Digital Communication Controlling Youngsters in Delhi, India, and Salalah, Oman: A Case Study

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Abstract

The new generation considers media technology as valuable assistance, while old and experience people take it as detrimental as well as beneficial. The internet has strengthened the ability to scan and learn faster, but it also influences learning and makes it complicated (Griffiths, 2000). This critical thinking led us to ponder over the relationship of technology with learning ability and forced us to examine its impact upon the youngsters' attitude and expression towards the outer world. This research focuses on 3 to 13 years' age group children as their developing minds can be easily ductile by frequent media exposure. News of kids committing suicide after playing online games, raise serious concern for everyone regarding the use of new media and its adverse effect. Our primary objective is to find out the reasons for the negative impact of media and new media without ignoring the positive side of the digital natives (Musgrove, 2008) (The Economist, 2010). The findings provide an insightful understanding of the technological influence on children's reasoning and learning ability, impact on their physical health, decision making ability, action and interaction to the outer world. The survey, observation, and case study method are applied to conclude the results.

Keywords:*Media and new media, digital devices, learning, digital natives, digital detox.*

I. INTRODUCTION

New media applications and frequently changing technology led by the internet have brought radical changes in thinking and learning behaviour across the globe. New media technology invades our lives and has replaced interpersonal communication by screen communication. There is no doubt that new media and internet has strengthened the ability to scan and learn faster than previous generations, but at the same time, it influences children physical and mental growth. Comfortable accessing of the virtual sky has made learning easy but with a threat. (Griffiths, 1998) (Griffiths, 2000).

A.Purpose of the Study

1)Limitless exposure to digital communication has made learning easy butcomplicated. This critical thinking led us to ponder over the relationship of technology with learning.

2) This research is much needed as prior studies are not sufficiently focusing on insights of technological impact on children and their behavioural pattern in Omani and Indian context.

B. Objectives

1)To examine the long term impact of new media on kids, adolescences' learning, decision-making capacity and their expression to the outer world.
2)To explore the solutions to minimize its negative impact without ignoring its positive side.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Year by year, the internet and new media users are increasing hugely. According to market research agency Kantar IMRB, internetusers in India are expected to register double-digit growth to reach 627 million by the end of 2019. It has driven by rapid internet growth in rural areas.Kantar IMRB ICUBE 2019 reportsays that India has registered an annual growth of 18 percent in using the internet, while in rural areas, it grew by 22% in the same period. According to a survey report on students' online behaviour by HT digital and IMRB (2014), 93% of urban students'access internet. Among all, 7% of account holders are school children. It is a big concern to safeguard children from online exploitation, violence, abuse, online grooming and lacuna, which leads them towards depression(Khanna, 2014). UNICEF Child Online Protection report for India (2016) also pointed out serious recommendations to ensure cyber safety.

Oman is also witnessing high growth in internet and new media users every year. At the end of the year 2016, its growth was 71% of the total population. It shows that new media evolved here rapidly. Speed always needs care when it relates to the young generation.

According to a survey in 2011, children use mobile internet 3 hours a day in Oman. During the research, 66% of parents do not play any role in controlling their children content online (Al-Saleem, 2012). A circular was sent to parents from the Indian School Muscat (ISM) on 27th August 2017, after understanding the adverse effect of unlimited use of

mobile internet. ISM principle Dr. Rajeev Kumar Chauhan stated that the young generation is getting addicted to new media technology which is adversely affecting their health and academic performance too. He said that children are curious by nature which provokes them to visit different sites that can harm them physically or emotionally.

Another research shows that 82.5% of Omani students admit that long-time internet use can affect their mental health and their academic performance. (Al Badi, Al- Mahrouqi and Ali, 2016)

Some other research studies in other countries also show how new media technology has quickly evolved and invaded lives. It has become inevitable to ignore or reject this form of media as it has changed the way of communication and become a significant driving force not only in specific peer group but within companies and market-places to motivate young, old and children to buy theirproducts and services. Facebook, Tweeter, Instagram, YouTube and countless social media applications on smartphones have made our life more accessible than ever. New media technology is not just a venue for socializing but provides alternative ways to create interest among kids and adolescences. It helps in "homework and group assignment" (Clark-Peason, O'Keeffe, 2011).

