

# New Media Trends among ODL Students in Pakistan and their Impact on Learning

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## **Abstract:**

*This study has been conducted to explore the new media trends among the open and distance learning students in Pakistan and the ultimate effects of excessive usage of various media outlets on their life pattern, educational learning, and social capital. The research has also tested Hypothesis of Time Displacement presented by Putnam (1995). The theory of Time Displacement says that heavy usage of media brings decline in time which is now remaining to be spent in other activities like learning, interpersonal communication, social and physical activities, and which ultimately erodes the social capital of users. The sample size was 500 students of various educational levels studying in the AIOU, a distant learning institute situated at Islamabad, Pakistan and the data was collected through a survey. A self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. The regression model has also been implied to explore the relationship between new media trends/activities of ODL students and their affects on educational learning, life pattern, physical activities, and social capital. The results show that there were no displacement effects of internet on educational learning and social capital of ODL students in Pakistan. These findings do not support the popular view that heavy users of internet are more isolated and less connected to society than the non-users. However, the study supports Uses and Gratification theory of Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch (1974), which says that media users are active and no more passive and they use various media to best satisfy gratify their social and psychological needs.*

**Key Words:** New Media, Trends, Multitasking, Gratification, Social Capital, Learning

## **Introduction**

Today's generation is living with a wide variety of mass media outlets like Radio, Television, Newspaper, Social Networking Sites and Internet based other media and most important the Mobile Phone. Similarly, the today's generation is enjoying a large variety of media content available with them on mass media outlets like drama, films, games, online activities, social networking, music, sports, entertainment, news and current affairs. Alongwith the benefits of having so many media choices, there are serious concerns being shown by parents, researchers, and teachers about the expected negative effects of the media on the overall personality of the users especially the young generation. So, the time allocated by students especially the University students who are having many resources to use new media should be calculated alongwith the usage pattern of various media outlets. This study, therefore, explored the actual media usage of students of an Open Distance Learning institution and how the media usage effects their daily lives like physical activities, exercise, communication with people, etc.

Robinson, Kestnbaum, Neustadtl, & Alvarez, (2000), concluded that 'Time' is the most important thing we must explore when we want to study the new media technology's effects on older activities. For example, the displacement effects of radio on newspapers were explored (Lazarsfeld, 1940) and similarly displacement effects of television on older media activities were also analyzed (Kaplan, 1978; James & Wotring, 1995).

The present study also investigated the Putnam's Hypothesis of Time Displacement regarding the media effects on social capital like relations with family, friends, relatives, neighbours and colleagues, exercises, games, etc. So, this study alongwith time budget also investigated new media trends but investigated the media effects on level of educational learning, health, physical activities, relationship with people and the feeling of loneliness (Putnam, 1995).

### **Objectives of Study**

1. To explore time spent by University students in using various media.
2. To explore new media trends among students.
3. To study new media's effects on students' educational learning, and social capital.

### **Significance of Study**

The study is very beneficial in analyzing the media using patterns of University students in an open and distance learning environment and their effects on their educational learning. The research will be beneficial for the policy makers to limit the bad effects of the ICTs, which alongwith many opportunities also hold many threats to the well being of the users.

### **Research Questions**

Following are the Research Questions of the study:

- R. Q. 1:** How much time the ODL students spend in using the various media outlets?  
**R. Q. 2:** What are the new media trends among the ODL students in Pakistan?  
**R. Q. 3:** What is the affect of internet on Social Capital of ODL students?  
**R. Q. 4:** What is the relationship between internet use by ODL students and their educational Learning?

### **Literature Review**

The use of internet though brings many benefits and merits for its users but also brings alongwith it many threats like time invested in exposure to improper contents and wastage of time instead of using that precious time in research, education, information, exercise, socializing and enhancing social capital (Turrow, 1999).

Robinson (1969) says that the television has consumed much of our time from our daily schedule. When television came into our lives, so many researches were done to explore the displacement of leisure activities of television audience (Williams & Boyes, 1986; Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961).

