

BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES AMONG ADOLESCENTS DUE TO THE USE OF MOBILE PHONES WITH INTERNET FACILITY

A CASE STUDY FROM THE STUDENTS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract : The student's behavioral changes are dependent on many factors like a family situation, societal acceptance, age, friends circle, the influence of social media, and the likes. This paper concentrated on exploring the student's perspective on the changes in behavior among adolescents due to the use of mobile phones with the internet. This is a pilot exploratory case study where the attempt is not to prove a hypothesis but gain in-depth knowledge on the issue from the student's perspective and to validate certain assumptions made by the researcher to formulate a testable hypothesis in the future. The response collected from 50, 10th standard female students of the Bangalore Urban region through a questionnaire was analyzed, and the assumptions where were found to be correct. The study found that through controlled and supervised use of mobile with internet facility the negative influence on the behavior of the children can be minimized. In the present scenario giving the children a phone with internet facility is unavoidable. The need of the hour is to give them better and proper self-control training and for parents to learn methods of monitoring their child's online activity.

Index Terms - Adolescents, Behavior modification, Mobile, Internet Facility, Student's Perspective, Social Media.

I. INTRODUCTION

ಮಗನ ಕೈಗೆ ಮಾಣಿಸ್ಕೆ ಕೊಟ್ಟಂತೆ is a Kannada proverb meaning - Giving precious stones in the hands of a monkey.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, children went to regular school, learned lessons, mingled with classmates, and got acquainted with their teachers, peers, and other students. They used to have a normal and age-appropriate exposure and recreation. When they came back from school, they had their recreation time, study time, and entertainment time. Entertainment would invariably be in from of watching TV. Commonly referred to as the 'Idiot box' by the elders because people spend a lot of time watching anything that is being broadcasted like serials, advertisements, and news which mainly highlights all the negative things that are happening locally, nationally, and internationally. But the good thing about television is that it was a family entertainment medium. Here the entire family sat together and watched the program, and the parents had control over what their children saw and for how long they saw TV. This acted as a control to the access children had to inappropriate content. This, in turn, helped the parents to regulate the changes in the behavior coming in their children due to exposure to inappropriate content.

Today due to the pandemic and the lockdown, schools are shut. The pandemic has deprived the children of their normal active childhood. There is no play, no emotional support from their peers, no sharing of their meals, talking about their small pleasures, confiding their feelings and anxiety and the joys and sorrows of everyday life with their friends. Such human interaction is required for the formation of healthy relationships, happy memories, and the overall development of the child. Today, because of the pandemic, everything has moved online, classes, studies, entertainment, recreation; everything is done online. This has, in turn, led to every child having access to the internet mostly through mobile phones, as mobile phones are cheaper than laptops and less space-consuming than computers. Even parents from low-income families have purchased mobile with internet facilities to facilitate a child's education. These phones can be carried around and viewed in private, and with the use of earphones, the children can maintain perfect secrecy over what they are viewing. Adolescent years are the age of curiosity and exploration. A commonly accepted theory is that children gain easy access to inappropriate content like pornography, violent videos, and other material meant for adults through the internet. Exposure to such materials corrupts the innocent minds of adolescent students and has the potential to change their thought processes, and that social media has a big influence on the behavior of the children and mostly in a bad. Giving children access to the internet is unavoidable under the current situation, at least till the time this pandemic is not brought under control. It is true that the internet has a lot of valuable information which can really assist the children in their learning process, But the main question is, are the children using the mobile and the internet for learning purposes only? Is this new access being misused by adolescents to satiate their curiosity on various topics? The problem is worsened by the fact that most parents are not tech-savvy, and hence they have no idea as to how to keep a tab on the internet use of the children. The big problem that most parents face is not knowing how to block or restrict access to inappropriate sites or keeping a tab on the online activities of their children. Assessing how honestly the child is using the phone and internet for the purpose of studies or they are misusing the mobile to watch unhealthy material from the net remains a big challenge. Befriending strangers on social networking sites, spending a lot of time endlessly and needlessly chatting with them is also an area of big concern. Uploading their photos and waiting for likes from friends and strangers is addictive in nature. Just like any other addiction, internet addiction has a deep impact on the tender mind of the child. While getting a lot of likes and favorable comments boosts the self-esteem of the children, not

