

Adolescent identity formation and internet usage

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Received: 26.01.2015; Revised: 06.04.2015; Accepted: 21.04.2015

■ **ABSTRACT** : Globalization has brought sweeping changes in socio-economic-cultural realms in our society. One of the ways in which human beings are influenced by globalization is through technology, of which the internet has a wider reach than any other medium. The phenomenon of the internet has created 'virtual spaces' in which adolescents spend increasing amounts of time. This study on adolescent identity formation and internet usage was conducted on a random sample of 120 (60 respondents were boys and 60 were girls) adolescent from different technical institutes of Kanpur city. It was found that 90.83 per cent respondents use computer at home and maximum respondents were interested in facebook on internet, whereas, 78.33 per cent respondents give their opinion that internet give latest information, current affairs, latest update etc. and 71.66 per cent respondents give their opinion that internet increase their knowledge. The finding shows that 75.83 per cent respondents think that cyber and pornography increase higher rate of sexual aggression and greater risk of teenage pregnancy, 70 per cent respondents think that internet play an important role in their physical development, while 67.5 per cent of respondents stated that internet has a important in their identity formation, whereas, 66.66 per cent respondents think that internet create a platform of cyber bullying as well as 65 per cent of respondents satisfied with the present resources and opportunities.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Adolescent, Identity formation, Internet

■ **HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER** : Garg, Mukta and Yadav, Preeti (2015). Adolescent identity formation and internet usage. *Asian J. Home Sci.*, 10 (1) : 129-132.

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Adolescence has traditionally been considered a more difficult developmental period both for children and their parents. Adolescence, particularly the early adolescence, is above all a period of change - not only physical, sexual, psychological and cognitive changes in the adolescent but also changes in the social demands made by parents, peer, teachers and society itself. It is also period of great "storm and stress" as well as immense physical, mental and emotional potential. According to Erik Erikson's identity is the essential characteristic of adolescence. During this period

individual must establish a sense of personal identity and avoid the dangers of role diffusion and identity confusion.

Using the internet to communicate is a popular activity among adolescents. Instant messaging- teenagers preferred means of online interaction- seems to support friendship closeness. Adolescent use the internet to meet new people, largely through chat rooms, blogs and message boards (Lenhart *et al.*, 2005). As they strive for autonomy and identity, teenagers are drawn to establishing relationship in cyber space, which open up a vast array of possibilities beyond their familiar, schools

and communities. Through their online ties, young people explore central adolescent issues- sexuality, challenges in parent and peer relationships and attitude and values- in contexts that grant anonymity and thus, may feel less threatening than similar conversation in the real world (Subrahmanyam *et al.*, 2004; Subrahmanyam *et al.*, 2006).

The internet as a source of health information in order to gain the necessary information of both sexual and general health issues that they would probably not have access to in their own local environment (Cassell *et al.*, 2006).

But online communication also poses dangers. In unmonitored chat rooms, teenagers are likely to encounter degrading racial and ethnic slurs and sexually obscene and harassing remark (Subrahmanyam *et al.*, 2006; Tynesa *et al.*, 2004).

■ RESEARCH METHODS

Objective:

To assess the use internet on adolescents' physical identity formation.

Sample :

The sample size was 120 students (17- 22 years) comprising 60 boys and 60 girls from technical institutes of Kanpur were selected randomly.

Tools :

A self prepared interview schedule was used as the technique for data collection.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A close perusal of Table 1 clearly shows that significant different exists in the dimension of how long you have been using internet across gender.

The above table shows that the mean value of boys was 4.93 and girls was 4.33 with Z value -11.114** which was significant at 1 per cent level of significant. The result illustrate that there was significant different between boys and girls on for how long have been using internet the mean score of boys and girls are compared it reveals that boys are more experienced in using internet than girls. Similar findings were revealed by Shashaani (1997) that women are less interested in computers than men and display less confidence and men have been shown to have considerably more experience.

It is clear from above table that more boys (80 %) than girls (70 %) were interested in face book on internet studies supported with findings of Sheldon (2008), Valkenburg and Peter (2008), total 43.33 per cent adolescents use internet for study purpose.