Robinson (1990a, 1990b) points that on average a user from his daily time budget gives 3 hours to television watching and also concluded that the television watching gets about 40% time out of daily budget of its users. Similarly, according to Kumar and Kaur (2006), internet is very useful and beneficial. Panda and Sahu (2003) conducted a research, which shows that students in colleges mostly use Internet for online demonstrations. Jagboro (2003) concludes that in Nigeria, the people mostly use internet based media for email and education.

Similarly, when we talk about internet, the talk about Social networking sites is must which are changing the social lives of the users and even the uses have re-scheduled their life style. Actually, the students at university level are usually seen and observed wasting their daily time budget in social media and non physical activities and even displacing their precious time to be invested in educational learning (Inkingrey).

### **Internet Use and Social Capital**

According to Parks and Roberts (1998), nowadays internet users mostly get support and social interaction through websites. According to Nie and Erbring (2000), youth under the age of 25 mostly use the internet. Nie (2001) highlighted that face to face communications was found reduced among the heavy internet users as was found by Putnam (1995).

Izenberg and Lieberman (1998) stated that physical activities can be displaced by the internet use. Similarly, many researchers also highlighted that internet based new media can erode the relationship and result in isolation of the users in the society (Nie and Erbring, 2000; Carlson, Chan, Chan, Kurato, Soong, & Yang, 1999). Similarly, Moody (2001) highlighted heavy use of internet brings loneliness in the lives of internet users.

Nie and Erbring (2000) concluded that with the increase in the usage of the internet, the social contacts of the users get reduced and ultimately the relationships with family, relatives, friends, and other people in contact get reduced and thus reducing the social capital. While Wellman (2001) says contrary to what Nie and Erbring (2000) say and concludes that internet increases that community relations and social capital.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Following is the theoretical framework of study:

### **Uses and Gratification Theory**

This theory has been developed by Elihu Katz, Michael Gurevitch and Jay Blumber in 1970s. They stated that the audience of the mass media is active and not passive contrary to the previous powerful effects theory of mass communication. So, according to Blumler and Katz, the users of mass media select the medium for exposure which gratifies their social and psychological needs the best (Blumler and Katz, 1974). The theory of uses and gratification of Katz states “What people do to the media?”

Similarly, Wimmer and Dominick (1994) argued that uses and gratification theory takes the view point of users of the mass media. So, the theory explains how the users of media go for particular media outlets to best gratify the media needs.

### **Time Displacement Theory**

The theory was first discussed by Putnam (1995a, 1995b). Robert Putnam said social capital is the most pivotal thing for social bonding and maintaining social relationships in society. He further elaborated that the social capital gets erode when the users of media allocate too much time to the media activities and displace their time which was previously allocated to more important things like social events, interpersonal communication, social movements, interaction with people, education and helping each other in social and personal matters.

The theory explains that how the new kind of the activities may displace older activities causing the great decline in the older activities like social relations, exercise, and feeling of loneliness etc. Robert Putnam (1995) studied that in America, social capital was found eroded and diminished due to heavy television watching, which ultimate resulted that people were found living in isolation with feeling of loneliness as they were away from movie theatres, physical activities, bowling leagues, clubs, social gatherings and the interpersonal communication.

## **Hypotheses**

Following are the Hypotheses of study:

**Hypothesis 1:** Exposure to Internet by university students in an Open and Distance Learning atmosphere would greatly affect them towards Social Capital.

**Hypothesis 2:** Exposure to Internet by university students in an Open and Distance Learning atmosphere would greatly affect their Life Patterns and Educational Learning.

## **Method**

For this particular research study, the researcher used survey research method. Therefore, a well structured questionnaire was prepared to get data from sample i.e. students of various educational levels of AIOU. The questions were relating to the demography, media use habits, media trends, and media effects on social capital and educational learning of the students. First of all a pilot study was conducted and after removing the discrepancies in the questionnaire and making it more robust, the final data collection was carried out. The collected data was analyzed by applying appropriate statistics. The SPSS version 16 has been applied to analyse the data and generate the results. Due to time and financial constraints, a sample of 500 was selected through convenience sampling technique for filling the questionnaire and collecting the required data.

## **Data Analysis**

The survey of young female and male students studying in an open distance learning institution has brought to light several important findings and results about the new media trends among the university students.