getting them has a very bad impact on their self-worth. Children get trapped emotionally in attention-seeking behaviors. When they do not get the desired attention, there is a chance of developing a low self-image, which can lead to depression. They tend to become nasty with their comments on other's pictures just because they did not get good comments or likes on their own pictures. Making them aggressive, abusive, and irritable in their behavior. Comparing themselves with others and feeling bad about their physical appearance can make them feel low about themselves. Excessive use of the internet drains them of their physical and emotional energy and adversely affects their health. Wasting a lot of time on social media instead of studying, cheating parents by pretending to study in front of them, misusing parent's faith and ignorance of technology, wasting parent's money on online purchases plays havoc on their psyche also. They feel guilty for their actions but learn to ignore their feelings, thus losing the values they have learned in school and from their parents. Telling lies and cheating becomes normal for them.

I am a teacher and take care of children in a boarding school. Recently, a student requested to borrow my mobile to call her parents. I gave my phone and was busy with my work. The student who took my mobile didn't return it even after 2 hours. So I sent a word to the student demanding that my phone be immediately returned. I did not suspect any foul play as the phone was taken by a young female student. My colleague asked me to check the browsing history; to my surprise, it was cleared. Later I received a notification in my mail from Snapchat. While checking my mail, I found that a Snapchat id was created without my knowledge. This made me think if these adolescents can cheat their teacher, how much more will they be cheating their parents and misusing the mobile for purposes other than for study? So I wanted to study the impact of mobile in the behavior modification of adolescents and get the student's perspective on it.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Seong-Soo Cha, Bo-Kyung Seo (2018), Found that as adolescents do not have a well-developed concept of self-control, they were more likely to get addicted to smartphones when compared with adults. Further, they found that adolescents who had working parents were more at risk of developing smartphone addiction because they had lesser parental control over them after school and had more time to use smartphones without any rules and guidance.

Parents are too busy: Today's world is revolutionized by technology. There is a need for acquiring more and more and yet are not satisfied. Couples are so conscious of not having more than one child, contrary to the olden system in India, which considered children a blessing and didn't mind having half a dozen kids irrespective of the gender, and there was so much bonding among the siblings even after they were married, there was humanity in people.

Dopamine for children who have not yet developed self-control: But today, most couples want just one child, and they think they can provide the best of education and everything. So both parents work night and day due to shift system, leaving the lone child in the house after the school hours the child being given best of the things parents think the child is happy, but a child has no opportunity to grow emotionally, mentally as there are no human beings to impart human values like love, care, belonging, as both parents are busy in their work and the rat race continues. The parents can provide anything a child requires that money could bring, except their time and emotional support. When Should Kids Get Smartphones? (Survey) Family Safety (2019) says that the children who have not developed self-control, it's difficult for them to know when to stop using the mobile or by how many hours they should stop seeing the mobile. The child is just trying to ward off loneliness, so it depends on the mobile with the internet either playing games or just surfing. The study found that 61% of boys owned one of these devices gaming devices as compared to just under half (49%) of all girls.

Parent's helplessness and employers' creativity: Since parents are busy with their work, when they return home, they are exhausted, and they can hardly monitor their online activities. So whom to blame? Here neither the child nor the parents can be blamed. It is how things are these days. So how to solve this problem? Could the learned take time to educate the parents through various platforms, like drama, movies, debates, talks, etc.? Even at work, parents make it their priority to make time for their children.

Employer's ignorance needs for awareness: Company owners should be educated too. Today some companies have realized, the welfare of their employees is essential for production. So if some companies take the lead and arrange programs in such a way according to the needs of each employee, it would spread like wildfire, and other companies would take their example. So there would be a great change in every family, and each family would be able to give that emotional support to their children; those children would grow into mature people, which would benefit not only the individual but also the company, the nation, and the entire world. There would be fewer criminal activities, and everyone can live in peace, harmony, and happiness, which is the purpose of every individual. Would it be the Ramrajya or kingdom of God, which everyone believes where there is a true joy, harmony, a brotherhood?

Children need to be taught focus: When parents are aware of the dangers of screen time, they need to teach their child how to control the mind. Mind control is only self-control. Parents need to know the ways to help their child control the mind. It could be watching its breathing, regulating the breath, or any other methods that are available to train the mind. Once the mind is controlled, everything else is controlled.

