

Guided by Academic Research:
The Effects of Technology on Well-being

What Researchers Find and How They Matter

2012





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網絡傳播研究中心
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1st print, September 2012







Contents

Introduction	4
Chapters	
1. It's rather simple for patients to seek for help on Internet	7
2. Using technology to re-engage the elderly to society	9
3. Cyber-porn dependents express distress and mental disorder	12
4. Cyberbullying affects teenagers' psychological well-being	15
5. How Internet affects psychological well-being is still yet to find out	18
6. Married couples need to change the way they communicate using the Internet	20
7. A significant effect between the use of Internet and the elderly's well-being	22
8. Too much online gaming is harmful	26
9. Online gaming itself is not the original to harm – It depends who you are	29
10. Facebook: A Platform to extend physical world to facilitate in building long-term friendship	32
11. Impulsivity personality is inclined to compulsive Internet use	35
12. Can the Internet improve personal well-being?	38
13. E-Commerce promotes Social Trust	41





14.	Online communication is not better than face-to-face communication	43
15.	The impacts of self-esteem and life satisfaction on problematic Internet use	45
16.	Get your Grandpa a computer!	48
17.	Positive well-being based on Internet communication with close friends	50
18.	Online communication technologies enhanced self-disclosure, social connectedness and well-being	53
19.	Cyberspace: A space for young adults to develop engaged and meaningful lives	56
	References	59
	Appendix: Summary of well-being research studies	64





Introduction

A Sharing of Happiness Tips Based on Scientific Research Findings

In this small book on well-being, we review academic research studies to provide scientific evidence of the effects of technology on personal well-being. There are many cases on a proper use of technology help increase positive personal well-being, for example, to re-engage the socially isolated elderly to society through Internet-based communication, to bring together patients to social support community through online forum, etc. However, at the same time, it is unavoidable to bring together the adverse effects that lead to negative impacts on personal well-being, for example, addiction to cyber-porn websites leads to stress and to mental disorder.

There are a lot of reasons for bringing in this small book.

Firstly, we must be aware of both the positive and the adverse effects of technology on personal well-being.





Secondly, we can be eye opening to all the different ways to improve personal well-being from the creative use of technology. We can bring into practice the ideas to our personal life.

Thirdly, we should develop a firm belief on how bad the technology could be, from reading these scientific research findings. We should at once devise proper strategies in the use of technology to prevent ourselves and our new generation from these adverse effects.

To conclude, we are glad that we could learn such a lot from the academic world. This finally benefits our society.

Hope it helps.

Will W.K. Ma
Editor





An Academic Research Guide to
The Effects of Technology on Well-being





1. It's rather simple for patients to seek for help on Internet

If you suffer from serious illness, would you seek assistance? Or, would you try to communicate with others for pathological information? What would you do? In many cases, the social circle of the patients may not have such friends with the same disease. They would not be able to get necessary information but will naturally feel lonely and helpless. Some may even be suffering from emotional problems. Reading newspaper does not help find relevant information, nor similar patients as friends.

In 2010, Beléndez and Suriá of two universities in Spain, published their study results that online forum was more popular to discuss people's health problems. The study pointed out that without the time or the geographical communication barriers, Internet forums were able to attract a wide variety of individuals suffering from health problems and caregivers. The users exchanged and shared personal experiences and feelings with strangers (other users in the forum). The study suggested a number of special features of Internet forum, including a better way for people to express themselves, access to a wide variety of health information, a





chance to express personal and private information anonymously, the benefits on expressing one's health problem. Hence, the Internet discussion groups' participation had a positive impact on users' well-being.

Obviously, online communication channels, such as forum, allow patients to run out of the lonely life of despair, to get mutual support and encouragement from the online community. Users are easier able to find comrades who face the same diseases. More importantly, the cross-regional boundaries of communication allow people to share around the community for medical information, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding on the conditions, and even different treatments. In this way, patients can actively face chronic illness that increases the likelihood of recovery.

Tags: patients, seek help, online forum, well-being

Reference:

Beléndez, M & Suriá, R. Support Is Just A Mouse Click Away: Health-related Internet forums. *Accion Psicologica*. 2010, Vol.7 Issue 1, p17-29.





2. Using technology to re-engage the elderly to society

Retired elderly will always find to face the problem of being socially isolated. Being isolated will result in physical and mental health problems. There is a need to relive their loneliness and hence, sadness in a healthy society. Would technology be a way to re-engage the elderly to show that they are still regarded as a part in society?

A recent study done by researchers Cattan, Kime and Bagnall in the United Kingdom examined the effectiveness of telephone-based befriending services on health and well-beings of the elderly. It started with previous studies on the use of telephone and Internet service in reducing loneliness of the elderly. Researchers conducted 40 in-depth interviews with the service recipients of 8 befriending schemes in UK in 2007-2008. The research found that it helped elderly with more confidence and helped bring the elderly in becoming parts of the society again. It also identified the reason for the elderly to value the service, the effect of the service on their health and well-being and their expectations to the service. The results came up with 9 more subthemes, including improving well-beings of the elderly, understanding





the worth to continue their life, developing a sense of belongings, identifying friends, better physical and mental health, less loneliness and anxiety, having more confidence in themselves, able to make ordinary conversations, and expecting to receive trustful and reliable service. The elderly were willing and were ready to devote their efforts back to the society service.