The picture under the chatting dimensions reveals that nearly equal proportion of girls and boys (58.33 and 60 %) were using internet for chatting same in

Table 1 : Average value and comparison among the respondents according to time spend on internet usage across gender

Sr. No.	Statistical tools used	For how long you have been using internet?		How many hours in a day do you use internet?		How many hours in a week do you use internet?		Where do you use internet mostly?	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1.	Mean	4.93	4.33	2.36	2.45	2.53	2.45	1.9	1.83
2.	Standard deviation	1.6329	1.321	1.088	0.946	0.891	0.964	1.217	1.181
3.	Z test	-11.114**		-0.1530		0.491		0.3199	

Note: **indicates significant of values at P = 0.01, respectively

Table 2 : Frequency distribution among respondents according to the favourite online activities across gender

Sr. No.	Activity	Boys (n ₁ =60)		Girls (n ₂ =60)		Total (n=120)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
1.	Chatting	35	58.33	36	60.00	71	59.16
2.	Mail	23	38.33	16	26.66	39	32.5
3.	Downloading (songs/ movie/ games etc.)	28	46.66	27	45.00	55	45.83
4.	Online movie	07	11.66	03	05.00	10	8.33
5.	Facebook	48	80.00	42	70.00	90	75.00
6.	Surfing	07	11.60	04	06.66	11	9.16
7.	Online games	18	30.00	08	13.33	26	21.66
8.	Searching (study/ project/ assignment material etc.)	24	40.00	28	46.66	52	43.33

downloading 46.66 per cent boys and 45.00 per cent girls were using internet for downloading songs, movie and games.

The above table shows that more girls (46.66 %) than boys (40 %) found in searching study material on internet same in mailing 38.33 per cent boys and 26.66 per cent girls were using mailing on internet.

The above table indicate that substantively boys were more interested than girls in playing game on internet, surfing activity, online movies.

Table 3 reveals that in question no. 19 (Do you think that cyber sex and pornography increase higher rate of sexual aggression and greater risk of teenage pregnancy?) 75.83 per cent respondents think that cyber sex and pornography increase higher rate of sexual aggression and high risk of teenage pregnancy followed by in question no. 9 (Do you think internet play an important role in your physical development/ physical identity?) 70 per cent respondents think that internet play

an important role in their physical development, while in question no. 12 (Do you think internet has a role in your identity formation?) 67.5 per cent of respondents stated that internet has a important in their identity formation, studies of Mullins (2007); Clark and Meden (2009) also revealed that internet inherent plays important role in identity formation. whereas, in question no. 22 (Do you think that internet create a platform of cyber bullying?) 66.66 per cent respondents think that internet create a platform of cyber bullying as well as in question no. 7 (Are you satisfied with the present resources / opportunities you used to improve your physical appearance?) 65 per cent of respondents satisfied with the present resources and opportunities that improve their physical appearance and in question no. 6 (Have you used any of the information from the internet, you mentioned in your day to day life activity?) 62.50 per cent respondents used information from internet to mentioned their day to day life activities.

Table 3 : Frequency distribution among respondents according to role of internet in physical identity formation across gender