Problems of overuse of mobile: Sahu, Maya, Manoj Kumar et al (2019) The review finds that excessive use of mobile phones resulted in feeling insecure; staying up late at night; impaired not only parent-child relationships but school relationships were also affected. It led to psychological problems such and behavioral addiction like compulsive buying and pathological lying.

2.1 Research gap :

Today's world is revolutionized by technology which has its benefits as well as a negative impact, as many studies have shown. Many aspects related to the use of the internet and its impact on the users have been studied from various angles by various researchers. While most of these studies are from the point of view of the adults, there is very little evidence that the student's perspective on the use of the internet and its impact on their behavior has been considered. There is even lesser evidence of research being done focusing on variables like the importance of teaching self-control measures and the role of monitoring and value systems. There seem to be very few studies that have looked at intervention measures. Hence this case study attempts to explore the variables that can be of relevance in formulating a testable hypothesis to further study this issue from the student's perspective.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Need and Importance of the Study:

While there are many studies that have stated that the use of mobile and uncontrolled access to internet negatively affects adolescents; There are very few studies that have looked at this problem from the student's perspective. The number of researches done that evaluate the maturity of the children to handle social media the level of self-control that children have during the adolescent stage is even lesser. There is also a need to understand what adolescents think about the effect the exposure to social media is having on their personality.

This case study completely focused on understanding the perspective of adolescents on this issue. The case study also tried to find out if the adolescents consider the use of the internet to be a problem or an issue to be worried about.

3.2. Objectives of the Study:

3.2.1 To collect information from the adolescents on the nature and purpose of their use of the internet.

3.2.2 To find out if the students are being honest about their use of the internet use.

3.2.2 To find out if the adolescents realize that there is a change in their behavior that is influenced by social media.

3.2.3 To find out what is the point of view of the adolescents on the perceived behavioral changes that have or may occur due to the influence of social media.

3.2.4 To find out if there is an impact upon the learned value system of the adolescents due to the use of mobile with internet facility.

3.3 Scope of the Study:

The case study is limited to the female student of the participating schools who were attending online classes and had access to mobile phones with internet facility in the Bangalore Urban region. This case study is limited to finding out the student's perspective on the issue.

3.4 Research Questions :

3.4.1 What is the nature and purpose for which the adolescents are using their mobile with internet facility? Is it for educational purposes only, or do they use the mobile with internet facility to access social media, chat with friends and befriend strangers?

3.4.2 Is their internet usage controlled and supervised?

3.4.3 Are the children ok with the control and supervision over their internet usage?

3.4.4 Are the children truthful to their teachers and parents about their use of the mobile phone with internet facility?

3.4.5 Has the use of the mobile phone with internet facility after the behavior of the children?

3.4.6 How much time do they spend on social media?

3.4.7 Are there any changes in their value system, the concept of self, thinking, and behavior due to the use of mobile phones with internet facilities.?

3.5 Research Methodology:

3.5.1 **Type of Research:** Exploratory Case Study.

3.5.2 **Type of Data:** Both primary and secondary data is collected and used for this study.

Primary Data: The data was collected through a Questionnaire from the students. Feedback was also taken through informal discussions with the class teachers and a couple of parents who happen to be at the school during the researcher's visit.

Secondary Data: The data from published and unpublished materials were also collected for reference.

3.5.3 **Sampling Design:**

Due to the pandemic and the travel restriction that were in place due to the lockdown, ten schools that were easy to be accessed by the researcher and who had female students studying in their tenth standard were approached. Out of these ten schools, six agreed to participate in the research. While convenience sampling was used to select the participating schools, a simple random sampling technique was used to hand out the questionnaires to the students.

The researcher decided to base this case study exclusively on the responses received from the female students because it is generally assumed that the females are more likely, to be honest in their responses and behavior in general. It was also assumed that females are more likely to have a better-developed self-controlled mechanism.

Only tenth-standard students were chosen for the case study because it was assumed that due to the upcoming board exams, children will naturally be tending towards studies rather than internet-based distractions and moreover will be under the direct and more vigilant supervision of the parents. Besides, only the tenth standard students were allowed to come to school for classes occasionally.