Socially isolated elderly is a social problem but mostly being neglected. It is important to arouse public concern in order to solve their worries. It is proved by this research that using communication technology is an alternative to re-connect this group of isolated people. Actually, the low cost of using telephone-based and Internet-based communication technologies is both practical and feasible. The key is that the government should devise befriending strategic plans to effectively help connect these people for more frequent social interactions in order to re-engage them in society. Finally, that helps improve their physical, mental and social well-being.

Tags: retired elderly, telephone-based, Internet-based, befriending, engaging in society





Reference:

Cattan, M., Kime, N., & Bagnall, A.-M. The Use Of Telephone Befriending in Low Level Support for Socially Isolated Older People. *Health & Social Care in the Community*. 2011, Vol. 19 Issue 2, p.198-206.





3. Cyber-porn dependents express distress and mental disorder

Nowadays, we almost unconditionally use different kinds of computer technology at all times, at all places for doing all different things. We are probably immersed ourselves in a computer networked society. At the same time, therefore, we may meet both information we want and information we do not expect, including violence, pornography, gambling and so on. Long-term exposure to this adverse information may lead to addictive psychological states and its impact on society is more serious than we expect.

In 2009, Cavaglion of the Ashkelon Academic College in Israel, published the results of a study about cyber-porn dependents in an Italian self-help Internet community. The analysis of 2000 narrative messages by 302 members helped define major patterns of stress and their self-defined dysfunction. The results revealed that these members were at a state of real mental disorder which had destructive implications on personal well-being, social adaptation, work, sex life and family relations.





How to prevent children from exposure to adverse information has been much a public concern. However, due to the openness of the Internet, it is not easy to bar this adverse information from Internet users. It is also found that the effectiveness of using filtering software is less obvious. In recent years, Government promotes e-learning, computerized classrooms and hybrid teaching processes, while less on the proper use of the Internet. Curious children would be attracted to sex and violent websites. From the result of this study, it confirms the serious adverse effects on cyber-porn dependents that lead to the state of mental disorder. It seems that we cultivate a new generation of technology natives who grow up and immerse the whole life in network environment. In the end, would that instead, become more on the negative impacts on personal well-being? Surely, there should be more work in this area.

Tags: cyber-porn dependence, pornographic addiction, stress, mental disorder, mental illness





Reference:

Cavaglion, G. Cyber-porn Dependence: Voices of Distress in an Italian Internet Self-help Community. *International Journal of Mental Health & Addiction*. 2009, Vol. 7 Issues 2, p295-310.





4. Cyberbullying affects teenagers' psychological well-being

As computers and the Internet are getting more and more popular, people's computer literacy has advanced quickly in the past decade. The younger generation, especially, students are now the major users of computer as well as the Internet. Most of the students nowadays form the habit of surfing the Internet even since they are even younger, in primary school. The public would therefore grow up more concerns about whether the frequent exposure to the Internet of this young generation leads to any adverse impacts.

A research done by researchers, Paula Devine and Katrina Lloyd in Northern Ireland, investigated on the relationship between the use of Internet and the psychological well-being of 10-year-old and 11-year children. Data was analyzed from the *2009 Kids' Life and Times Survey* which involved 3657 children whose age between 10 and 11, by using the KIDSCREEN-27 instrument. The research found that poorer psychological well-being due to the use of Internet, especially social networking sites, was resulted in for girls more than in for boys. Cyber bullying also caused negative impacts on the children's psychological well-being.





Teenagers like wandering around social networking sites, especially online chatrooms. They “listen” to people’s talking. They meet and try to talk with strangers in the chatroom without any idea of whom they are talking to. When teenagers get bullied in this cyber-world, they could not just take it easy. Even though they understand that this cyberbullying could not affect their physical real life. On the contrary, this bullying does have effects on their psychological well-being. As parents, educators, and adults, we all have the responsibility to protect our kids. We do not take it serious as we also may think that teenagers could easily run away from the social network sites so long as they turn off the computer. To the teenagers, this cyber-world seems so real to them as they live there. Teenagers do have an identity in the cyber-world. If that identity hurts, teenagers hurt. This research study implies that girls are more committed in the cyber-world to develop their identities, making friends and developing their community and network. If their cyber-identity hurt, that also hurts more to the girls.

Tags: cyberbullying, gender differences, psychological well-being





Reference:

Devine, P. & Lloyd, K. Internet Use and Psychological Well-being among 10-year-old and 11-year-old Children. *Child Care in Practice*. 2012, Vol. 18 Issue 1, p5-22.





