

DIGITAL LEISURE AMONG YOUNG FEMALE STUDENTS OF COLLEGES

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ABSTRACT

Youth of present age leisure activities experience is transformed from the previous generations used to enjoy before the digital boom. We analyzed the data collected by 400 students from two different colleges adopting a constructive approach to study how virtual age has innovated their leisure-based activities, how it affected their psychological health, and to what extent family bonding was affected by them. The extensive exposure to technology has created a non-homogeneous experience among family members, but it also controls the user's mind. Increasingly sophisticated digital devices and applications are being used for home-based digital leisure. More research is required to examine how digital leisure impacts other aspects of people's lives.

Keywords: Digital immergence, leisure, ICT, social media,

INTRODUCTION

A digital lifestyle has become a popular pastime for adults and children in the 21st century (Lenhart et al., 2001). Digital technologies have profoundly altered how adolescents and young adults develop and interact. Meurs and Kalfus (1996: 128) define leisure as "all the time a person does not devote to ensuring his or her future welfare in a broad sense." Leisure is a value related to intention, satisfaction, and freedom (Cuenca & Goytia, 2012). it is also the stronghold of human development (Cuenca, Aguilar, & Ortega, 2010) because leisure time has gone from being an exciting opportunity to being established as a right, valued by youth to a greater or lesser extent (Aristegui & Silvestre, 2012). The goal of leisure activities is to improve family functioning. Social media platforms, messaging apps, and devices (tablets and smartphones), along with the generalized use of broadband Internet have become indispensable to young people worldwide and given birth to a new model of leisure, which has transformed traditional activities and generated new ones, resulting in an experience of leisure that can now be carried out either in the natural or the virtual world (García, López, &

Samper, 2012). Their educational and learning practices, friendship formation and maintenance, leisure activities, and engagement with society have changed. Culture and leisure time are essential to experiencing and creating increasingly leisure-based communities. The community can be formed within leisure settings, such as games and sports (Kemp, 1999), raves and clubs (Trammachi, 2000), or vacation-based communities (Neuman, 1994).

Using digital technologies allows students to make more meaningful and personal choices, and a sense of community does not have to be based on face-to-face interactions. Information and communications technologies (ICT), specifically the Internet, have altered how we experience identity and form communities. As a result of ICTs, communities are no longer confined to their familiar surroundings. According to Gergen (1991: 38), "individuals have the mobility and technology to maintain membership in numerous discrete communities in which they have unique identities and social relations." In an online world, consumers increasingly consume and share

lifestyles and experiences to form a sense of belonging, a crucial component of forming an identity. Many internet users under 18 use the Internet, and 71% of 15-24-year-olds have access to the Internet, making them the most connected age group. As a result, some researchers have hypothesized that digital technology usage has led to changes in cognition and learning behavior. Prolonged immersion in digital media has been linked with behavioral changes and new ways of thinking and learning (Donaldson, 2006; Feiertag & Berge, 2008; Prensky, 2001a; Robinson, 2007). Bennett, Maton & Kervin (2008) report that we know little about how digital immersion affects cognitional experiences. There is a distinction between digital consumers and digital creators, suggesting that children from low-income families are more likely to be consumers than creators. This distinction can be viewed as another facet of the digital divide because access to technology does not guarantee digital equality. It is essential that individuals with access to technology also have the skills and opportunities to use it beneficially. Good computer and information literacy is essential in ensuring that users have the opportunities to use digital technology advantageously (Ebo, 1998; Besser, 2001).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, digital media become a solution to confinement time and the discovery of many leisure activities in the family environment. Although we have recovered many of our pre-pandemic habits, such as social relationships, being present at work, and a return to culture or outdoor activities, it is true that we have discovered new ways of having fun thanks to the growth of connectivity. The increase in the use of technological devices benefited from the growth of digital entertainment offerings. For example, during 2020, according to the study carried out by AliExpress' Motivations and attitudes of Spaniards in the new era of leisure', 2020 home entertainment activities increased by 30% (something that has a lot to do with the health context), and half of the respondents chose to enjoy digital entertainment in the company of the family. At that time, the most popular habits were self-care, cooking, board games, and handicrafts. These non-digital activities were supported by online trading, social media, and websites for advice and counseling. Precisely, digitalization and connectivity were vital during the mobility restrictions. According to data

collected by Telefonica in the latest edition of "The digital society in Spain," during 2020, the two main activities carried out on the Internet were linked to the consumption of digital leisure content. The study indicates that 62.3% of internet users watched multimedia content, and 60.6% listened to online music, radio programs, or podcasts. This represented a 10.4-point growth in multimedia content viewing, compared to 2019, to become Spaniards' main online leisure activity. In contrast, music consumption dropped slightly, by 2.5 points. In the same way, access to online video games grew in 2020, with almost one in four internet users choosing this option for entertainment.