3.6 Research Tool.

A structured questionnaire with 21 questions was created by the researcher to collect the required information; the questioner had six questions that collected demographic information. There were five closed-ended yes / no questions; and seven questions that used a five-point Likert scale to record the responses from the children. There were three open-ended questions to understand the student's perspective on the ways they felt the use of the internet could influence their personality and behavior, and what could be some of the intervention measures that could be put in place to regulate their internet use.

3.7 Data Collection:

Around one hundred questionnaires were printed and circulated among the tenth standard female children. The students were asked to email or WhatsApp the filled-in questionnaire to the email id and phone number mentioned in the questionnaire. Around 78 filled-in questionnaires were received, 20 through email, 24 through WhatsApp, and 34 through their respective class teachers. During the scrutiny of the filled-in questionnaire, it was found that most of the questionnaires received from the schools were incomplete. After proper scrutiny and data cleansing, 50 valid questionnaires were finally selected for analysis in this case study.

3.8 Ethical considerations :

Written content for participation was taken from the principles of the collaborating schools. The class teachers were contacted to get access to the children. The nature, purpose, and scope of the study were explained in detail to the class teacher so that they could inform the parents of the participating children accordingly. Printed copies of the questionnaires were circulated among the students through the class teacher. A disclaimer for the children and a consent letter from the parents for the participation of the children was attached to the questionnaire. The disclaimer clearly stated that the participation of the children was absolutely voluntary. Any information shared by them will solely be used for the purpose of this case study, and that the provided information would not be shared with anyone, including the school or their family. The researcher's email ID and mobile number were shared in the questionnaire so that the children could call to clarify any doubts that arise while answering the questionnaire.

IV. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

- As this is just a pilot case study, the sample size is very small.
- As the sample is small, the findings can not be generalized to a larger population.
- The sample consists of only female students, and the case study is based on a lot of assumptions; hence the scope of generalization is limited.
- Due to the pandemic and the restriction on travel due to the lockdown, only six schools of Bangalore urban that were easily accessible were selected for the study. Due to the pandemic and the lockdown situation, conducting personal interviews was not possible.
- Most of the interactions and information transfer happened online. This may have impacted the quality of the qualitative data collected. Due to the pandemic and lockdown situation, the scope of active physical follow-up was limited; this resulted in a lesser number of responses and valid questionnaires for the final study.
- Though the participants were informed that they could email or what's an app the questionnaire to the researcher directly, most of the responses were received from the school through the class teachers. This may have compromised the authenticity with which children may have responded to the questionnaire.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS :

5.1 Descriptive analysis .

5.1.1. Demographic profile: 58% (29) of the respondents are 16 years of age, 26% (13) are 15 years old, 12% (6) of the respondents are 17 years old, and there is one respondent each in the 13, and 14 age group. 90% (45) of the respondents lived with their parents, and one 8% (4) of the respondents lived with their relatives, or a local guardian. 84% (42) of the respondents did not have their own personal mobiles, and a majority of them used their mother's mobile to attend classes. This is understandable as the data revealed 84% (42) of them had stay-at-home mothers, and their fathers went out for work. Only 16% (8) of the respondents had their own mobile with internet access. When asked if their parents monitored their mobile usage, 84% (42) of the respondents replied yes, and out of this, 79% said that their mobile and online activities are monitored and regulated by their mothers. Only 16% (8) of the respondents replied saying "No" that their mobile usage and online activities are not monitored. 78% (38) of the respondents did not have their own bed or study room and were sharing their space with either a sibling or their parents; only 11% (22) of the respondents had their own rooms.

5.1.2. Nature of use of the mobile phone with Internet facility: When asked how much time they spent on the mobile with internet facility? 30% (15) of the respondents admitted that they spend anywhere in between 7 to 9 hours in their mobiles 24% (12) said between 6-4 hours, 20% (10) of the respondents admitted to spending 10-12 hours with their mobiles; 18% (9) said they spent only 2-3 hours on the mobile and 8% (4) of the respondents said that they spend only up to an hour on the mobile. It was found that the respondents were very careful in their answers, and in most of the questionnaires received from the class teacher's this column was left blank hence they were not considered for the case study.

