The Effect of Computer and Internet Use on the Happiness, Hopes and Optimisim in Past and Future Encounters of Various Age Groups : The Turkish Experience

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Abstract

The weakening of the traditional cultures is becoming more evident from the final quarter of the last century, a period of time where the world starts to look like a "small village" in all means. A substantial cause of cultural deterioration shows to be the growing use of information and communication technologies widening the views, mentalities, and perspectives of people. Today the adolescent groups frequently owning, utilizing and consequently being charmed by the electronic equipment such like computers, internet and cellular phones have developed a unique tradition/practice in sensing and meaning life triggering larger generation gap and fading of established cultures. The main focusing of the paper is on the correlation between computer and internet use and life satisfaction, level of hope, personal development assessments and expectations of the adolescent groups in Turkey. Interpretation of the survey findings indicates that this group grading highest in use of that shows to be the happiest, most hopeful and optimistic ones among other groups. Methodologically, the study is based on data analysis and a review of recent key literature. For more dependable results a further study comparing similar tendencies of the similar groups of other nationalities is recommended.

Keywords : ITC Use, Adolescent Groups, Life Satisfaction, Personal Development.

1. Introduction

Technological change brought through inventions/innovations influencing the values, traditions, customs, habits so the living forms/standards of people commonly for the good of people has a side-effect as to widen the gap between generations leading to disturbances in societies. The modern life style of the day shaped by the diffusion of new technologies awaken adaptation problems leading to a sense of confusion and discontent in the elder generations contrary to adolescent groups content with such progress. People resist change when they perceive it as a threat that might be real or imagined. "Insecurity and change are conditions that illustrate how a chain reaction effect may develop" [ewstrom and Davis, 1997]. As a result of this chain reaction while more and more individuals from the elderly group will resist to changes in socio-cultural structure brought by the electronic revolution the opposite will be witnessed in the adolescent groups. Surely the group cohesiveness within such groups will play a significant role at that according to Forsyth [1990] based on attributions such as the unity, membership stability, member satisfaction and internal dynamics.

Through the analyzing of the tables below regarding life satisfactions, hopes, past assessments and future expectations, and computer and internet use of groups in certain Turkish age groups, the adolescents having the highest grading between the two are argued to be the ones most optimistic, pleased and hopeful. To conclude, developing technologies in communi-

cation work for the contentment, pleasure and hopefulness of the young Turkish generation while met with caution by elderly groups feeling rather disturbed with that.

2. Changes in Traditional Value Systems and the Turkish Practice

"New technologies developed in the closing decades of the 20th century are again transforming society and business and creating the potential for new ethical problems. Foremost among these developments are the revolutions in biotechnology and ⋯ information technology ⋯ spur[ring] a number of changes ⋯ in the ability to create new life forms whose benefits and risks are unpredictable" [Velasquez, 2002]. Concerning with the risks "The problems surrounding the misuse of technology lie in a lack of understanding of technology's inherently social and moral dimensions" [Buchholz and Rosenthal, 1998]. From earlier times to date booming technologies become an eminent factor in disturbing traditional social and cultural forms reshaping relations/interactions between people creating a new socio-cultural environment. While people need to communicate meaning "sharing" of the common with one another, the technology's parting impact on social and cultural forms disrupting communication/mutual sharing is consequently widening the gap between generations. A glance at the changes in traditional Eastern Asia cultural values could be a good example. "In Japan, business relations operate within the context of wa, which stresses

group harmony and social cohesion. In China, business behavior revolves around guanxi or personal relations. For Korea, activities involve concern for inhwa, or harmony based on respect or hierarchical relationships, including obedience to authority" [Lowenberg and Conrad, 1998]. Today it will not be easy to say that the similar tendencies and behavior (primarily concerning with that of the adolescent groups) be the same in said cultures. While computers and the internet help the development and progress in all parts of the world, do have inevitable side-effects deemed to be cost factors corrupting traditional culture and social ties both in the family and in society.