Theoretical Framework

This research explored female college students' digital literacy and competence toward ICT use, focusing on using social networks and mobile devices for leisure and recreation. To conduct this study, four hundred female volunteer students of two medical colleges in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region are used to evaluate the satisfaction obtained from leisure activities performed with digital technologies. These students are selected from *Khyber Girls College Peshawar* and *Women Medical and Dental College Abbottabad*. These students are studying medical first year, the second year, the third year, and the fourth year, aged between 18 and 28 years old, respectively. The data was collected by distributing a questionnaire to each participant, and an informal interview was conducted. The response is recorded digitally and transcribed verbatim. The research is framed in the constructive paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2000) that asserts that human beings construct meanings from activities as they interact with other individuals and objects and make sense of their activities.

Results and Discussion

Demographic characteristics of the participants are given in table 1. Generally, informants reported replacing traditional leisure activities with digital ones and changing how leisure activities at home are developed. Conversing with the participants, the researcher knows that for them, Spotify is an excellent service for listening to music, and YouTube is an excellent tool for watching videos. In explaining how television is becoming obsolete for them, the facts illustrated that these students are using the Internet more and more to

view series online, spending more time on computers scrolling digital media. This is because it is a viable source for them to decide what to

watch, when, and in which arrangement. The digital leisure variables asked from participants were given in table 2.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants.

Age			Education				Marital status (n=400)	
18-21	22-24	25-28	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	Single	Married
170	120	110	50	50	50	50	250	150

Virtual Reality (VR) refers to the interaction between humans and computers in which users are no longer passive observers of images on a screen but actively participate in a three-dimensional virtual world. Video gaming is a new trend based on VR in the age of leisure which is joyful and recreational. Computer graphics and various input and display technologies are integrated to create a sense of presence in a VR environment. Beyond the

recreational aspect of video games, this application has psychological benefits and well-being depending on the time spent on this activity. With the collaboration of Electronic Arts (EA) and Nintendo, the Oxford Internet Institute reports that people who play video games for extended periods are happier than those who do not, after analyzing well-being, motivations, and need for satisfaction during play.

Table 2. The digital leisure variables were asked from participants.

Variable	Response (%)	
	Yes	No
The user of Digital Technologies	300 (75)	100 (25)
Using Leisure time at home	200 (50)	200 (50)
Performer of digital Leisure Activities	355 (88)	45 (12)
Performer of digital Leisure Activities in bedroom	322 (80)	78 (20)
Another member of the family engaged in digital Leisure activities with you	102 (25)	298 (75)
Satisfaction level higher than the home-based Leisure activities	280 (70)	120 (30)
Netflix is used for watching series	350 (88)	50 (12)
Video Gaming is a source of pleasure as well as a tool for language acquisition	290 (73)	110 (27)
Online shopping	250 (62)	150 (38)
Total Number of Participants	400	

In addition to stimulating creativity, it improves reflexes, sharpens memory, promotes teamwork and communication skills, and even aids foreign language acquisition. Without going as far as excessive consumption, video games stimulate creativity, improve reflexes and memory, and, when it comes to online gaming, it favors teamwork and getting to know other people, even helping with learning other languages. After the analysis of the narratives of the participants, it is concluded that our youth, especially students, are spending their leisure time using ICT rather than traditional ways of recreation. They watch Tv but not traditional way as they used to in their childhood. 75% of the sample consumes leisure

digitally and 50% at home because it is cost-effective compared to outdoor recreational activities and, in terms of time, performing leisure activities in their bedrooms. They spent their time in bedrooms rather than conventional family quality time sharing whole day experiences, performing leisure activities such as watching tv and movies, and going together for outings that strengthened family ties in the past. This can also be justified by the fact that only 25% of the sample responded positively when asked about another member of the family engaged in digital Leisure activities with you. Easy access to ICT, on the one hand, equips the students with up-to-date information relevant to their field, but on the other

hand, it is also a big distraction as most of them cannot concentrate on their studies entirely. So only cautious and imperative use of ICT can give advantages to the user.

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