## Exposure to Various Media - Time Budget

Table 1 tells us about the time spent by ODL students in using different media like radio, newspaper, internet, television and social networking sites. It can be observed that majority was giving one to two hour to television while majority of ODL students was giving less than one hour to radio.

Similarly, ODL university students' majority was giving less than one hour to newspapers' reading. Likewise, a maximum students' percentage was giving one to two hours each to internet and social networking sites.

*Table 1: Exposure to Media - Time budget*

TIME SPENT PER DAY	MEDIA EXPOSURE				
	TV	Radio	Newspaper	Internet	SNS
<b>More than 4hours</b>	032	06	06	100	039
<b>3 to 4hours</b>	055	016	016	081	041
<b>2 to 3hours</b>	095	036	015	090	060
<b>1 to 2hours</b>	180	048	101	130	178
<b>1 hour or less</b>	110	270	302	084	153
<b>No Exposure</b>	022	124	060	021	029

The above table elaborates that internet was heavily used than other media since majority of respondents were using it for four hours or above and similarly another majority used it for more than three hours upto four hours.

**R. Q. 1:** How much time the ODL students spend in using the various media outlets?

**Answering R.Q. 1:** Table 1 elaborates answer to Research Question 1, which shows that how the TV, Radio, Newspapers and SNS were used.

## Youth's Media Trends

Table 2 gives detail s about new media trends among university students as regards to their Demography. The Table explains that the Multitasking Trend was found present in both Male and Female students of the ODL institution, but its extent was not large. However, it was found a little more among Female than Male students. It is important to note that the Trend of visiting Net Cafes was found too much diminished among the female as well as male students of the university. However, the Mobile Phone was given a great priority by both female and male respondents.

*Table 2: Youth's Media Trends*

DEMOGRAPHY	MEDIA TRENDS					
	Remain online while watching TV or listening to Radio		Frequency of Visiting Net Cafes		How Important is Mobile Phone for you	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	170	104	240	34	47	227
Female	120	106	199	27	49	177
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Married	75	37	98	14	25	90
Un-Married	215	171	345	43	75	310
<b>Educational Level</b>						
Intermediate	60	62	100	22	30	92
Bachelor	132	79	185	26	46	165
Masters	75	58	123	10	20	113
MS/MPhil	20	03	20	03	05	18
PhD	07	04	10	01	01	10

Similarly, the Multitasking Trend was found present in both Married and Un-Married students but it was not very great and it was found a little more in Un-Married than the Married respondents of the study. Visiting Net Cafes was found very low among un-married and married students. While the mobile phone was again found most important by both categories of marital status.

Multitasking was more in Intermediate students and least among students of MS/MPhil level. The students of all educational level were not visiting Net Cafes and Mobile Phone was again given top priority by all educational levels' students. Overall, trend of the Multitasking was not common among the University students and Net Cafes trend was found diminished among the University students. However, there was a great priority given to mobile phone by the university students.

**R. Q. 2:**

What are the new media trends among the ODL students in Pakistan?

**Answering R.Q. 2:**

We can trace the answer from Table 2, which shows that Multitasking was not found common among students to a great extent. Trend of visiting Net Cafes was also found diminishing. However, mobile phone was considered very important.

### Internet Use and Social Capital

The results of the Multiple Regression in Table 3 shows that criterion variable in this model is 'Exposure to Internet'. The F value (03.10) and Sig. (.007) of ANOVA indicate that model is significant.

*Table 3: Internet Use and Social Capital (Multiple Regression Model)*

<b>Multiple-R:0.18,R-Square:0.037</b>					
<b>Standard-Error:0.890,</b>					
<b>F-Value:03.10, p=0.007</b>					
	<b>Df</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Mean Squares</b>		
<b>Regression</b>	007	019.000	03.000		
<b>Residual</b>	0492	0385.160	00.800		
<b>Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE B</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Daily face to face communication with Parents	-0.040	0.050	-0.032	-0.560	0.550
Daily face to face communication with Siblings	0.036	0.048	0.040	0.801	0.461
New Media has decreased Physical Interaction with Friends	0.071	0.058	0.071	1.231	0.250

**Dependent-Variable:**Exposure to Internet

**Unstandardized-Coefficients-Equation:** Exposure to Internet=03.900+(0.-0.040xDaily face to face communication with Parents) + (0.036xDaily face to face communication with Siblings) + (-0.071xNew Media has decreased Physical Interaction with Friends)

There was not found any positive relationship between criterion variable and predictors; i.e. Daily face to face communication with Parents, Daily face to face communication with Siblings, and New Media has decreased Physical Interaction with Friends. Multiple Regression analysis infers that Internet use does not have any significant effect on Social Capital of students in an open and distant learning environment.

