

EFFECTS OF WHATSAPP ON PSYCHOLOGICAL, PHYSICAL AND PERSONAL SELF: A HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

¹P.Clement Babu, ²K.Ravi Kumar

¹Assistant Professor, ²Assistant Professor

¹Department of Mass Communication and Journalism

¹ St Francis College for Women, Hyderabad, India

Abstract: We observe changes in science and technology with respect to developing and designing devices. This change has fostered in us dependency on smartphones for communication purposes. Whatsapp application has become a vehicle for quick access and instant reply to messages for the youth of 21st century. As the use of whatsapp is on rise, stay connected, be in touch have become buzz words today. The criteria are to develop a close relationship and receive and send information. To reach this end, usage becomes excessive resulting in health hazards of Psychological, Physical and Personal Self. The article suggests that parents should mandate 'off' time from whatsapp. The article proposes to maintain gadget hygiene, digital detox and internet diary.

Keywords: Dependency, smartphones, whatsapp, self, digital detox

I.INTRODUCTION

The world of communication is undergoing a tremendous change as science and technology develop and design various devices. The changes fostered our dependency on the communication devices such as computers and mobile phones. From dawn to dusk, most of the youth are occupied with the devices for communication purposes. In the present scenario, one of the most used devices is smartphone as it can contain various applications to educate, entertain, inform and connect people easily at a click of a button. Smartphone applications include games, e-book reader and other apps that require internet connectivity like Facebook, YouTube, twitter, Skype, and WhatsApp etc. Among all these applications, WhatsApp has become the app and talk of the day for youth of 21st century as it makes communication easier, faster and cheaper. As the usage is snowballing, there are changes in the communication patterns. In the current scenario, Youth prefer communication to be online. Stay Connected, be in touch are the buzz words of youth today. The underlying criteria is to develop a close relationship with friends and loved ones and receive and share information. To achieve this end, the usage becomes excessive resulting in health hazards of Psychological, Physical and Personal Self.

II.OBJECTIVE

1. To study the effects of whatsapp on the health of the Psychological, Physical and Personal Self

III.BACKGROUND STUDY

Sankalp Raj Choudhury, Mohammad Irfan H. Momin, S.L. Kantharia (2015)

The research article “Facebook and whatsapp: Beneficial or Harmful?” discusses that health related articles and pages are shared through Facebook and whatsapp are very useful in sharing various health related information.

V.P. Karthikeyan, Tony Varghese O., Sanal Jacob (2015)

The research paper “A study on impact of whatsapp among college students in Coimbatore district” focuses on student’s using behaviour, how much, when, where and to whom they are using, factors influencing and mode of usage of whatsapp.

Navjith Singh, Nidhi Chopra, Jaspreet Kaur (2015)

The research article “A study to analyze relationship between psychological factors on whatsapp addiction among youth in Jalandhar District in Punjab” touches upon the technology addiction and factors leading to numerous social, physical, and psychological problems.

Michael Tirkey, Dr. Anthony Raj (2017)

The research paper “Whatsapp: A distancing Bug” concentrates on the distance that the whatsapp creates from personality, health, sleep, concentration, good eye sight and faithfulness.

IV. A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

Whatsapp is a smartphone application used for sending instant messages. Jan Koum and Brian Acton introduced the app to the world in 2009. The use of Internet becomes essential to send text messages, images, PDF files, word documents, audio and video files. There is also a feature of voice and video calls. Internet data allowance is a point of concern to note to utilize the app to the optimum. Youth take pleasure in forming groups for chatting (school mates, college mates, closed friends etc.), for voice messages, for sharing text messages, pictures, pdf files, videos, audios, location sharing, status sharing etc., done at the cost of individual’s data allowance. A study by the research firm TNS reveals that Among India’s internet users, whatsapp tops the list of instant messaging apps. 56% of internet users in India use whatsapp everyday, says the study titled *connected life*.