5. How psychological well-being being affected by the Internet is still yet to find out

Internet use has been becoming more and more popular nowadays. This massive use of Internet makes people surprised of its ability and benefits on one hand, and questions the effects of Internet to the human beings on the other hand. It is therefore important for people to have a more thorough understanding of how Internet affects us.

A recent research, done by Huang of the National Changhua University of Education in Taiwan, explored the correlation between various Internet uses and psychological well-being. Huang collected data from a total of 21,258 participants and compared it with 43 independent correlations proposed by previous studies. The results indicated that a small detrimental effect was brought by the Internet use to psychological well-being. However, under the random-effects model the effects were insignificant. The researcher also called for further investigation as the results showed deficiency of the previous researches.

Internet has been newly-developed in recent decades. The





uses of Internet have been changed dramatically from its beginning use to the present. The Internet's epoch-making capacity makes it become so connected to every one's life but somehow mysterious to normal people. We have still insufficient knowledge towards the understanding of the effects of Internet on psychological well-being. The Internet is helpful on one hand and also is perceived as certain degree of unexpected harm to us.

Tags: Internet uses, computer uses, psychological well-being

Reference:

Huang, C-J. Internet Use and Psychological Well-being: A Meta Analysis. *CyberPsychology, Behavior & Social Networking*. 2010, Vol. 13 Issue 3, p.241-249.





6. Married couples need to change the way they communicate using the Internet

Many messaging devices and online social networks are indeed contributors to marriages in the 21st century. A lot of couples nowadays start their relationship with social media, such as, a mobile SMS message, a Whatsapp discussion, a note in the Facebook inbox, and maintain their relationship through these platforms as well. It is true that these social media platforms provide a convenient way for couples to keep connected when they are at work and even over the night time. However, what if they are living together after marriage? Are Internet and all these social media yet a contributor to the close relationship?

Kerkhof and the colleagues of VU University in Amsterdam in 2011 investigated 190 newly wed couples and found that for those compulsive computer users, who would have unpleasant emotional feeling when being stopped for computer usage or lack of sense to stop whenever they started using computers, there would be more marital problems than those who were not compulsive counterparts.





Computer and Internet activities affect social relationships in many different ways. There are times that it adversely affects family relationship and friendship, especially for those who could not control themselves from using computers, as in the study discussed above. And when it comes to close relationships, such as married couples, it is worth to explore more in-depth. There are possibly different effects at different stage of a relationship. For example, Internet is a tool making a connection and maintaining a relationship at an early stage of a relationship. However, situation changes when they are married that they may no longer rely on Internet for connection. They live together and face-to-face meet each other every day. On the contrary, if married couples do not realize the change in live pattern, but still use a lot of Internet even they are at the same house, problems appear. Internet then takes away the face-to-face connection chance instead of helps communication. The key point is when the environment changes, both attitude and behavior need to be adjusted as well. For example, it maybe good to have the online messaging when chances that one does not see each other.

Tags: compulsive computer users, Internet uses, married couples





Reference:

Kerkhof, P., Finkenauer, C., & Muusses, L.D. Relational Consequences of Compulsive Internet Use: A Longitudinal Study Among Newlyweds. *Human Communication Research*. 2011, Vol. 37 Issue 2, p147-173.





7. A significant effect between the use of Internet and the elderly's well-being

Aging population is a problem facing by most developing countries now and is expected to eventually a problem that is needed to tackle by the whole world. Our aim would be on how to let the elderly enjoy a happy retired life in order to attain a healthy social structure and society.

Koopman-Boyden and Reid in New Zealand examined the relations between Internet/E-mail use and well-being of people. They utilized data from 1680 New Zealanders and aged 65-84 in 2007 with their age, gender, education level, household composition, income and work as the predictors of Internet/Email usage. A significant relation was found between Internet/Email usage and overall well-being. The results also identified the characteristics of those elderly who used more Internet, for example, those who had higher education level were likely to use more Internet. The researchers urged the government to recognize the usefulness of Internet to well-being and to adopt community policies as well as national policies to encourage the Internet usage among the elderly.





The use of Internet improves well-being of the elderly in a number of possible ways. For example, the elderly may use Internet communication platforms or email to communicate with others and through a comparison of others' life, they know better about themselves. Although the Internet actually creates only a virtual world, the community developed in the virtual world and the email communication among Internet users does have real effects to the elderly. It provides the connection between the elderly and society. This is a kind of emotional and social support between Internet community users and the elder users would know they are not isolated. As they feel that they have a connection with society, they would be more satisfied with their lives. Hence, it improves their psychological well-being.

Tags: elderly, Internet uses, psychological well-being, characteristics of Internet users

Reference:

Koopman-Boyden, P.G. & Reid, S.L. Internet/E-mail Usage and Well-Being Among 65-84 Year Olds in New Zealand: Policy Implications. *Educational Gerontology*. 2009, Vol. 35 Issue 11, p.990-1007.