Kids and teens' developing minds want to explore every moment and stay connected with the virtual place to share their interests in games, art, science, music, culture, audio, video, pictures and their blogs with others (Clark-Pearson, O'Keeffe, 2011).

Kids and adolescents can create enough impact on their communities and their nations in a surprising way. It can be seen from time to time when school children make awareness to save the environment or organize a fundraising campaign for the social cause. In such a situation, this new form of media gives them a variety of ways to work out and accomplish their plans (Clark- Pearson, O'Keeffe, 2011). Above mentioned activitiescan count as a positive impact of new media.

Likewise positive impact, numerous adverse effects can be seen on our young generation. According to Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-year-olds research(2010), mediaimpact on teens increases over time. Long hours of new media use can decrease the contentment level in youngsters and can increase the level of depression in them (Rideout ND Roberts, 2010). The use of YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram tends to be more aggressive, narcissistic, boastful and antisocial (Rosen, 2011)

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study is related tobehavioural science and a matter of investigation through psychological analysis. To discuss the severe impact of new media on the new generation's behaviour and physical health in different cultural contexts, we have adopted qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data consists of open-ended questions which havebeen gathered through interviews and observations. Quantitative data includes close-ended questions. The questionnaires have been devised in English and Arabic language and distributed to the respondents through an online link.To measure the long term impact on the youngsters, we have selected four cases from our interviewees. Descriptive method is used to analyze the data.

A. Sample size and Area of selection
Purposive sampling technique is applied as we targeted such families where they have children from 3 to 13 age groups. Area of sample selection is West Delhi, India and Salalah, Oman. While selecting our samples, we have focused on family size, their financial background, education, the environment of the family, approach to new media and new media using pattern by their children. Two hundred responses have been received.

B. Selection of Case Study
For understanding the long term impact on youngsters, we have selected four cases from our interviewees-two nuclear families from West Delhi and two joint families from Salalah. During interviews, we found that these four families are anxious about their kids' health and started visiting doctors for a consultation to avoid long term impact of the screen on kids and adolescences. The kids are advised to follow digital detox. It insists us to choose these four kids as our cases for study.

C.Variables of the Study
Specific criteria or variables are devised such as family size, parents' age and occupation, education, their financial background, an environment of the family, behaviour and attitude towards new media and reasons to allow its use for long hours.

D. Research Questions
* Who is selecting new media for their kids as learning tools, and why?
* What content do we need to allow our kids to watch on the internet and how long?
* Is this fine if kids are set free to use any application on the internet?
* What are the impacts of long hours' use of a digital screen?
* How can we minimize the impact of new media and connect our kids to the physical world?
* Alternatively, do they need any assistance while using smart digital devices?
* What kind of help do they need?

E.Limitation of the Research
An ideal situation for case study suggests that we need to take ten cases for the study, but in Oman due to cultural barriers and family hesitation, families are

not ready to tell anything about their kids to anyone.It hinders us from following up more than two cases. We have included a survey to support our study and reach out to our research conclusion.

The second limitation is related to the families' structure of the cases. Due to different country's cultural, economic requirements and family needs, Delhi is having more nuclear families while Salalah has joint families. That's why there is a disparity in the family structure of these four cases from India and Oman.

Another limitation is respondent area selection. Delhi is the national capital region of India; it covers an area of 1,484 square kilometres. Its population is around 18.98 million. It is challenging and time-consuming to go through this much significant population. So, we have divided the city into four parts - east, west, south, and north. We have selected West Delhi for our research because it is accessible to our reach.