It is true that the younger generation is more inclined, able and competent in computer and internet use either at home, in schools or in workplaces some dependency offering a vast range of opportunities helping their improvement in communicative skills so building better connections. To be good at that also affects their perceptions, opinions, philosophies and preferences that subsequently guide their motives/choices in "life satisfaction" and "life expectancies". Without doubt the adolescent group "culture" is having an effect on the individuals in same age group to be leading them to involve electronics in the same way. Where the group cohesiveness, meaning "the degree to which group members are attracted to one another and share group goals" [De Cenzo, 1997] such impact will even be higher making "new members of the club" to be more content and happy when/if using similar devices. Friendships in the same districts, schools, clubs in which ideas are shared

and discussed become places young individuals affected from one another consequently imitating what others do.

All that directs to the idea that to be competent in computers and internet use could be a leading factor in triggering the happiness so the optimism of individuals especially of the younger generation where statistical data supplied from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) verifies such a correlation.

Traditionally Turkish culture demands obedience and respect to the elderly. While father is and had been to time thought to be the dominant figure in the family, as indicated by Ortaylı [2009] in tradition of the Ottoman society authority of the father in family is limited far from that of the father's authority *patria potestas* in Roman law. Customarily as it is true that the father (and the elderly brother in his absence) has the authority on his sons, spouses and grandsons and daughters, such authority has never stand as a legal right, despite being one that authorizes him to manage the family's relations, financial operations, and existing in-house or outdoor problematic matters ⋯ "Still it is the mother and grandmother that is in charge of the education of the children. For such reason modernization period writers extensively worded the essence of the education of the women, implying the mother."

The section arranging the persons and family relationships of the former Turkish Civil Code used to be comprised of articles formulating the supremacy of men in family. Despite that changes in the conventional value system reflected to the new civil code necessitates equivalence so mu-

tual decision making between couples. Such equivalence is also worded in a separate paragraph of the Item 10 of the Turkish constitution based on the equality of all persons without discrimination by any reason (color, religion, sex, language, etc.) indicating the equal rights of women and men where the state is obliged to support such equality [Özdamar, 2009].

With the change in the socio-cultural texture of the Turkish society the adolescent groups are now far independent in their choices, preferences, and norms similar to that of the young generation almost all over the world showing *sui generis* understanding and behavior unique for them. Widening the gap between generations this indicates to be a meaningful determinant in explaining the differences in getting pleasure from life between age groups in the country electronics playing a considerable role at that. Electronics show to be a significant component that adds color to the youngster lifestyles making them more satisfied, more hopeful, more confident compared to those in older age.

3. Age, Education and Life Satisfaction : Concluding Through Statistical Data

<Table 1> and <Table 2> below [2010] indicating computer and internet use "by age groups" and "by educational level and labour force" in Turkey clearly displays the adolescent generations' dominant role in both cases. Among others the 16~24 group (<Table 1>) shows to be the highest in computer and internet use (65.2% and 62.9% respectively). As given in <Table 2> the "student" group in "non-labour force" shows counts to be the highest (91.6% and 89.5% respectively) where the same age group characterized by "educational level" individuals in high school (71.8% and 69.9% respectively) and high education (90.4% and 89.6% respectively) similarly tops at that.

<Table 1> indicates a fall both in computer and internet use from younger to elderly groups being similar in males and females breakdowns. <Table 2> indicating "educational level" where

<Table 1> Computer and Internet Use by Age Group, Last Three Months, 2010.

Age Group	Computer use (%)			Internet use (%)		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
16~24	65.2	78.5	52.7	62.9	76.6	49.9
25~34	52.0	62.4	41.6	50.6	60.9	40.2
35~44	36.9	46.9	26.9	34.7	43.5	25.7
45~54	23.2	33.6	12.7	22.4	31.9	12.9
55~64	8.3	13.5	3.4	7.8	12.6	3.2
65~74	2.7	4.1	1.6	2.7	4.2	1.6

Source) TurkStat, Turkey's Statistical Yearbook, Science Technology and Information Communication, 2010.

