

## **ON THE DOWNSIDE OF THE INTERNET**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

*World Wide Web and the Internet allowing instant and anonymous exchange of uncensored text, images and video have offered immense opportunities for all and sundry. At the same time a lot of challenges are also posed before the society in that unwary users especially the youngsters might find themselves in one pitfall or the other if they don't take proper care in the usage of the information technology. Anyone in this virtual-metropolis can put anything online, and once it is there anyone can access it. This article explores the negative aspects of the tools of the information age.*

**Keywords:** Internet, World Wide Web, internet pornography.

## **1. Introduction**

The Internet and the World Wide Web allow people from all over the globe to communicate with each other. They can upload information to make it publicly available, send and receive messages through email, share files through *ftp* or have live conversations through chatrooms. This unlimited flexibility surpasses all other types of communication one has heard of in the past. Benefits of this new channel of communication are many, for example, businesses can communicate more effectively and more economically; individuals can quickly find information for their day to day needs, upload their own information, hold discussions within the interest groups; and participate in a hord of other activities.

Nevertheless, there are a few negative aspects of increased communication abilities made available by information and communication technologigy. Internet addiction has surfaced as a new medical and social problem. Some people are preoccupied with using the Internet, are unable

to control their use, and are jeopardizing employment and relationships. The concept of "Internet addiction" has been proposed as an explanation for this uncontrollable, damaging use of this technology.

Copyright law has come under close scrutiny lately because anything that can be stored on a computer can quickly be copied. The publishing and music industries, which previously controlled how copies were made in order to control prices, are having a hard time dealing with the internet's ability to quickly distribute illegal copies of products.

As people put more information online, security becomes more important. Since it is easy to make copies of computer files, companies must be very careful when giving people access to their files. Computer viruses and denial of service attacks can cause major problems for online systems. Although, the positive aspects of the internet outweigh the negative aspects, yet the negative aspects of the Internet and its related technologies must be studied in depth so as to deal with the impending threats properly. This article touches upon various facets of the Internet and WWW that have a negative ting associated with them.

## **2. Cyberspace – The Darker Side**

Like any metropolis, the web has neighborhoods, some safer and some horrific. Unlike any other metropolis, the web lacks a government, laws, or a police force. The only universally acknowledged cyber-crime is the intentional spreading of computer viruses -- infectious software programs that could impair the experience of other cyber-tourists. Beyond this, there are no moral guidelines. A turn in the wrong cyber-street guarantees exposure to highly corrosive content.

For example, the web hosts thousands of pornographic sites -- offering material that is explicit and generally more violent than what is found in print publications -- and these sites are heavily trafficked. In response to academic surveys, 25-50% of men with Internet access admit spending time online viewing explicit material. Various studies and surveys have revealed that:

- 44% of men who visit these sites admit that they began doing so before age 16.
- Over half of all word searches on the Internet are aimed at locating pornography.
- The top eight word searches were all pornography related.

- Men outnumber women 6:1 in their online use of explicit material.
- Women slightly outnumber men when it comes to the "Chat Room."
- About 90% of Chat users form personal relationships.
- About one-third of these relationships result in a face-to-face meeting.
- About a quarter of these relationships evolve into romantic involvements.
- Close to 60% users have received an email from a total stranger

In past few years there have been several infamous cases of abduction, rape and murder in which the victim was first approached and lured through a Chat or an email or an SMS. There are, no doubt, many more cases in which Chat, instant messaging, or email interactions led to psychologically destructive relationships. These are the harsh realities of cyber-street life.

Another problem that the Internet has made to spurt is software piracy. Estimates have it that the global problem of software piracy has costed technology firms close to \$18 billion in 2007. Moreover, until recently, the phenomenon was limited to the unorganised sector of Asian urban centers has now attained global dimensions. Now close to 40 percent of all software is pirated. Yet, technology companies aren't the

only ones who loose when someone uses illegal software -- these programs are notorious for having viruses that can affect all of our systems.

A study by the Business Software Alliance of US revealed that: 1) two-thirds of college students wouldn't think twice about downloading illegal software, 2) software piracy was on a decline, 3) by lowering software piracy rates by 10% in 54 countries will create an additional \$400 billion in revenue, 1.5 million new jobs, and \$64 billion in taxes

With regards to another dark facet of the Internet – pornography - researchers explain that it is the web's "Triple-A Engine" -- *access, affordability, and anonymity* -- that drives the online pornography industry. Porn is dangerous and destructive folowwing reasons:

**Unrealistic view of the male/female bodies:** The bodies of both men and women shown in porn come from a very narrow part of the wide spectrum of how real men/women look. They are young, they are thin, they have large sex organs, and so on and so forth. In addition, these porn actors may wear makeup from head to toe, they are filmed with lighting that hides blemishes, and the pictures may be air brushed or digitally

altered after they are taken. How can a person look at these false images of "sexual perfection" and not begin to think less of his spouse? How can he/she not be affected by these images?

**Wrong ideas and expectations about sex:** Porn is not real sex. Sex is not a spectator game whereas the porn is produced for viewing. Porn has only one purpose, to make money for those who produce it. For this reason the pornographers produce something that has only the most visually powerful aspects of sexuality - the faster and stronger the turn on, the more likely a man will come back and pay for more.

It is impossible for someone to repeatedly view this kind of thing and not be affected by it. A person who has been happy with his sex life can become frustrated that it's not like the porn. The man may also start to question his own sexuality, since the men in porn are much "better endowed" than most men, and seem to be able to have an erection at will and last as long as they choose. Women can also be affected negatively by viewing porn.