4.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF

One of the influential reasons for the connecting to internet is the possibility for the better communication with the people far away from us. (Honor whiteman,2015). Chaffe (2017) says that all over the world the use of mobile phones has over taken the use of computer. As the usage mobile phones especially the smartphone having whatsapp application is escalating, the mental health becomes a major concern. As soon as youth rise from the sleep in the morning, they first have glance over whatsapp. If they realize that they have not got messages from friends or loved ones, they get upset. The consequence is that mind is full of questions, doubts and negativity leading to destructive feelings of low self esteem thus affects mental health.

An article titled, “whatsapp addiction and Borderline personality disorder: A new therapeutic challenge,” published by Indian journal of Psychiatry (Serial Online Journal, June 10, 2016) states that excessive use of whatsapp causes users to loose control, it seriously interferes in everyday life and makes the user dependent on whatsapp. Thus it creates a Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) which is characterized by feeling of emptiness, getting bored easily, unstable self image, increase of the proneness for whatsapp. Youth, on and off check their whatsapp application whether or not have they received any messages from their contacts. Number of times, youth feel restless as the messages are not pumped in whatsapp. They feel empty and void and come to conclusion that ‘I am not loved, I am not wanted, I am not accepted’, thus affecting the personality.

Online activity has inevitably degenerated into a situation of dependency. The dependency is such that Youth check whatsapp multiple times a day. The reasons are being receiving and sending, chatting, stress buster, boredom relief and distraction. As they are into it, it is difficult to stop using it. As it can be accessed anytime and anywhere throughout their day, they feel checking whatsapp messages are more important than anything else. They feel lost themselves in it. The result is that it leads to a tendency to crave for Wi-Fi or data connection. For instance, India Today (March 8, 2017) reports that Hyderabad man thrashes wife for switching off Wi-Fi router at night. Reshma sultana (24) wife, observed husband being as busy as bee on the phone at night, switched off the Wi-Fi router. Omer Pasha-Husband, immersed in online activity, could not digest switching off Wi-Fi. He showed his anger by thrashing her mercilessly, landing blows on her face and other parts of the body.

FOBO [Fear of Being Offline] is the new syndrome that is trying to grip youth. FOBO is the fear of losing some online activity that happens around us which leads us to be permanently connected. This fear of running out of battery, do not have data rate, or access to a Wi-Fi connection, causes an unhealthy anxiety, which particularly affects teenagers and young adults. As recorded by the study published in 2015 by Facebook, 70% of children under the age of 24 years need to be permanently connected, wherever they go. Youth are available on whatsapp 24/7 as the data packages by the service providers (BSNL 81 days free calls and 1 GB data per day, Airtel, Idea, vodaphone etc.) are relatively cheap and affordable. They want to have quick access and instant reply to messages. If not, there would be a sense of sadness haunting the mind that they have missed out some chats or messages or funny videos. They tend to have a fear of being offline.

4.2 PHYSICAL SELF

Youth invest a lot of time on whatsapp especially during night times. The usage at night time is alarming. As the whatsapp usage is on upsurge, it does affect the eyesight acutely because the radiation emitted by the screen causes damage to retina.

Youth prefer to stay indoors than outdoors and sit with whatsapp. They even have their food along when they virtually socialize on whatsapp and there is no physical movement after the consumption of food thus leading to obesity.

The university of Basel in Switzerland analysed 300 students and reports through a study on Switch off whatsapp for sound sleep (the Health Site Essel, 2017) that youth who own smart phones spend more time online also during the night which affects their sleep. The fact is, a poor sleep results in type 2 diabetes, depression, eating disorders and others. Youth even are alert and attentive to listen to the message alert tones and check the message instantly and quickly reply and thus delay and break sleep.

The addiction can even cause physical discomfort such as Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (pain and numbness in hands and wrists), back aches and neck aches, severe headache and pronounced weight gain or weight loss.

A 34-year-old woman in Granada who had spent at least six hours with her phone in her hands complained of sore wrists and was diagnosed with “WhatsAppitis” named for the popular instant messaging service WhatsApp after the doctor ruled out carpal tunnel syndrome and nerve damage, the Guardian reports.