8. Too much online gaming is harmful

Earlier, the online game "Diablo 3" thermal explosion of the world has been launched. It is very popular among all walks of lives, including enthusiastic adults (both men and women) and children who discuss a lot about it. Online games are capable of allowing hundreds, or thousands of simultaneous players, connected through the Internet, specifically named as Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMO/MMOG). There are a wide variety of kinds, such as, Role Playing Games, Battle Games, Time Strategy Games, Shooter Games, Sports Games, Racing Games, Rhythm/Music/Dancing Games, Management Games, Social Games, Puzzle Games, Collectible Card Games, Reality Games, and Simulation Games, etc. Yes, it is really exciting and fascinating in even just learning all these names. However, the problem is that many youngsters spend too much time on it and neglect their studies. Parents are very worried.

A research team, led by Kwon of Korea University, found that, in fact, many online games were harmful to children. They investigated 1,136 junior high school students. The results showed that most of them were addictive to network games





and had negative emotions. The researchers suggested that the addictive behavior increased the self-gap. They escaped from the real self and finally had a negative mood.

From time to time, there are tragedies that young people are addicted to playing computer games. They have poor family relationship or some are found sudden death after overnight /prolonged playing online games. It is logical to think that addictive online game players are short of time in the real world and get along with their family or friends. Most importantly, they do not know that they could not leave the virtual world. The more they use the Internet, the more they feel isolated and hence, negative mood. It is very important to be self-disciplined and have a plan, listing clearly the time limit for using the computer or going online. Just a reminder, there is nothing more easy by just turning off the computer and not going online.

Tags: addictive online gaming, self-gap, escape from self, negative mood, psychological well-being, pathology





Reference:

Kwon, J.H., Chung, C.S. & Lee, J. The effects of escape from self and interpersonal relationship on the pathological use of Internet games. *Community Mental Health Journal*. 2011, Vol.47 Issue 1, p113-121.





9. Online gaming itself is not the original to harm – It depends who you are

Living in city is generally fast pace, full of tense as well as pressure. People always seek way to reduce pressure. Online gaming is popular online activity which aims at providing entertainment and happiness to the players. We can see those who are engaged in online gaming are passionate, pay a lot of attention and efforts in it. It seems that they are all happy resulting from their gaming experience. However, do they enjoy the same degree of life satisfaction?

Lafreniere and the colleagues of the University of Montreal in Canada, studied on the role of passion to the enjoyment of online gaming. The researcher conducted an online survey. 222 participants voluntarily joined, completed and submitted the survey while playing online game. The researchers categorized the players into 2 groups by examining their personalities, including harmonious passionate group and obsessive passionate group. Harmonious passionate refers to those who like online games with their own personal volition and are able to manage their time and efforts in other aspects of life. They can determine which of the gaming experience to





be internalized to their personalities. Obsessive passionate refers to those who like online game but they are likely to neglect other aspects of life. The research found out that the harmonious passionate resulted only with positive effects as this kind of players would neglect the negative feelings during gaming, and they had a high degree of self-realization. On the contrary, obsessive passionate were found positively related to both positive and negative experiences while playing online games. All experiences and emotions emerged by playing online games would be controlled and internalized to players' personalities. Moreover, only obsessive passionate were found to be related to problematic behaviors like excessive playing and negative physical symptoms and conflicts in their lives.

Satisfaction from online gaming varies between different individuals due to individual differences in personality. Instead of online gaming itself which provides entertainment for players, how the players treat online gaming and their personalities are the determinants to satisfaction resulted from online gaming. This is an important finding as we therefore may not judge playing online games as good or bad. It is important that we adjust our attitudes in benefitting the enjoyable experiences from playing online games. In order to





attain a greater satisfaction from gaming, you should have a better understanding of yourself and strike a balance between online gaming and other parts of life.

Tags: online gaming, harmonious passionate, satisfaction, self-realization, obsessive passionate, negative experience, physical symptoms, conflicts in life, psychological well-being

Reference:

Lafrenière, M-A.K., Vallerand, R.J., Donahue, E.G., & Lavigne, G.L. On The Costs and Benefits of Gaming: The Role of Passion. *CyberPsychology and Behavior*. 2009, Vol. 12 Issue 3, p.285-290.





10. Facebook: A Platform to extend physical world to facilitate in building long-term friendship

There are many types of friends in our lives. We start a friendship by meeting a stranger. We may also meet someone occasionally because we belong to the same affiliation, such as the same school, the same organization or the same interest group. As time passes by, we may build a closer friendship. Nowadays, there are many social media platforms available for us to make friends as well as to maintain friendship. Facebook is a typical one of them.

Manago, Taylor and Greenfield of University of California Los Angeles, explored how Facebook helped users maintain and extend friendship and in what ways the users could get satisfaction from Facebook. The researchers conducted an online survey to collect data from college students on their network community size, their frequent contacts and their personal profiles, etc. They discovered that the majority of friend composition on Facebook was acquaintances. They were mostly someone they met in some activity events or organizations they joined. This composition added up together formed slightly more than half of their total friends. The two





followed categories were close friends and other friends. Facebook users could expand their networks by updated status as it was similar to a public announcement as which provided the opportunity for other user to connect with the user of his / her entire contacts. The research also found that the size of the network was positively related to life satisfaction. Users could get social support from their network that made their life better. Facebook was also found as a platform to help users to keep a long-term friendship which satisfied human needs for a permanent relationship and belongings.