This change of ideas and expectations is a slow, subtle process, but it's extremely destructive. It's also very difficult to correct - a man who

has stopped viewing porn still has the wrong ideas and expectations in his head, and getting them out is not easy. Many men who have used porn prior to marriage say they have no idea what real sex should be like.

Porn can be like a cancer - the damage can be rather extensive before any hint of a problem exists. Porn can eat away at the healthy sexuality of a marriage, slowly perverting and destroying what God intended sex in marriage to be. The nature of human psychology is that over-indulgence in one pleasure creates a desire for another, more depraved pleasure, and so forth in a potentially unending downward spiral towards total degradation. Thousands of websites offer 24x7 online gambling, and researchers say upwards of 15 million people visit these sites annually and leave several billion dollars of their family's funds there. Researchers also report that escorts and prostitutes in most major cities can now be reserved online. There are even special sites for those seeking extramarital relationships and other, weirder liaisons.

### **3. The Impacts**

Recent surveys identify a burgeoning trend of Internet-related divorces. In most of these tragedies, visits to explicit sites, or extramarital



relationships forged over the web, destroyed mutual trust has ripped the marriage apart.

In a landmark study, published in *American Psychologist*, researchers from Carnegie Mellon University examined the amount of time people spent interacting with other family members before and after installation of a computer with Internet access. During the two-year longitudinal study, family interaction declined dramatically, and the drop was directly proportional to the increase in Internet use. Ironically, many participants justified their increasing time online saying they needed to "stay in touch" with more distant friends and relatives, while they increasingly ignored those they were living with. Complaints are common where spouses, parents, and especially children who feel the Internet has robbed them of their loved-ones.

Only recently, the authorities at University of Bombay at Mumbai, India, have to bar the Internet connectivity between 11 PM and 8 AM in the morning, only because of the astonishing reports that many students did not know even the immediate neighbours of two years in the hostels. As Internet involvement increases, so do loneliness and depression -- especially among middle and upper class males. There are many theories about the relationship between Internet use and depression. For example, some researchers argue that productive people have only limited time to

develop and maintain their most significant relationships, and moderate-to-heavy Internet use necessarily siphons hours of this precious reservoir, leaving people socially isolated and sad. Other researchers remind us that the mere act of sitting still in front of a computer display can trigger a biochemical chain-reaction that ends in depression.

The Internet involvement can lead to damage on academic performance of the teacher, the taught, and the researcher, all. Although many parents help their children get online in order to boost grades, research reveals that more time spent online translates into less time spent reading books. The Internet cultivates impulsive jumping from web page to web page, but real learning requires still concentration. Business analysts also note associations between employee Internet access and decreased productivity.

#### **4. Risk Factors**

It is clear that there is a need to protect the humankind and particularly the childhood and the youth from the distractions and corrosive elements of the Net. Limitations to Internet access, the use of filtering

software and pre-filtered Internet providers, placement of computers in highly visible areas of one's home are all good ideas.

Ultimately, restricting Internet access is a necessary but insufficient solution. But what is needed is healing the personality weaknesses that virtually guarantee some individuals will fall victim to Internet temptations. Studies show that those most likely to get into trouble are not deterred by limits on Internet access. Given the Net's omnipresent nature, they will find a way to get online -- at the local Internet cafe, if not elsewhere. Therefore, a key challenge to parents and educators is identifying the risk factors and the individuals most at risk.

Researchers describe three pre-existing conditions that put an individual at high risk for getting into trouble on the Internet. They are: lack of family bonds; introvert nature; and lack of socialisation.

#### **4.1 Family Bonds**

Both for adults and children, the most statistically significant risk factor for Internet use is weak family bonds. Children are at a greater risk when they are physically separated or emotionally distant from their parents. Anything we do to strengthen our relationships with our children -- from spending more one-on-one time with them, to taking courses in the practice and philosophy of parenting -- makes them less vulnerable to the

Internet. Greeting our children when they arrive home from school, being there to send them off again in the morning, and spending quality time with them in between all constitute inoculations against the Internet.

#### **4.2 Introversion**

Because of its perceived anonymity, the world of the Web offers adults and children equally a place to say and ask what they feel they cannot say and ask in the real world. The less people feel they can discuss with their teachers and parents, the more likely they are to turn to the Internet for discussion and information.

#### **4.3 Lack of Socialisation**

Researches indicate that many who turn to the Internet for pornography or social contact do so because they consistently fail to succeed socially in their own world. These individuals generally fall into one of two categories: the socially inept; and the "not-so-beautiful."

Men and women who lack physical attractiveness or money are sometimes attracted to the Internet because the medium conceals their "appearance." Resultantly, many Internet relationships are built on deception and misrepresentation. Children pretend to be adults, adults

pretend to be children, men pretend to be women and vice-versa, and people lie about their religion, background and accomplishments.

## **5. Epilogue**

The challenges and threats posed by the Internet leaves us no option but to strengthen family ties and teacher-taught relationships; to stress in our educational approach and behavior the essential greatness of being human; to encourage questions and open discussion, especially about issues related to sexuality and religion; and to raise a generation who will seek marriage partners who are above all emblems of refinement and integrity. Parents and teachers who recognise these challenges can adjust to modernity and raise a valiant generation. Those who fail to see this hairpin turn in the path towards normalcy could lead their children and students over a devastating abyss.

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