4.3 PERSONAL SELF

The relationship is weakened among the whatsapp users (who are in serious love relationship) mentions Anuradha (2016) in her article on 10 ways whatsapp is killing your relationship. Text messaging has made each other to be dependent, compulsive and suspicious

when they do not receive instant reply. Though the status 'online' is reflecting but messages are not sent. This makes each other feel suspicious and thus commitment to each other is at stake.

Cyber Relationship (Dr. Yamini Kannappan,2016) is gaining more prominence than real life relationships. online friends become more important than real life relationships with family and friends. Many people turn to Whatsapp in order to manage unpleasant feelings such as stress, loneliness, depression and anxiety. When one has a bad day and are looking for a way to escape problems or to quickly relieve stress or self-soothe, whatsApp can be an easily accessible outlet. Losing oneself online can temporality make feelings such as loneliness, stress, anxiety, depression, and boredom evaporate into thin air. Youth fail to realize the losing track of time online.

Tarini Puri reports in his article to Times of India that "bonding over social media is now leading to marital discord, even divorce. The women grievance redressal cell of the crime branch has recorded 67 of such cases in one month, of which 49 couples are now headed for separation. Social media, particularly whatsapp, is putting many marriages and relationships through the litmus test of fidelity. Easy access to the past or to the desirable, even if it is virtual, has complicated real life relationships."

Counsellor Rashmi Joshi says that half the marital dispute cases she gets are rooted in WhatsApp. "Our culture has changed so have meanings of family and marriage. People share forward message with others without considering if it is suitable or not. Significantly, what people delete from chat history is easily recoverable with the help of special softwares and is even acceptable in court as evidence, and is actually giving a solid base to marital disputes," she says.

V. CONCLUSION

An article "Now, marriages break over whatsapp connections of partners (Puri T.,2015) published by The times of India reveals an alarming fact of an app which weakens the relationship and distances persons. Certainly there is an effect of whatsapp on the health of the self. Dr. Rauch says, "I think parents should be aware that adolescent children are living at a time where they are constantly 'on' and connected. I would encourage any parent to explore the ways to encourage or even mandate 'off' time not just away from the social networking but away from the devices. That is probably good advice for all of us." Dr. Yamini Kannappan, Consultant Psychiatrist at Kauvery Hospital, addressing the youth at FOBO campaign, Loyola College-Chennai, suggests Gadget Hygiene meaning not to sleep with smartphone, not to carry smartphone to bathroom and not to use smartphone while eating. In addition, she proposes Digital Detox. It means that one needs to have gadget free periods or weekends. She recommends to maintain an internet diary to consciously restrict hours of gadget usage.

REFERENCES

- [1] Chaffey D. (March 1, 2017). *Mobile marketing statistics compilation*. Retrieved on April 4, 2018 from <http://www.smartinsights.com/mobile-marketing/mobile-marketing-analytics/mobile-marketing-statistics/?new=1>
- [2] Faye Ad & et all (2017). *Whatsapp addiction and borderline personality disorder: A new therapeutic challenge*. Retrieved on April 4, 2018 from <http://www.indianjpsychiatry.org/text.asp?2016/58/2/235/183790>
- [3] Anuradha (2016). *10 ways whatsapp is Killing your relationship*. Retrieved on April 4, 2018 from <http://www.thehealthsite.com/sexual-health/ways-your-whatsapp-is-killing-your-relationship-v0316>
- [4] Falcon, (2016). *Negative effects of social media on your health*. Retrieved on April 4, 2018 from <http://www.symptomfind.com/health/negative-effects-of-social-media/>

- [5] Tarini Puri (Sep 1, 2015). Now Marriages break over Whatsapp connections of partners. Retrieved on April 14, 2018 from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/pune/Now-marriages-break-over-WhatsApp-connections-of-partners/articleshow/48752696.cms>
- [6] Ashish Pandey, (March 8, 2018). *Hyderabad man thrashes wife for switching off Wi-Fi at night*. Retrieved on April 14, 2018 from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/hyderabad-man-thrashes-wife-for-switching-off-wifi-at-night-1184731-2018-03-08>
- [7] Samantha Grossman, (March 26,2014). *Quit texting all the time because you might get WhatsAppitis*. Retrieved on April 14, 2018 from <http://time.com/38952/whatsapp-health-damage/>