There are many ways to get new friends and to maintain friendship. However, we still wonder how Facebook could be so outstanding in doing this right. For example, Facebook can free user from geographical limitation to connect with friends over the world. Moreover, Facebook users can know more different types of people, rather than limited by their surroundings and nearby friends. Facebook has an updated status that any user can read to have a better understanding of that user. It provides chance for users to get to know each other better and to build closer friendships. Unlike other websites which allow anonymous login in the unreal virtual world, Facebook encourages real physical identity that creates





trust and credibility. Information available in Facebook is perceived to be based more on facts that it strengthens the physical world connection, it deepens the relationship by more frequent interactions, and it extends even more than the original physical relationship.

Tags: social network sites, facebook, physical relationship, to build a relationship, to maintain a relationship, social support, life satisfaction

Reference:

Manago, A.M., Taylor, T., Greenfield, P.M. Me and My 400 Friends: The Anatomy of College Students' Facebook Networks, Their Communication Patterns, and Well-Being. *Developmental Psychology*. 2012, Vol. 48 Issue 2, p369-380.





11. Impulsivity personality is inclined to compulsive Internet use

Compulsive Internet use refers to the state that Internet users cannot stop themselves from using the Internet even though they have to stop or they want to stop. Compulsiveness is not good. It implies unwillingness and incapable to self-control. Finally, it reduces one's well-being. Nowadays, we can see more and more people around us who show such symptoms of compulsive Internet use. Internet users are uncomfortable if they cannot get the news which they think they have to know. That makes them stick to the Internet all the time.

Meerkerk and the colleagues in Netherlands explored the reasons for compulsive Internet use, including personality and psychosocial well-being. The result showed that particularly rash spontaneous impulsivity predicted compulsive Internet use. Sensitivity to reward and to punishment, which was regarded as the reason of some compulsiveness like abuse and eating disorders, was found not related. It suggested that people who were impulsive personality feature were less capable to control and to stop themselves from using the Internet. Therefore, they were more prone to develop





compulsive Internet use behavior.

From the implication of the research study, it seems that Internet users' strong inclination to get more information on the Internet may not be related to their thirsty for knowledge but a problematic behavior. It is also important to find out that personality matters. Therefore, we should have a better understanding of ourselves. Strictly followed discipline and thoughtful use of the Internet is needed to prevent one from being compulsive Internet use. It is then the way to lead to a healthy style in using Internet.

Tags: psychosocial well-being, sensitivity to reward and punishment, personality, impulsivity, compulsive Internet use

Reference:

Meerkerk, G.-J., van den Eijnden, R.J.J.M., Franken, I.H.A., & Garretsen, H.F.L. Is compulsive internet use related to sensitivity to reward and punishment, and impulsivity? *Computers in Human Behavior*. 2010, Vol. 26 Issue 4, p.729-738.





12. Can the Internet improve personal well-being?

How old people can spend their lives happily has become a social issue of common concern. When people are getting old, they gradually lose the ability to physical activities and the thinking process. Old people would therefore easily be isolated from society. There are also problems if we start too late to learn new things in the old age, for example, the technology, even though it will bring benefits to them.

In 2008, Mellor and the colleagues in Australia jointly conducted a research project to explore the potential of the Internet on whether it could reduce social isolation of the elderly, and hence to their psychosocial functioning. The project investigated 20 residents of a retirement village that these residents were able to access and to be trained in the use of computers and the Internet. The results found that, after 3 months, they had little changes in self-esteem, positive affect, personal well-being, optimism and social connectedness. However, they reported that they gained benefits in the process. The impacts of the Internet to the elderly well-being were not confirmed yet in this study,





through the analysis of the psychometric measures.

Perhaps the elderly's well-being is much more complicated. We should explore more to understand the need of the elderly and to see if using the Internet can satisfy their needs. There are also a lot of technical know-hows in using the Internet. Therefore, both technical and social support seems important. Or else, too many difficulties while using the Internet can hinder its benefits. We still believe that increased channels of communication through the Internet can enhance the interaction with others, so as to gain more social support and finally achieve a positive life. Maybe, there should be a better understanding of the process in using the Internet and there should be a better understanding of the self-restraint and control of the elderly in order to use the Internet well.

Tags: elderly, computer use, Internet use, boredom, self-esteem, optimism, positive affect, personal well-being, social connectedness





Reference:

Mellor, D., Firth, L., & Moore, K. Can the Internet Improve the Well-being Of the Elderly. *Ageing International*. 2008, Vol. 32 Issue 1, p25-42.





13. E-Commerce promotes Social Trust

Buying online has becoming very popular nowadays. It even becomes part of life that people visit online shopping every day, such as Amazon, E-Bay, Groupon and Taobao. It becomes a community of users, including both buyers and sellers.