IV. DISCUSSION

The present discussion base on responsesof survey and interviews, which has been received in the percentage of frequency. The figures are used to describe data.
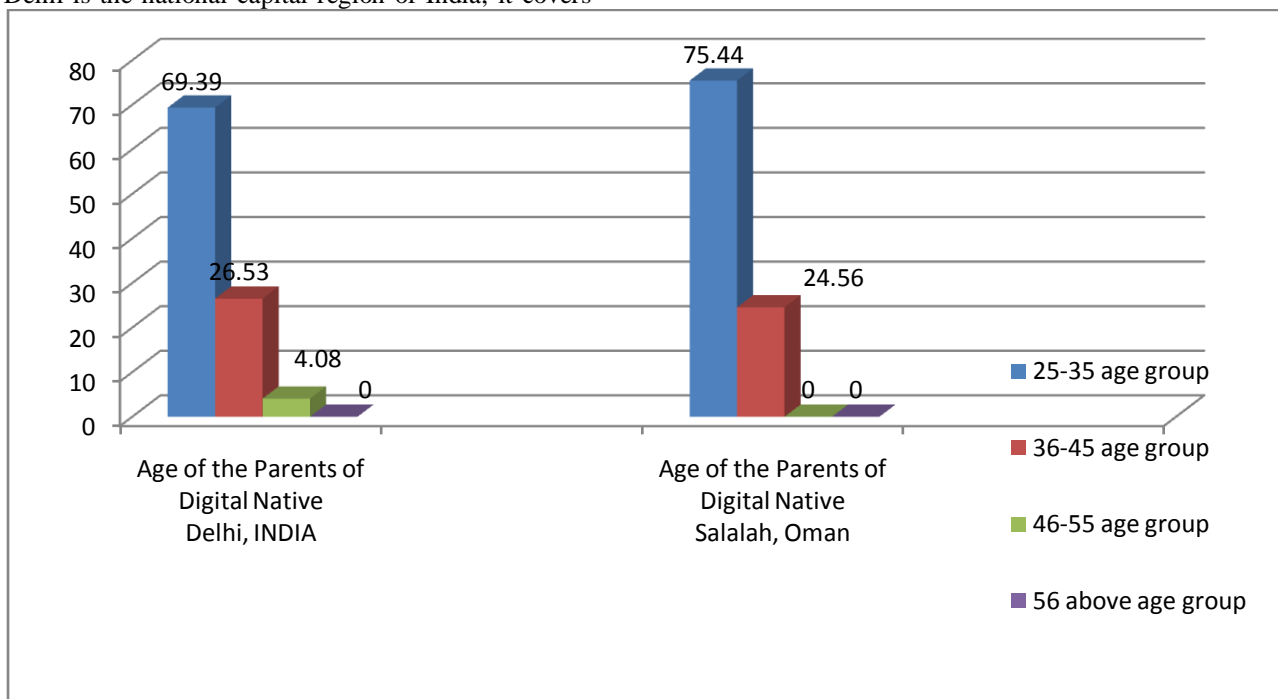

Fig 1:Parents age group, using new media for bringing up their children

Percentage of data fromboth countries shows that new parents more depend on media and new media for upbringing their kids. They allow phones and TV to their children as a new learning tool while only 24 to 26 percent parents who belong to 36 to 45 age groups allow their children to use these devices to fulfil a task.

The reason for allowing phone and TV to their kids is not related to mothers' employment. We found that unemployed mothers are also allowing phone and TV to their kids. In Oman, 59.65 percent unemployed mothers are allowing new media to keep their kids busy as they have many kids. This ratio is adverse in the Indian context. The 57.45 percent of Indian employed mothers are taking help of new media to keep engaged their kids because of lack of time, their busy job schedule, heavy traffic while commuting from home to office. The reasons are different in both countries, but the approach is similar.