5.1.3 Analysis on the effect on behaviour : 82% (41) of the respondents said that they have a social media account; most of them claim to be passive users of their social media account.

Table 1 : Analysis of Behaviour

Table 1 . While you are studying, are you tempted to use social media?				
Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
2	3	20	8	17

From table 1, we can see that a majority, 40% (20), of the students get tempted to use social media while studying, while 37% (17) of them claim to be focused on their studies.

Table 2 : Analysis of Behaviour

Table 2. If yes, how many times during the class do they check?				
Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
14	20	4	2	10

From table 2, we can see that a majority, 68% (34), of the students give in to their temptation to check their Mobil/social media during the class, whereas only 24% (12) have decent self-control over their temptations and do not get distracted

Table 3 : Analysis of Behaviour

Table 3. Do you get angry when your online activity is monitored?				
Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	6	15	16	12

From table 3, we can see that children are mostly accepting the fact that their activities will be monitored and are not angry about it; only 44% (22) admit to getting angry about this issue

Table 4 : Analysis of Behaviour

Table 4 . Have you faced harassment or bullying on social media?				
Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
0	2	4	7	37

From table 4, we can see that only 12% (6) of the students have said that they have faced some sort of online bullying or harassment. This could be due to the fact that they claim that they have only their known friends and family on their social networking sites.

Table 5 : Analysis of Behaviour

Table 5. Is there a change in your sleeping pattern / and timing due to mobile usage at night?				
Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
0	4	6	8	32

Table 5 shows that a majority, 80% of the students, claim that there is no disruption of sleep due to late-night online activity. This could be because most of the students do not have their own phone and share their rooms with their siblings or parent .

Table 6 : Analysis of Behaviour

Table 6. How do you feel reading the comments on your online posts?				
Very Happy	Happy	Somewhat Happy	Unhappy	Dejected
5	24	4	3	14

Table 6 show that all the students were emotionally affected by the comments received on their social media posts. While 34% (17) of the students were negatively impacted and felt unhappy and dejected, the others were happy about the comments and likes they got online.

Table 7 : Analysis of Behaviour

Table 7. Have you befriended strangers through social media?				
Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	0	4	4	41

Table 7 shows that 90 % (45) of the students refrained from risky attention-seeking behavior like befriending strangers through social media platforms. This could be due to the fact that their parent and siblings were also their social media.

When asked about when they went to sleep, 51 % (26) of the respondents said that they went to bed by 10 pm,25% (11) said they went to bed by 11p 19% (7) of them went to bed by 9 pm, and only 2%(1) admitted to staying up till 1 am and claimed that it was because of studies and not because internet surfing

5.1.4. Students Perspective on the usage of mobile with internet facility

To the question do you think excessive internet usage can influence the thinking and behaviour of adolescents 59% (29) of the respondents said yes, whereas only 41% (21) of the respondents said no.

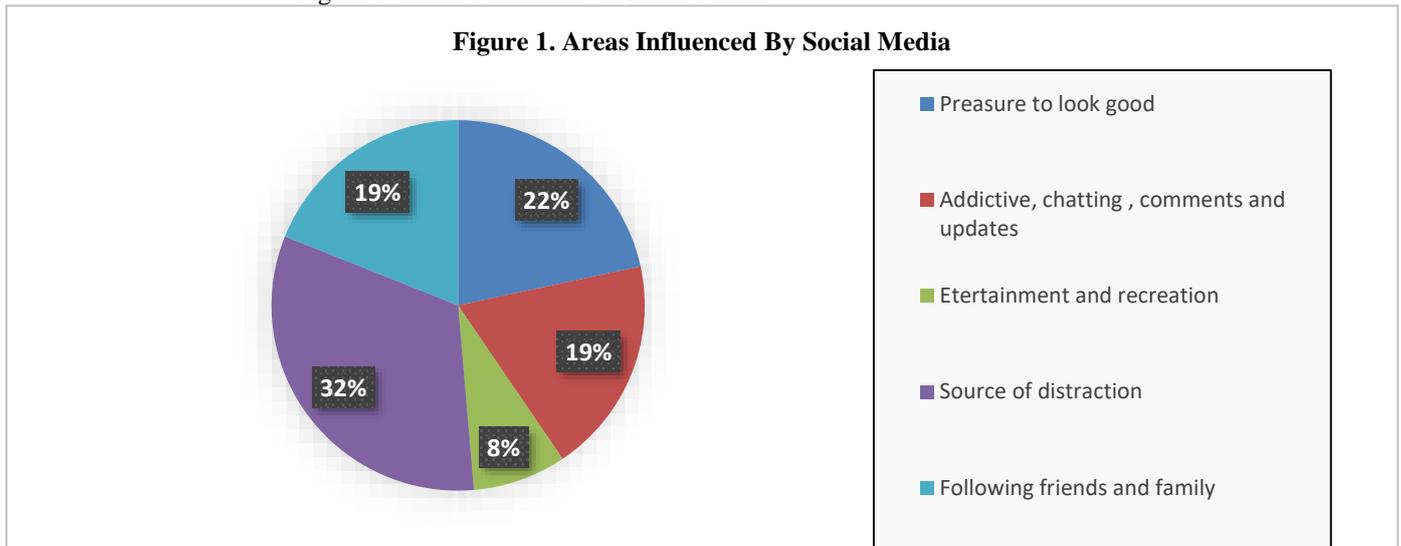
To the question Do you think your behaviour has changed due to internet usage 84% (42) said nowhere as 16% (8) children admitted that internet usage had influenced certain behaviour changes in them.