According to a research done by Mutz of Oxford University, purchasing online did not only mean reducing cost by buying in bulks and saving the money paid to third party. The results also suggested that when “Social trust is widely believed to be a key factor in promoting healthy societies”, successful online shopping experience indeed helped promote social trust. That was, for people who had more positive online buying experiences, they tended to have faith on society and in turns, would have a more positive attitude towards democracy. Positive experience included feeling satisfactory to the products they got, no privacy were leaked nor credit card tricks.

Trust is a simple but big word. We sacrifice the risk for potential harm in exchange for cooperation. Trust is important in various relationships, including love, family, business, etc.





Building trust is not easy while building trust on the Internet is even more difficult. People could be anonymous in the virtual world. People think they do not need to be responsible in the virtual world. Thus, if trust is built in an online community and you have engaged in a happy online buying, it is worthwhile to feel glad. Even if it is an unhappy one, don't lose the faith in the Internet since what you have to do is to check more!

Tags: online shopping, e-commerce experiences, social trust, healthy society

Reference:

Mutz, Diana C. Effects of Internet Commerce on Social Trust. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 2009, Vol. 73 Issue 3, p439-461.





14. Online communication is not better than face-to-face communication

Today, it is because of the popularity of the Internet, there will always be a kind of electronic means of communication for everyone, for example, send and receive e-mail; inbox messages in social networking sites; instant messaging using mobile phones. Without restrictions of time and space, it seems that the public feel pleasure to share the joy of social life through electronic means.

However, Schiffrin and the colleagues of the University of Mary Washington found that face-to-face communication was better than communication through the Internet because face-to-face would provide a better means to smooth and autonomous self-expression. The study also found that the increase in the Internet usage reduced the extent of human happiness. The research team, therefore, had reservation on that the Internet helped improve interpersonal relationships.

The results of this study remind us the importance of face-to-face communication. However, in busy city life, most people have difficulties to find time for face-to-face direct





communication. Therefore, the networked communication technology becomes a way to narrow the physical distance's gap. That is also why electronic communications become very popular. This study reminds us the importance of face-to-face communication in which one can better express his/her inner thoughts in order to live happier. Therefore, while electronic means provide us with convenience, it is still not the time to replace face-to-face direct communication.

Tags: Online communication, self-expression, effectiveness, interpersonal relationship

Reference:

Schiffirin, H., Edelman, A., Falkenstern, M., & Stewart, C. The Associations among Computer-Mediated Communication. Relationships, and Well-being. *CyberPsychology, Behavior & Social Networking*. 2010, Vol. 13 Issue 3, p299-306.





15. The impacts of self-esteem and life satisfaction on problematic Internet use

We may frequently hear that Internet addicts would suffer disadvantages, such as, lack of self-confidence in normal social life. For example, it is because of the heavy use of the Internet, users may become less and less in contact with others, either because of no time, no interest or no self-confidence. Finally, they may not be aware that they have difficulties in everyday social life. However, we may not realize that such a causal relationship may in turn be reversed. That is, low self-confidence would both be possible be a cause and a result of problematic Internet use.

Senol-Durak and the colleagues of Abant Izzet Baysal University studied 480 Turkish university students, on the mediator roles of life satisfaction and self-esteem between affective components of subjective well-being and cognitions about problematic Internet use. They found that self-esteem impacted both positive/negative affect component of subjective well-being and life satisfaction, and hence, indirectly influenced cognitions about problematic Internet use. They called for a further investigation on the roles of





self-esteem on subjective well-being.

The study reveals that addictive Internet users would fall into a vicious cycle where they would first lose self-confidence, and then to a state of deep negative emotions. For people with less self-confidence, there may probably have more problematic use of the Internet. We recommend that teachers and parents would provide more guidance to children in order not to let them fall into such a vicious cycle. This would affect children's future psychological development. This study suggests that we first need to develop self-esteem of youngsters. They would then be more self-confident in which will shield them from problematic Internet use. Simply preventing them from using the Internet would not be the way to solve the problem.

Tags: self-esteem, life satisfaction, subjective well-being, problematic Internet use





Reference:

Senol-Durak, E & Durak, M. The Mediator Roles of life satisfaction and self-esteem between the affective components of psychological well-being and the cognitive symptoms of problematic internet use. *Social Indicators Research*. 2011, Vol. 103 Issue 1, p23-32.





16. Get your Grandpa a computer!

Many places in the world now are facing the aging problem. It comes along with the problem of increasing social burden since resources have to be saved for the caring of elders' physical as well as mental health. When we seek for medical help for the elders, we often come back with a recommendation as to keep the elders with appropriate amount of mental exercise. What can we do to keep mental "functioning"? Computer and Internet usage is a way!