India and Oman both are having a different country culture which reflects on their family environment and upbringing for these digital natives. Delhi culture is metropolitan and having a fast lifestyle. Due to this, it has more than 75 percent of nuclear families while the percentage of big/joint families is only 25, but Salalah has a reverse case. Joint or prominent families are more than 75 percent, while nuclear families are 25 percent.
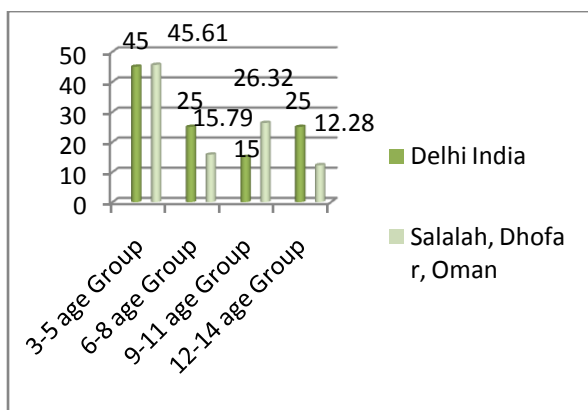
Fig 2: Digital media exposure age of digital natives

Figure2 shows, though Delhi and Salalah family structure is different the exposure age to media and new media of these digital natives are matching with 45 percent. Kids between 3-5 age groups are easily attracted to phones and TV because toddlers want to explore the new world. Here, moms need someone to take care of their kids and make them learn. At this point, they consider media and new media as a tool which can help them as a third parent not only to make their kids busy but also to make them learn with fun. This data also shows that due to new media popularity, traditional ways of communication have got replaced by maximum use of screen communication.
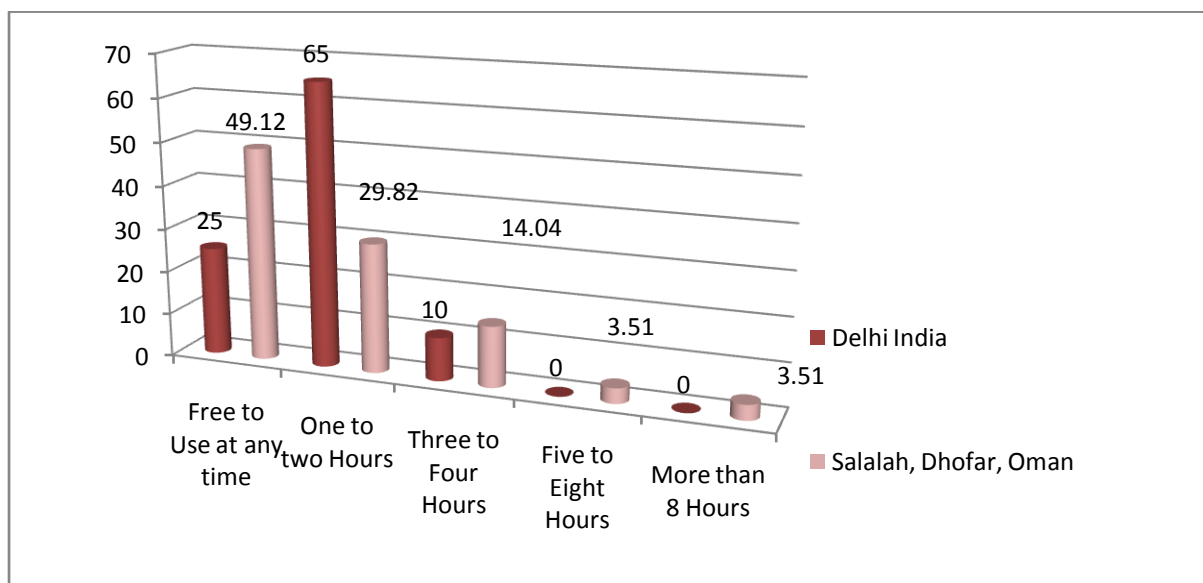

