ABSTRACT

IMPACT OF ICT WITH REFERENCE TO INTERNET AND COMMUNICATION DEVICES ON SOCIAL INTER-RELATIONSHIPS

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The focus of the research study has been to assess whether technology and in particular Information and Communication Technologies such as the Internet and the Cellular Phone has brought people and family together or distanced them. Whether it has contributed to an increase of connectivity between individuals, whether it has extended and expanded the circle of individual reach, whether the intensity and width of transaction between individuals has been impacted. It also covered levels of face-to-face communication, pattern of communication and in some sense levels of involvement with others around them; in family and outside. I propose that there appears no reason to believe that ICT is actually causing people to withdraw into a smaller social network circle. Importantly, there appears to be no reduction in engagement/transaction within the family per se. It seems to have increased intensity of transactions between individuals, and within the family. That technology may isolate families and communities was not borne out. The argument is supported by an extensive longitudinal study across two time frames (2007 and 2011) in specific locations. This research survey labeled Connections Survey examined the role of the Internet and cell phones in the way that people interact with those in their immediate circle or social network. This is particularly applicable and relevant in the reference class cities with significant Internet and cellular start points as both relate to infrastructure. Over 1000 participants in each round enabled collection of data sets. Various statistical measures are used including different regressions to analyze linkages. I further argue that ICT may not have reduced the level of involvement of people in various activities that characterize social interactions. Evidence of diversity of relationships is also looked at; something which is a direct outcome of withdrawal or extending into society. Other parameters that influence relationships are also
looked at in some detail. I further reinforce that by saying that people are able to prioritise their communication across various vehicles available and make a choice. I also show that connections between people have not only increased but are also more diverse. The interaction in the social circle in many ways holds the key to a lot of formal and informal decision making in the normal lives of these social units. I conclude by suggesting that the swiftness of change and scale of change has enabled absorption and embracing of ICT into the Indian social interaction space. To that extent, it has been localized into our culture as evidenced by the classic 'missed call concept' that is unique.