Shapira of Israeli University and Barak of University of Haifa investigated the computer and Internet use of the elderly. From the study, they divided the subject-elders who often went to day care centers into two groups. For the one group, elders had a daily activity of using computer for operation and Internet browsing. For another group, elders there were engaged with other activities like painting, sewing and needlework, etc. The research then came out with results that elders who belonged to the computer and Internet group were with better interpersonal interactions, cognitive functioning, experience of control and independence. All these contribute to the well-being and self-empowerment of





the elders.

We may think that activities can be arranged for elders are limited since they are physically weak and mentally less open minded. This study suggests that we can just bring them to the computers. By equipped them with computer skills, it is believed that they can continue their fruitful lives like before. Try to imagine: when your grandpa and grandma start to send you the first email, get information from the sites they are interested in and connect their friends through online forums. It seems a good idea.

Tags: Computer use, Internet use, elderly, interpersonal interactions, cognitive functioning, experience of control, independence, well-being, self-empowerment

Reference:

Shapira, N., Barak, A; & Gal, I. Promoting older adults' well-being through Internet training and use. *Aging & Mental Health*. 2007, Vol. 11 Issue 5, p477-484.





17. Positive well-being based on Internet communication with close friends

It is said that the emergence of the Internet is the greatest contribution to mankind because people can communicate without time and space limitations. However, others would say that the Internet is the poison for the human mind because the Internet network is full of unreal and non-credible information. The following results of a study may be able to open a new direction for our thinking.

Researchers Valkenburg and Peter of University of Amsterdam studied 816 young people, and found that the use of the Internet had a negative impact on well-being. However, the negative effect on well-being disappeared for Internet communication with close friends. Rather, via closeness to friends as a mediator, Internet communication showed a positive impact on well-being. It was then identified that Internet communication with strangers accounted for the negative impact on well-being. Further analysis found that the effects of both Internet communication and Internet communication with strangers on well-being were most





adverse for lonely adolescents.

Although the Internet opens a new channel for people's communication which is convenient, free and easy to connect far apart friends, we are not sure if there are disadvantages in Internet communication. This study clearly differentiates the positive impacts on well-being in Internet communication with close friends, to that of the negative impacts on well-being in Internet communication with strangers. Communication between people is indispensable, and the Internet can enhance the effect of this process, that the function cannot be ignored in maintaining interpersonal relationships with close friends. Finally, it makes oneself happier. On the other hand, we should be very careful not to spend too much time to make friends online as finally, this communication process makes us unhappy instead.

Tags: Internet communication, close friends, strangers, positive impacts, negative impacts, well-being





Reference:

Valkenburg, P.M. & Peter, J. Internet communication and Its Relation to Well-Being: Identifying Some Underlying Mechanisms. *Media Psychology*. 2007, Vol. 9 Issue 1, p43-58.





18. Online communication technologies enhanced self-disclosure, social connectedness and well-being

The younger generation has been the major computer and Internet users. However, it is still difficult to draw a conclusion on whether computer and the Internet use are good or bad for them. For example, many Japanese hidden youth focus on using computer and the Internet. They shut themselves up in a room and isolate themselves from the outside world. It results in a general barrier to their social life. On the other hand, the emerging social networking media enhances frequent social contacts and interactions, allows them easier to make and maintain friends. It seems depend on how one makes use of the computer and the Internet.

In 2009, Valkenburg and Peter of University of Amsterdam reviewed literatures about the effect of online communication technologies on adolescents' social connectedness and well-being. It was found that in the 1990s', Internet use was detrimental to well-being. However, on more recent works, the findings were on the opposite. They suggested that online communication technologies provided a better channel for self-disclosure, and hence, improved social connectedness and





well-being instead.

In the early years, people who involved a lot of time in using the Internet were those having problems in communication in the physical world. The more time an individual spent on the Internet, at the same time, the less time the individual would spend time with others, the greater the hurdle for the individual to spend time in physical social life. However, recently, the Internet communication has become more diverse and interactive. Sharing has become the most important social contact. This is not limited to the virtual world, but also an extension of the physical social world. Internet communication is no longer confined to a limited group of people who have difficulties in communicating with others. Internet communication becomes part of life of many individuals. It promotes one to express his or her views and to provide more chances for one to understand others; even they have frequent face-to-face social contacts. This study suggests that this extension of frequent social contacts in the virtual world through Internet communication is a way to promote pleasant interpersonal relationship and hence happier in life.





Tags: Internet communication, online communication, adolescent, social contacts, social connectedness, self-disclosure, well-being

Reference:

Valkenburg, P.M. & Peter, J. Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A Decade of Research. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 2009, Vol. 18 Issue 1, p1-5.





19. Cyberspace: A space for young adults to develop engaged and meaningful lives

For many years, cyberspace has always been an example of showing “a coin of two sides” and many parents would just focus on the adverse impact brought by it. Whenever they see their children chatting with friends through online social network and playing online games, worries like making bad friends and forgetting study come to their mind. Yet, when we see now people are shifting from using ICQ to MSN to Facebook, spending time on watching YouTube more than online games, it is meaning something different!