〈Table 2〉 Computer and Internet Use by Educational Level and Labour Force, Last Three Months, 2010.

	Computer use (%)			Internet use (%)		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
Educational level						
Literate w/o diploma	3.4	9.8	1.6	2.8	8.7	1.1
Primary school	15.3	20.3	10.6	14.0	18.7	9.6
Secondary school or equal	56.6	62.5	48.5	54.0	59.7	46.2
High school	71.8	74.3	68.2	69.9	72.1	66.6
Higher education	90.4	90.8	89.9	89.6	90.1	88.8
Labour force						
Labour force status	50.7	51.6	48.3	48.9	49.6	47.2
Regular/Casual employee	62.6	60.1	70.7	60.5	57.7	69.6
Employer	69.2	68.4	75.5	67.8	66.9	75.5
Self-employed	27.8	28.7	22.3	26.4	27.4	20.2
Unpaid family worker	17.2	43.9	6.3	16.2	42.6	5.5
Unemployed	50.0	44.7	65.8	48.2	42.7	64.5
Non-Labour force						
Non labour force status	28.1	42.5	23.0	26.9	41.2	21.8
Housewife	15.4	20.4	15.4	14.3	19.1	14.3
Retired	19.2	16.6	28.0	18.2	15.4	27.9
Student	91.6	93.1	89.8	89.5	91.6	86.8
Not hope to work	35.2	35.8	34.1	35.8	35.8	35.7
Disabled	6.3	10.0	0.0	5.0	7.9	0.0
Other	26.7	27.9	24.9	25.9	27.4	23.7

Source) TurkStat, Turkey's Statistical Yearbook, Science Technology and Information Communication, 2010.

the use of computers and internet is heightening with the level of education signifies a similar tendency. There is a sharp inclination in computer and internet use from illiterate higher education groups exhibiting the large gap in between each group, some being even more severer.

<Table 3> below conducted to determine the group of individuals with "highest in happiness" and "lowest in unhappiness" similarly indicates that the 18~24 group to be above the average in being "happy" and lowest in "unhappy" cate-

gories both in males and females of the same age range.

Concerning with the "level of hope" (<Table 4>) "grading the hope of individuals interviewed within the scope of the survey" the same group also shows to be far above the average in "very hopeful" while under in "not hopeful" categories.

In both cases while the female adolescents top all other categories the males of the same group while topping all other groups in being "very hopeful" seem to be more pessimistic in relation to those individuals in "45~54" and "+65" cate-

〈Table 3〉 Level of Happiness, 2010.

Happy	Neither happy nor unhappy			Unhappy		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
General level of happiness According to age groups	50.2	58.1	32.7	29.6	17.1	12.3
18~24	52.8	61.6	33.2	29.9	14.0	8.5
25~34	51.0	60.8	33.6	29.3	15.4	10.0
35~44	49.1	57.8	34.5	31.9	16.5	10.2
45~54	47.8	54.7	31.5	30.4	20.6	14.9
55~64	47.2	56.4	31.3	27.3	21.5	16.4
65+	54.2	54.3	28.9	27.0	16.9	18.7

Source) TurkStat, Turkey's Statistical Yearbook, Life Satisfaction, 2010,

〈Table 4〉 Level of Hope, 2010.

	Very Hopeful		Not hopeful	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
General level of hope According to age groups	8.7	5.0	22.8	22.2
18~24	16.2	7.9	22.1	18.1
25~34	10.2	6.2	23.9	24.0
35~44	4.5	3.5	23.9	23.8
45~54	5.7	4.5	21.3	19.2
55~64	8.5	2.8	23.1	22.7
65+	7.2	3.4	20.5	25.1

Source) TurkStat, Turkey's Statistical Yearbook, Life Satisfaction, 2010.

gories where such difference (while small) could be the subject of a survey.