To the question, are you honest about your internet usage with your parents, 78% (38) students said yes there as 22% (11) students said no.

To the question, do you think your parent approves of your internet usage 58% (29) said yes and 42 % (21) no?

The response to the question how has internet usage influenced you are shown in the pie chart below. From Figure 1. We can see that 32% admitted that social media has made them more distracted, 22% said they get influences by the posts of their family and friends, 19% felt that the usage was addictive in nature, and they felt pressurized to look good whereas 8% Said that they were only entertained by it.

Figure 1. Area of influence of Social Media



5.2 Findings

Even though we may say that excessive mobile usage and internet exposure could have a negative effect on the children, the respondents in this case study feel that controlled use of mobile is not an issue and should be allowed as that is one of the main ways to keep in touch with friends and share their feelings and thoughts with others. This is collaborated by the data given above. As most of the respondents did not have their own mobiles and had to use their parent's mobile, who kept an eye on their online activity, children automatically exercised restraint and control over their internet surfing and social media usage. The fact that most of the students did not have their own room or sufficient amount of privacy also forced them to act responsibly. While a majority of the students admitted that they spent around seven to nine hours on the phone, all of them said that they primarily used the phone and the internet for academic purposes only and felt that the time they spent on social media or social media is not too much and it's not a big deal either has their studies are not getting affected. but when asked if they were honest about their internet usage majority of them said no. This shows that they are willing to compromise on their value system for internet access. While most of the respondents said that they do not misuse the phone, many admitted to deleting their browsing history before returning the phone. Majority of the respondents did not object to their parents keeping a tab on their online activity and also admitted that their parents are not tech-savvy and so they do not know how to keep a tab. Most respondents did not feel that there has been a significant change in their behaviour due to the use of the mobile with internet facility. They admit to using social media platforms to be connected with their friends and family and share their thoughts and feeling with their friends and family, follow their idols and be inspired, know the latest beauty and fashion trends, hardly any of the respondents have claimed to have face bullying or harassment on their social media accounts.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study has shown that due to the current scenario and with the changing lifestyle keeping the children away from gadgets with internet access is not a practical solution. A life that is, for the most part, lived and reported online in the form of updating status, putting up posts, changing profile pictures, and creating content to share online and get likes, comments, and views is the new normal. From the point of view of the children, they are being as responsible as possible in their use of the internet and conscious of their online social media activity. While the kids have said that there is no change in their behaviour and thinking process from the data, it can be seen that their social media activities have influenced their mood and feeling. While children do not like the control or supervision of their parents on their online activities, they admitted that they do not access certain sites because they fear the repercussions from their parents if they found out. Hence parental control and supervision acts as a great deterrent from unaccepted activity on the internet and forces them to act with self-restraint and caution. This is a good thing as accepted by most of them; From the data collected, it can be inferred that with controlled and well-supervised exposure to the internet; the negative effect of the influence of social media can be minimized, and the need of the hour is for parents to learn ways in which they can block and track the internet activity of their children.

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