Fig 3: Pattern of new media use by digital natives

Figure 3 depicts that 65 percent of West Delhi kids use new media for one to two hours daily, while 25 percent of kids are free to use it as and when they want to use. Ten percent of kids are allowed to use it for three to four hours. Salalah data shows a reverse trend. The 49.12 percent of families do not have any restriction on the use of new media over their kids because of families' economic condition and size. Oman (Salalah) per capita income in 2016 was 17071 dollars while in India; it is 1861.5 dollar. Economically well off families can afford separate gadgets for their kids. Due to the big size of families and several numbers of kids, sometimes Salalah parents allow them to use new media freely. So, they can be busy and learn.
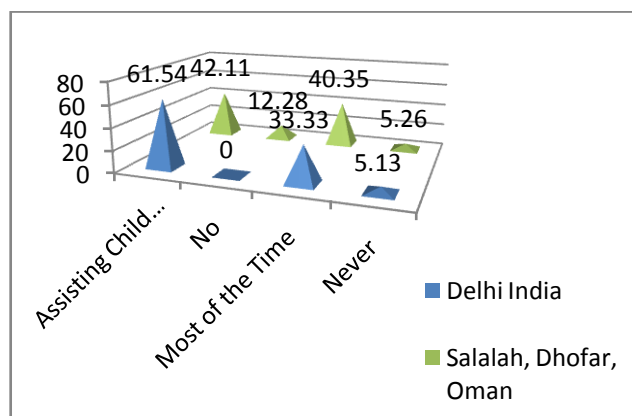

Fig 4:Assistance by the parents to the digital nativeswhile using digital devices

Figure4 shows that 61.54 percentand 42.11 percent of parents from West Delhi and Salalah are assisting their kids while using new media. This percentage is striking and raises two questions here at the same time. What kind of assistance parents use to give to

their kids? Moreover, are the parents themselves aware of the repercussion of using new media more than they required?

During our survey and interviews, 72.97 percent of parents from Delhi said that they spare time with their kids. While with 49.12 percent of Salalah parents are also taking note on sparing time with their kids. The 42.11 percentof parents from Oman and 18 percent of parents from India try to spare time with their kids as and when they get time.
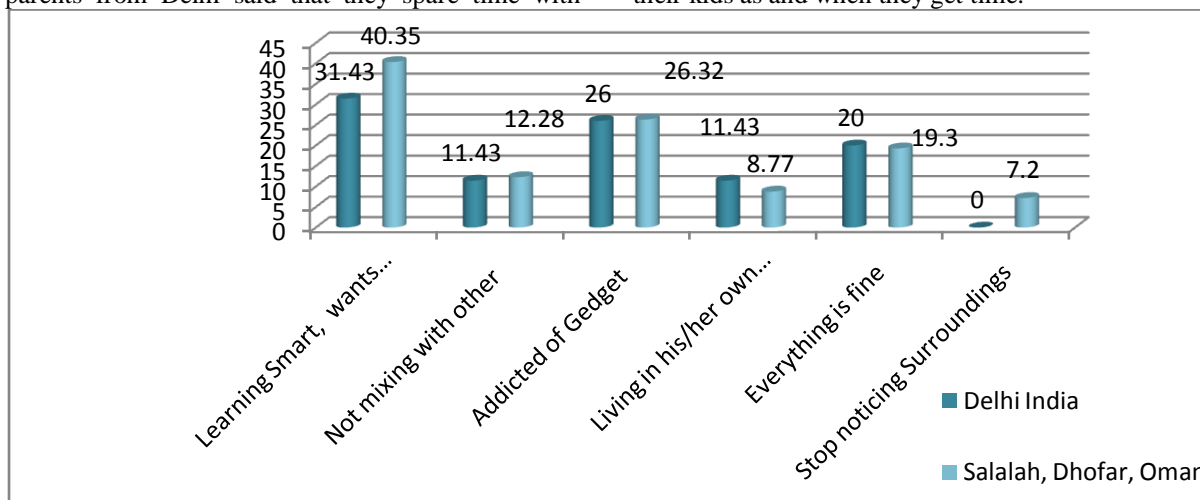

Fig 5: Impact of digital devices on digital natives

Figureno. 5 shows the approach and thinking of digital natives' parents. The 31.43 percent from West Delhi and 40.53 percent from Salalah data show that their parents think that these digital natives are learning smart. However, long hours of watching and use of media and new media brings some repercussions later. The figure, as mentioned above, shows similar kinds of percentage ratio. The 26 percent kids' parents said that their kids are having an addiction of gadgets for using them long hour while 11 and 8 percent parents noticed that their kids have started to livein their own created castle. The 7.2 percent said that their kids stopped noticing their surroundings. Due to this, they are worried about what to do to help their children?