Sr. No.	Boys (n ₁ =60)			Girls (n ₂ = 60)			Total (n= 120)		
	Yes	Sometimes	No	Yes	Sometimes	No	Yes	Sometimes	No
1.	32 (53.33)	22 (36.66)	06 (10.00)	39 (65.00)	17 (28.33)	04 (06.66)	71 (59.16)	39 (32.50)	10 (8.33)
2.	26 (43.33)	26 (43.33)	08 (13.33)	31 (51.66)	14 (23.33)	15 (25.00)	57 (47.5)	40 (33.33)	23 (19.16)
3.	30 (50.00)	16 (26.66)	14 (23.33)	28 (46.66)	20 (33.33)	12 (20.00)	54 (45.00)	36 (30.00)	30 (25.00)
4.	31 (51.66)	20 (33.33)	09 (15.00)	24 (40.00)	22 (36.66)	14 (23.33)	55 (45.83)	42 (35.00)	23 (19.16)
5.	30 (50.00)	07 (11.66)	23 (38.33)	28 (46.66)	13 (21.66)	19 (31.66)	58 (48.33)	20 (16.66)	42 (35.00)
6.	39 (65.00)	07 (11.66)	14 (23.33)	36 (60.00)	09 (15.00)	45 (75.00)	75 (62.50)	16 (13.33)	29 (24.16)
7.	41 (68.33)	07 (11.66)	12 (20.00)	37 (61.66)	12 (20.00)	11 (18.33)	78 (65.00)	19 (15.83)	23 (19.16)
8.	28 (46.66)	19 (31.66)	13 (21.66)	34 (56.66)	17 (28.33)	09 (15.00)	62 (51.66)	36 (30.00)	22 (18.33)
9.	43 (71.66)	04 (6.66)	13 (21.66)	41 (68.33)	09 (15.00)	10 (16.66)	84 (70.00)	13 (10.83)	23 (19.16)
10.	41 (68.33)	12 (20.00)	07 (11.66)	28 (46.66)	15 (25.00)	17 (28.33)	69 (57.50)	27 (22.50)	24 (20.00)
11.	43 (71.66)	05 (8.33)	12 (20.00)	31 (51.66)	11 (18.33)	18 (30.00)	74 (61.66)	16 (13.33)	30 (25.00)
12.	39 (65.00)	13 (21.66)	08 (13.33)	42 (70.00)	06 (10.00)	12 (20.00)	81 (67.5)	19 (15.83)	20 (16.66)
13.	27 (45.00)	22 (36.66)	11 (18.33)	25 (41.66)	25 (41.66)	10 (16.66)	52 (43.33)	47 (39.16)	21 (17.50)
14.	27 (45.00)	13 (21.66)	20 (33.33)	32 (53.33)	12 (20.00)	16 (26.66)	59 (49.16)	25 (20.83)	36 (30.00)
15.	25 (41.66)	27 (45.00)	08 (13.33)	23 (38.33)	19 (31.66)	18 (30.00)	48 (40.00)	46 (38.33)	26 (21.66)
16.	29 (48.33)	23 (38.33)	08 (13.33)	27 (45.00)	19 (31.66)	14 (23.33)	56 (46.66)	42 (35.00)	22 (18.33)
17.	21 (35.00)	16 (26.66)	23 (38.33)	35 (58.33)	10 (16.66)	15 (25.00)	56 (46.66)	26 (21.66)	38 (31.66)
18.	22 (36.66)	27 (45.00)	13 (21.66)	31 (51.66)	21 (35.00)	08 (13.33)	53 (44.16)	48 (40.00)	16 (13.33)
19.	41 (68.33)	09 (15.00)	10 (16.66)	50 (83.33)	06 (10.00)	04 (6.66)	91 (75.83)	15 (12.50)	14 (11.66)
20.	24 (40.00)	26 (43.33)	10 (16.66)	34 (56.66)	18 (30.00)	08 (13.33)	58 (48.33)	44 (36.66)	18 (15.00)
21.	22 (36.66)	13 (21.66)	25 (41.66)	27 (45.00)	18 (30.00)	15 (25.00)	49 (40.83)	31 (25.83)	40 (33.33)
22.	41 (68.33)	12 (20.00)	07 (11.66)	39 (65.00)	13 (21.66)	08 (13.33)	80 (66.66)	25 (20.83)	15 (12.50)
23.	22 (36.66)	11 (18.33)	27 (45.00)	30 (50.00)	14 (23.33)	16 (26.66)	52 (43.33)	25 (20.83)	43 (35.83)

* Figures in parentheses denotes per cent value

Above table shows that girls search more nutritional and health sites on internet while boys search more yoga and exercise tips through internet, and internet influenced their thoughts and feeling more as compared to girls. Apart from these boys feels that internet helps them to understand them better.

Conclusion :

According to the finding of the study it can be concluded that internet enhance a sense of identity and helps in study, on the other side internet is distributing sexually explicit material to adolescent.

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