Thus **Hypothesis 1 (Exposure to Internet by university students in an Open and Distance Learning atmosphere would greatly affect them towards Social Capital)** was not supported.

**R. Q. 3:**

What is the affect of internet on Social Capital of ODL students?

**Answering R.Q. 3:**

According to Table 4, there was not found any significant affect of internet on social capital of ODL students.

### Effect of Internet on Learning and Life Pattern

Multiple Regression in Table 4 shows that the computed values of F (06.010) and Sig. (.001) of ANOVA is indicating that model is significant and 24 percent variability ( $R^2=0.054$ ) in criterion variable was overall explained

by predictors. There was a positive relationship between criterion variable and 'Internet has affected Health'. However, relationship of other predictors was not found significant with criterion variable. The result infers that Internet use has affected pattern of physical activities /games of students in an open and distance learning environment, however, it has no significant effect on Educational Learning, Health, and Loneliness Emotions among the students.

**Table 4: Internet effects on Learning and Life Pattern (Multiple Regression Model)**

<b>Multiple-R: 0.240, R-Square:0.054</b>					
<b>Standard-Error:0.881</b>					
<b>F-Value: 06.010 p=0.001</b>					
	<b>Df</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Mean Squares</b>		
<b>Regression</b>	007	021.436	04.124		
<b>Residual</b>	0491	402.100	0.843		
<b>Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE B</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Internet has disturbed Educational Learning	-0.074	0.047	-0.082	-1.808	0.081
Internet has affected Health	0.007	0.052	0.008	0.116	0.809
Internet has disturbed Physical Activities	0.201	0.051	0.165	4.012	0.002
Internet has resulted in Loneliness Emotions	0.045	0.054	0.065	0.900	0.502

**Dependent-Variable:**Exposure to Internet

**Unstandardized-Coefficients-Equation:** Exposure to Internet=4.001+(-0.074xInternet has disturbed Educational Learning)+(0.007xInternet has affected Health)+(0.201xInternet has disturbed Physical Activities)+(0.045xInternet has resulted in Loneliness Emotions)

Thus **Hypothesis 2 (Exposure to Internet by university students in an Open and Distance Learning atmosphere would greatly affect their Life Patterns and Educational Learning)** was not supported except for Physical Activities.

**R.Q. 4:** What is the relationship between internet use by ODL students and their educational Learning?  
**Answering R.Q. 4:** No negative effects on educational Learning of ODL students have been found due to internet use.

## Findings

The study has not predicted any displacement effect of internet on social capital of university students. The findings do not support Time Displacement Hypothesis. However, the Uses and Gratification theory by Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch (1974) has been seconded and supported by the present study. So it is once again evident from this particular study that people use various media to gratify their needs.

The results show that majority of students was getting exposure to the television for one to two hours, and majority was listening Radio for even less than one hour per day. Newspaper was also read very less. Similarly, internet and networking sites were mostly used by students for *Above 1 hour upto 2 hours*.

Trend of Multitasking was present among university students but its extent was not very large. Trend of visiting Net Cafes was found very low. It is worth-mentioning here that few years back, the trend of net cafes was very popular in the country. This study also found that the Mobile Phone was given very great priority by the university students irrespective of their demography. University students were mostly using PC for internet. Tablet was not used highly by students. The use of Mobile Phone for internet was also found.

Similarly, Multiple Regression elaborates that exercise/games was badly affected by internet use, however, affect of internet were not found on social capital, educational learning, health, feeling of loneliness and eating disorders.

Summarizing, this study has not supported Robert Putnam (1995a; 1995b) Time Displacement Hypothesis. However, study supports Uses and Gratification theory of Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch (1974).

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