The data of 33 percent from West Delhi display that kids are estimating themselves low when they see others' update on social media. Due to competition between their lifestyle and living standard, they envy to have those kinds of stuff and want to update themselves online as soon as possible. Salalah is not left behind. It is also cantering march with the on-going trend. The data shows that the increasing use of new media has created a different type of thinking among youngsters. Because of the full range of connectivity, new media enables them to get more exposure to this materialistic world while another significant percentage from Delhi and Salalah 67.65 and 61.4 percent showed that they are also on Facebook, but they try to create their lifestyle instead of following others.
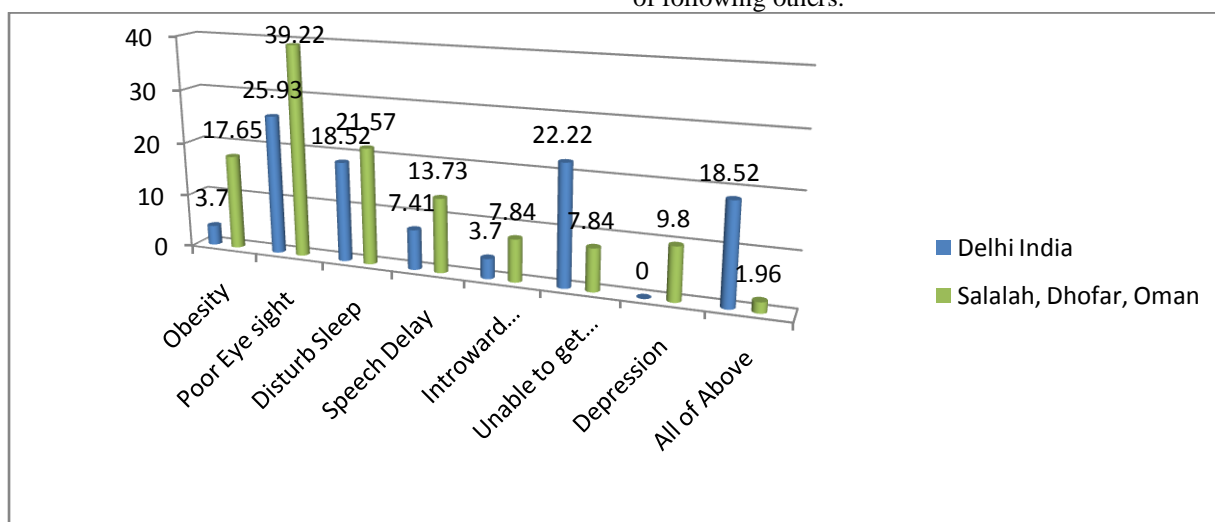

Fig 6:Issues among digital natives due to long hours use of digital devices

Figure 6 shows that long hours of using new media minimize physical activities, and we can see its impact on kids' health. Obesity, poor eyesight, speech delay, introvert personality, are some issues which create difficulties to socializing.Depression is also found common during our research. Due to different religions and customs, Delhi has a wide range of vegetarian and non-vegetarianfood course. Their lifestyle is also different from Salalah. That is why; obesity issues are lesser with 3.7 percent, while in Salalah, obesity is a common problem among kids with 17.67 percent. Non-veg is main food course here, which enrich the diet and make it more substantial. Rich diet and less physical activities is a significant cause of obesity.