<Table 5> relates to the "personal development assessments of individuals for the last five years" displaying the appraisals/judgment of people relating to their advancement for the earlier five year time where the same age group (18~24) happens to be the one largely agreeing with "developed" and disagreeing with "become worse" viewpoints in that case. It is also interesting to see that the mentioned group of individuals similarly holds the bottom in "remaining the same" alternative meaning in believing that at least some degree of development is bound to happen within that time, indicating their optimism for future progress. Another finding worth to mention is the degrading/falls in the "assessments" of groups of individuals from younger age to the elderly in "developed" alternative despite increases in those of "remained same" and "become worse."

<Table 6> is on the development expectations of people for the next five years reflecting their optimism or pessimism basically depending on

〈Table 5〉 Personal Development Assessment with Respect to Last Five Year Time, 2010

	Developed		Remained same		Become worse		No idea	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
General level of development asses. According to age groups	39.7	36.5	30.9	34.1	28.6	25.9	0.9	3.5
18~24	51.7	49.4	28.5	28.0	18.7	19.6	1.1	3.0
25~34	44.7	43.1	31.3	32.8	23.5	22.4	0.4	1.7
35~44	38.8	36.2	29.1	36.3	31.0	25.6	1.1	1.9
45~54	35.2	32.2	28.7	34.4	35.8	30.8	0.3	2.6
55~64	31.3	26.6	32.8	36.5	35.7	32.8	0.2	4.1
65+	18.5	13.6	36.7	38.2	42.1	39.2	2.7	9.1

Source) TurkStat, Turkey's Statistical Yearbook, Life Satisfaction, 2010.

〈Table 6〉 Personal Development Expectation for the Next Five Years, 2010.

	To develop		To remain same		To become worse		No idea	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
General level of development expec. According to age groups	39.3	32.4	31.1	32.2	16.3	13.4	13.1	22.1
18~24	50.2	48.5	27.4	25.8	10.1	8.6	12.3	17.1
25~34	45.5	40.6	32.0	30.3	13.6	11.6	8.9	17.6
35~44	37.9	29.3	29.9	34.9	16.8	14.0	15.4	21.9
45~54	35.2	27.5	31.9	33.7	20.0	14.0	13.0	24.9
55~64	32.9	20.4	27.1	35.7	22.9	19.8	17.1	24.1
65+	22.6	15.8	41.2	34.9	20.1	15.9	16.2	33.5

Source) TurkStat, Turkey's Statistical Yearbook, Life Satisfaction, 2010.

their practices and encounters at present and earlier times. Similar to that of their assessment in the last five year time the individuals interviewed were requested to respond whether they are expected to "develop", "to remain same", "to become worse" or having "no idea." <Table 5> indicates that the 18~24 age group while showing to be the leading ones in convincing "to develop" (50.2% and 48.5% respectively) happen to be least convincing others both in "to remain same" (27.4% and 25.8% respectively) and "to become worse" (10.1% and 8.6% respectively) categories.

4. Conclusion And Recommendations

The tremendous progress in electronics had an incredible impact effect on the social orders,

cultures so the lifestyles of individuals for the last few decades. Beyond so many other electronic devices such like the cellular phones more and more people today are having and using computers and reaching the internet starting with the younger generation. Concerning with the matter the findings of the survey conducted by the Turkish Statistics Institute, TurkStat indicates the positive correlation between the happiness, hopefulness, optimism about past assessments and future expectations of the adolescent groups in Turkey and their computer and internet use. While this is also observable for the other groups participated in the survey the adolescents show to be leading one among them.

This situation could be interpreted in two ways where one is the maximum use of computers and the internet by "happy, hopeful and optimistic" people, and the other is the use of the same making people "more happy, hopeful and optimistic." However here the second idea seems to be more convenient and logical in face of the captivating effect, attractiveness and glamour of the world of electronics on the younger generation. Use of computers and internet opens the gates of a globe never previously experienced influencing/coloring the inner-realms of people (especially those of young) sharing and exchanging ideas, discovering and experiencing new occasions, thus making life more interesting and meaningful for them.

A further study comparing similar tendencies of the other nationals of the same group of individuals are recommended for reliable results concerning with the matter.

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