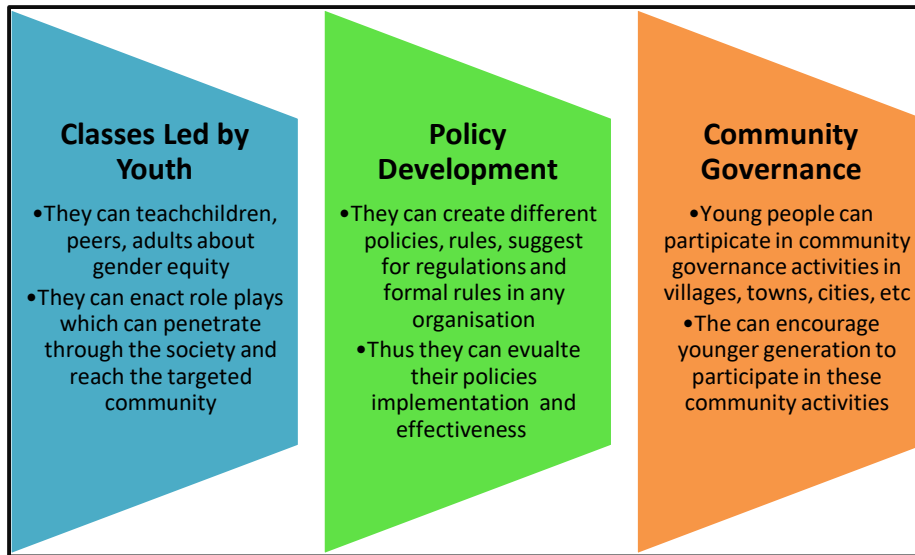- College

Of which it has been clearly depicted that male gender is given more preference to the female gender in different areas of life.

Overall we have come to know that Gender matters the most even today in our present lives. The opinions of the sample studied says, that though gender is not as important in day to day life but preference is given to Male gender rather than any other.

Different ways how youth can change the world through gender equity can be described as follows:

Classes Led by Youth
- They can teachchildren, peers, adults about gender equity
- They can enact role plays which can penetrate through the society and reach the targeted community

Policy Development
- They can create different policies, rules, suggest for regulations and formal rules in any organisation
- Thus they can evualte their policies implementation and effectiveness

Community Governance
- Young people can partipicate in community governance activities in villages, towns, cities, etc
- The can encourage younger generation to participate in these community activities

Role of Digital Media In Youth Identity

Adolescence is the age where the youth actually starts thinking about his or her whereabouts. They are continuously self searching their goals and roles in life. They keep on thinking about the roles they want to assume as they grow up, or how do others recognize them when they grow up. They are always in the learning process of acquiring knowledge and digital world is the key which shows them the way forward. Digital media technologies have made them the youth to enhance their own self expression and thus become themselves as role models for the younger generation and also to the people living with them in their home, streets, locality, town , etc.

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Growing up digital :
The struggle to differentiate- Technology can make it difficult to form an Identity. There are more versions of SELF than before. Hence the younger generation gets confused on this and think that both the personalities which they are displaying online and which they are really are, are both the same, but its not the same in reality.
Digiphrenia – is the experience of trying to exist in more than one personality. Having different accounts like in facebook, twitter, instagram, etc having all together different profiles in these social media sites stakes for more unstable online life. The focus on external image distracts the true identity.
Thus digital role modeling comes up.

Digital Role Modeling:

Parents must be good digital role models for their kids and youngsters. They are in a position to set up the right kinds of limits for their kids. The change in public attitude toward teen technology has improved during the recent times. For example playing internet based games make the kids get a feel that they are close to their friends who are also playing similar kind of games. It's like when you made a friend at camp and would never talk to person again — social media keeps these relationships going as a way for people far away to know you care about them. But even here nothing can replace face to face communication though.

CONCLUSIONS
It has been observed that presently every home is equipped with Digital knowledge and the means of acquiring it is through personal computer or a laptop or youth even use their college laptops and internet cafes to gather information and be updated with the latest technologies.
Irrespective of gender people are able to use the technologies which are present. Social media is a means of being in touch and connected with people, peers, friends, and also update themselves with the current prevalent technologies. Youth and Elderly, both of them are equally interested in learning new ways of being connected with the world.
Gender , still plays a major role in acquiring a position or status at home or work place. For most of the works being done usually the masculine gender is preferred than the feminine gender. Currently youth thinks that everyone should be capable of doing any kind of work irrespective of gender.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- Young people aged between 15 -18 yrs are well acquainted with the latest digital technologies and there is no stronger gender differences in usage and access of digital technology
- Parents can act as enablers or barriers to the development of their child's digital competencies and most of the students feel that gender discrimination does not play any role in having social media accounts instead it is used for the betterment of the child
- It is essential for both the genders to have equal opportunities to be admitted into schooling, colleges, work place and enjoying life at their own personal levels.
- The word " Gender' is used to discriminate one person from another, is the perception which is existing presently in the minds of the young generation.

OPPORTUNITIES OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES – KEY FINDINGS

Learning opportunities – Digital Technologies

- Provides quick access to knowledge and information – it's easy to get information from the internet rather than going to a library and searching for the book and writing down the notes of information
- It is quicker to ask GOOGLE than to ask someone – using google helps to get the broader picture of the world around
- Technology acts as support teachers - no need for anyone to attend a class to get information and including teachers prefer to use the digital advancements
- Enables group learning

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