The percentage of data 63.64 percent from Delhi and 91.23 percent from Salalah data is a bit surprising which shows that people have many issues due to long hours use of new media, but they do not go for a further check-up with the doctor or other treatment for their kids. While talking to some mothers, we could explore that they do not consider these issues as serious problems. They feel bad to share these issues with anyone in society. They think that these issues will resolve with time. As West Delhi data also have the same trend, but parents' thinking is a bit different fromSalalah. They do not want to discuss their kids' issues in the open, but they are conscious of their child grows. Around 30% of Delhi parents visited the doctor for either eye check-up, psychologist or other reasons, but the ratio of visiting a doctor is only 8.77 percentin Salalah.

West Delhi parents with 75.76 percentknow much about Blue whale suicide game on the internet, and 52.63 percent of Salalah parents are also aware of such issues. It shows that Indian parents have more exposure to such news than Salalah. However, it raises a question, how their news tracking can protect their children from any adverse effect of new media use. After listening, what safety measures have they taken?

In answer to a question how to bring back such kids who lost themselves into digital devices, mothers of both places have an almost similar answer. The 8 to 9 percent of mothers say that they will take the helpof a psychologist, while 24 to 25 percent say that they will try to involve their kids in family activities. The 29 percent of mothers from Salalah say that they will stop using the gadget while this percentage is low for Delhi mothers. Only 9 percent of mothers say that they will not allow their kids to use phones anymore. The significant percentage 56.25 percent in West Delhi and 39.29 percent in Salalah of mothers say if necessary, they will use all options to bring their kids back from the problem.

V. CASE DISCUSSION

To measure the long term impact on the youngsters, we have selected 2-2 cases from Salalah and Delhi interviewees. Two girls of 3 years' age and two boys of 5 years and 12 years are kept under observation. These cases are encoded here as Case 1(Girl from Delhi), Case 2 (Boy from Delhi), Case 3(Girl from Oman), and Case 4 (Boy from Oman). The reason for selecting them are –

A.Long-time use of media and new media by these digital natives. The parents have no restriction on them.

B. These four cases have started digital detox after doctor's advice. Theobservation of the cases has started in March 2017, and tracking has been done three times. First tracking has scheduled in the month of June 2017. Second tracking has completed in March 2018 and final tracking has been done in September 2018.

C.*Follow-up Report after Nineteen Months*

A follow-up study was conducted after 19 months in September 2018 to examine the impact of digital detox on the physical, psychological and routine behaviour of digital natives. Though the youngsters have refrained from the use of electronic devices such as smartphones, TV, and computers for nineteen months, regarded as an opportunity to reduce stress or focus on social interaction to the physical world, we could not find significant changes among these digital natives. The impact is so profound that they are still suffering from some physical and social problems.

D.Due to long hours in touch with one-way communication, they have started enjoying their own company and struggling to make friends. When they come in contact with their age group children, they tried to initiate but lack of expression and poor language skills, they are not able to have a normal friendship.

E.After digital detox, the parents of all four cases have started interacting with their youngsters and engrossed them into different activities like painting, physical games and storytelling. In the beginning, it has been difficult as these digital natives have stubborn, but slowly they could adopt. Now parents allow them to use the phone and watch TV for half an hour or a maximum one hour only when they get bored.

F."Age of the kids"has played here a prominent variable. All four digital natives have started their digital exposure at the age of 2, and It has severely affected their minds and behaviour. During our study, we could find that remedial steps begin at the initial age for case 1 and case 3girls, while it has startedlate for case 2 and 4 boys. These digital natives have been using phones and TV excessively, so in the beginning, we have recorded a very high impact on their behaviour. After digital detox,these kids have tried to engross themselves with family and friends'

