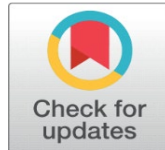


EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF NEW MEDIA EXPOSURE ON YOUTH FOR SOCIETAL AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS: A STUDY IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Technology is advancing rapidly, and youth are increasingly exposed to new media and their diverse applications. This exposure varies by individual, but overall, young people—especially in rural areas—are becoming more adept at engaging with electronic media. As digital content proliferates, it becomes essential to understand how rural youth interact with new media and how this interaction influences societal and sustainable development. This study aims to explore the extent and nature of new media exposure among youth in rural villages of Tiruchirappalli district. The study focuses on a qualitative approach to provide a comprehensive analysis. The findings will contribute to understanding the role of youth in leveraging technology for positive societal impact and rural sustainability.

Keywords: Technology, Youth, New Media, Societal, Sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology has significantly influenced youth, including those in rural areas, through widespread access to new media. This exposure shapes their behavior, communication, and role in community development. Understanding how rural youth engage with these technologies is vital to assessing their potential contribution to societal progress and sustainable development in regions like Tiruchirappalli District.

Despite increasing access to new media among rural youth, little is known about how this exposure influences their role in societal and sustainable

development. The lack of focused research on rural area like Thirupattur limits our understanding of technology's potential to empower youth and drive positive community transformation.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To examine the influence of electronic gadgets on the behavior and daily lives of youth in rural areas.
- 2) To analyze the impact of new media exposure on youth participation in societal development.
- 3) To assess how new media content contributes to societal and sustainable development in villages of Tiruchirappalli District.

2.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the relationship between exposure to electronic gadgets and the behavior of rural youth?
- 2) How do new media influence on youth participation in societal development.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1) Digital Platforms and Informal Learning

Jenkins (2009) emphasized the potential of digital platforms to promote informal and self-directed learning, particularly among youth. Mishra and Sarkar (2014) further noted that Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms have expanded access to educational and infotainment content, allowing learners the flexibility to engage with material at their own pace. Similarly, Sharma (2017) pointed out that OTT platforms offer personalized learning formats such as video lectures, documentaries, and tutorials, making them an alternative to traditional classroom settings.

Iyer and Menon (2020) asserted that the flexibility of digital media supports lifelong learning by enabling youth to choose what, when, and how they learn. Kapoor (2022) reinforced this idea by stating that the integration of infotainment and education on OTT platforms increases youth engagement and enhances knowledge development.

2) Social Media, Connectivity, and Emotional Well-being

Lenhart et al. (2011) found that 65% of internet users made new friends through social media, highlighting its role in expanding social networks and offering emotional support. Hampton et al. (2012) emphasized that digital platforms help maintain strong emotional bonds through regular communication, especially with distant family members.

Shapiro and Margolin (2014) noted that technology used for social interaction, such as texting and video chatting, contributes to emotional support and reduces loneliness. Tufekci (2014) discussed how social media strengthens weak ties and mobilizes collective action, particularly within student activism.

Anderson and Vogels (2021) emphasized the need to foster responsible media consumption and media literacy among youth to manage screen time and promote well-being.

3) Media Consumption Trends and Behavioral Shifts

Kumar (2015) observed that globalization and digitalization have dramatically transformed audience behavior, reducing reliance on traditional media. Bansal (2018) identified a significant shift in India's television landscape due to the rise of online video platforms, altering consumer habits and content accessibility.

Sharma and Joshi (2020) found that OTT platforms are now the primary entertainment source for youth, overtaking traditional Pay TV. Singh (2021) emphasized the on-demand, affordable, and convenient nature of OTT services as key reasons for their popularity among young users.

4) Personalized Content and Viewer Engagement

Kapoor and Bhattacharya (2018) highlighted the impact of personalization features, such as recommendation algorithms, in enhancing user satisfaction. Gupta and Arora (2020) noted that influencer marketing combined with socially impactful messaging boosts user engagement on digital platforms.

Singh and Mehta (2022) emphasized that personalized content delivery, coupled with social responsibility and influencer strategies, drives OTT adoption among youth and urban users.

5) Educational and Cognitive Benefits

Rideout and Robb (2019) argued that exposure to creative and educational content enhances critical thinking and social connections. They also noted that constant connectivity via smartphones has made digital interaction a routine part of youth life.

Anderson and Jiang (2018) linked increased media use to the availability of digital devices and interactive content that now forms a core part of youth lifestyles.

Twenge et al. (2017), Twenge et al. (2020) raised concerns over increased screen time, linking it to potential cognitive and psychological issues, including technology addiction, sleep disruption, and exposure to misinformation. These findings underscore the dual nature of digital media—beneficial when used purposefully, but potentially harmful when unregulated.

6) Online Communities and Societal development

Bury (2010) examined how fan communities built around serialized digital content promote emotional investment and critical discourse. Boulianne (2015) argued that online platforms are valuable for civic engagement, trust-building, and collective action, particularly among marginalized groups. These communities often provide a platform for voice and belonging in broader social movements.

Tufekci (2014) also noted that social platforms play a crucial role in mobilizing protest movements, demonstrating their impact beyond entertainment.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study will be conducted in the rural villages of Tiruchirappalli district. A **qualitative study** will be employed to comprehensively explore the research objectives. For the **qualitative component**, observation and in-depth interviews was utilized to gain deeper insights into the attitudes, behaviors, and perspectives of the rural youth and other stakeholders. A sample of youth 20 to 27 years of age were analyzed from selective rural areas of Tiruchirappalli district.

The data collected from the study was systematically analyzed to ensure a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study. The integration of data aimed to enhance the reliability and depth of the research findings.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from the study was analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to identify the behaviour relevant to the research objectives. To enhance the depth and validity of the findings, the results from the qualitative study—including observations and in-depth interviews—was systematically analyzed through thematic analysis. The integration of data has provided a comprehensive understanding of the research problem and support the findings.

The findings from the observation had found that the majority of the rural youth in Tiruchirappalli district used new media platform for entertainment. The study has also found that more than 50% of youth population in rural villages in Tiruchirappalli district have used new media for watching movies of societal content. They related the story with their lifestyle and becomes highly emotional while watching the scenes related to their childhood stories and share their empathy emotion while watching such emotional scenes.

The findings from the in-depth interview had concluded that the youth of age 22 to 25 are highly emotional towards viewing certain societal issue -based movies in Tamil. Nearly half the population in the findings have also stated that the films related to positive development of the characters in the storyline have motivated them for their personal development such as pursuing of education, seeking job opportunities in other regions, following disciplined lifestyle. The study has concluded that the storyline plays a vital role in the impact of youth. The availability of OTP platforms had given them the exposure to web series. But majority of the youth prefer to view films than any other media content.

6. CONCLUSION

This study is significant in understanding the extent of exposure to new media gadgets among rural youth in villages located in the Tiruchirappalli district of Tamil Nadu. By exploring how youth engage with media content, the research has found their behavioral responses and level of comprehension regarding digital media.

Furthermore, the study aimed to evaluate the impact of media content on societal and sustainable development within the village. The findings have concluded by providing valuable insights into the role of media in shaping youth perspectives, participation in community development, and the potential for leveraging digital tools for positive rural transformation.

This study can inform policymakers, educators, and media practitioners on how to better align media initiatives with the developmental needs of rural communities.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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