interaction. We have found better improvement and learning capability in case 1 and 3, while this is very slow in case 2 and 4. Omani boy has become reluctant to the changes. Since two years of his age, he is using phone and TV that has become an integral part of his daily routine. His activities are moving around the phone and TV, found it very difficult to accept these changes. Long-time use of these digital devices has made him more focus only towards the virtual world, and desist from the study. After his parent strictness, he has left out only with one option that is studying. Due to overweight, he is unable to do more physical activities and play. He has tried to learn driving, but the country driving rules do not permit him to go for it. Case 2 and Case 4 are still facing some physical issues such as obesity, speech delay, disturb sleep, introvert personality and vision-related problems. Their families are still working hard to bring back their children to mainstream society so that they can live a healthy life. After lots of effort, when case number 2 could not improve much, his mother has decided to go for an MRI. The frustration of the family has risen so high, and lead towards thinking that their boy has some mental illness. It has been noticed that in both the cases of boys from Salalah, Oman and Delhi India, they used to force their parents to allow them to watch phone and TV apart from family time, while both little girls tried to adjust and ask for such devices when they are in their holidays or when they get bored.

G. During the study, we find that the parents know the profound impact of digital tools on their kids; even then they use these devices themselves in front of their kids. They wanted to change their kids but not to themselves. It is one of the reasons which force the kids to use digital tools more than required.During our study, one family mentioned that they have never thought in this direction that indirectly they are pushing their kids to one-way digital communication which is neither good for their health nor their personality development.

VI. FINDINGS

The findings present an insightful understanding of the increasing use of media and new media and its significant impact on youngsters' lives. The results are:

1)The result shows that new parents are more inclined than old parents towards new media. Due to lack of care and support; they leave their kids with these digital devices for long hours without considering its adverse impact on them. Now such devices are playing a third parent role in youngsters' life, which creates a void for two-way communications.

2) Long hours use of media and new media creates many physical and social issues among digital natives

such as – poor eyesight, obesity, disturb sleep, introvert personality and depression among digital natives.

3)Speech delay has found among such digital natives who use TV and social media more than eight hours in a day. Due to long hours use of one-way communication, it affects their language learning ability and social interaction process. They do not understand the skill of answering a question though they are useful in knowledge. They love their own company.

4) Their social learning and sense of belongingness are also found inadequate and limited to the media screen. They also have a lack of confidence.

5) The study shows that these impacts on youngsters are so profound and long-lasting. That is the reason; we have not found much improvement.

6) The meaning of "assistance" to their kids are different for parents. They consider that If their kiddos are watching TV and new media in front of them, it is their assistance, while real assistance is connected with the notion of media content and its purpose of use by their youngsters.Because our moral policing and open communication channels can guide them to create a difference between right and wrong.

7) When we compare two different cultural backgrounds, we found that parents' mentality is the same. They do not want to talk in the open due to ignorance or social reason, but Indian parents are more active to seek medical help than Omani parents. They do not want to accept it openly due to close society system. Another reason is the prominent family structure. During interviews, families told us that Omani families generally prefer to have a maximum number of kids in their families. It becomes difficult for them to focus on just one kid. So in this situation, these digital screens become a great help for the families. However, after getting aware of digital screen effect, they are trying to minimize its use.

8) Age and time have proven here as strong variables. Due to long hours of new media use, if the change in behaviour has noticed in initial age, and digital detox will pursue at the right time, its repercussion can be minimizing and avoid.

VII. CONCLUSION

From the present study, the conclusion needs to be considered as recommendations. Long hour's use of the digital screen creates a long-lasting impact on the youngsters. So, to avoid repercussion of new media on kids, we need to make ourselves aware and the community about its adverse effects. We cannot exclude it from our lives, but we can control its use to

make it more effective learning with experience. We need to understand the real term of assistance, which should not be limited to our presence while they are using digital devices. For practical assistance, we need to understand child psychology, liking and disliking. Through daily discussions over what they are watching and learning, we can give our support to our kids and adolescences. More often, we need to use this practice in a friendly way with our kids to make them feel that we, as the parents are also part of their journey of learning. Traditional care and face to face communication are still considered useful because it always gives us the scope of two-way communication with our kids and adolescences. If we utilize new media along with conventional care, we can get a better result. We need to encourage our kids to share their acquired knowledge with everyone in the family so that they can talk and share maximum. Total digital detox is not possible as we are living in a digital age where everything is virtually connected, but partial digital detox is possible and must be used.

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