Yu and Chou of the Department of Counseling and Applied Psychology of National Taichung University in Taiwan, studied cyberspace and personal well-being related research and came out with a result that with guidance for college students on using the Internet, cyberspace would be a space for them to establish their pleasant, engaged and meaningful lives. Previous findings included Seligman (2002) which stated that “to have an engaged and meaningful life is to identify and exercise one’s own signature strengths.” With the massive use of email, MSN and Skype, people were familiar with the





concept that the Internet helped extend real world communication to virtual world regardless of time and geographical restrictions. Cyberspace enabled teenagers a place to explore their hidden strengths and unreachable knowledge as well. It is contributed by the recent development of Web2.0, such as free online encyclopedia, Wikipedia, and other free online courses provided by universities, etc. Again, for example, if not the video of Michael Sandel's "Justice: What's the right thing to do?" opened to the public on the Internet to narrow the public's knowledge gap, the video and the embedded knowledge was still restricted to Harvard University students. With less psychological burden, teenagers were more willing to express on the Internet. All these made cyberspace a utopia for teenagers to "develop their human potential, fulfill their psychological needs and increase their well-being," as suggested by the study.

This is interesting. The review suggests that there is a causal relationship between Internet use and well-being because the Internet provides a space for young adults to be engaged and to develop meaningful life. Therefore, instead of always limiting college students' time spending on the Internet,





parents may give college students more freedom on their cyber world. We may find teenagers who have potential secrets cultivated there. However, why not? Young adults visit websites that they are interested in. Hence, cyberspace is the best library, cinema and school for young adults. They need time to explore their potentials and to develop their interests. Meanwhile, it is always a good way for teacher to recommend their students useful websites and e-learning resources.

Tags: cyberspace, young adults, teenagers, Internet use, hidden strengths, unreachable knowledge, willing to express, pleasant life, engaged life, meaningful life, positive well-being

Reference:

Yu, S.C. & Chou, C. Does authentic happiness exist in cyberspace? Implications for understanding and guiding college students' Internet attitudes and behaviours. *British Journal of Educational Technology*. 2009, Vol. 40(6), p1135-1138.





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Appendix: Summary of Well-being Research Studies

Year	Studies	Findings
2007	Shapira & Barak	Computer and Internet use of the elderly were with better interpersonal interactions, cognitive functioning, experience of control and independence, hence, well-being and self-empowerment.
2007	Valkenburg & Peter	Use of the Internet of 816 young people had a negative impact on well-being, but disappeared if Internet communication referred only with close friends. Internet communication with strangers accounted for the negative impact on well-being.
2008	Mellor, Firth, & Moore	Internet use of the elderly had little effects in self-esteem, positive affect, personal well-being, optimism, and social connectedness. The Internet impacts on the elderly were not confirmed through psychometric measures.
2009	Cavaglion	Cyber-porn had destructive implications on personal well-being of cyber-porn dependents.
2009	Koopman-Bo yden	Internet and email use had significant relation with overall well-being of 1680 New Zealanders elderly.
2009	Lafreniere & Donahue	Obsessive passionate were positively related to both positive and negative experiences while





		playing online game, related to problematic behaviors, negative physical symptoms and conflicts in lives. Harmonious passionate were related only to positive effects.
2009	Mutz	Successful online shopping experience helped promote social trust.
2009	Valkenburg & Peter	In 1990s Internet use was detrimental to well-being. Recently, Internet use provided a better channel for self-disclosure and improved social connectedness and well-being.
2009	Yu & Chou	With guidance for college students on using the Internet, it helped establish pleasant, engaged and meaningful lives.
2010	Beléndez & Suriá	Internet discussion forum had positive impacts on users' well-being.
2010	Huang	Internet use had only a small detrimental effect on psychological well-being of 21,258 participants. Effect became insignificant if under random-effects model.
2010	Meerkerk; Van Den Eijnden; Franken;	Particularly rash spontaneous impulsivity predicted compulsive Internet use. Sensitivity to reward and to punishment were not related.





	Garretsen	
2010	Schiffirin, Edelman, Falkenstern, & Stewart	Face-to-face communication was better than communication through the Internet. The increase in the Internet usage reduced the extent of human happiness.
2011	Cattan; Kime; Bagnall	Telephone-based briefing service improved well-beings of the elderly.
2011	Kerkhof, Finkenauer, & Muusses	Compulsive computer users of newly married couples had more marital problems.
2011	Kwon, Chung & Lee	1136 junior high school students were mostly addictive to network games and had negative emotions.
2011	Senol-Durak & Durak	Self-esteem impacted both positive/negative affect component of subjective well-being and life satisfaction and indirectly influence cognitions about problematic Internet use.
2012	Devine & Lloyd	Use of Internet led to poorer psychological well-being of 10 and 11-year children.
2012	Manago; Taylor; Greenfield	The size of facebook network was positively related to life satisfaction.





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In this small book on well-being, we review academic research studies to provide scientific evidence of the effects of technology on personal well-being. There are many cases on a proper use of technology help increase positive personal well-being, for example, to re-engage the socially isolated elderly to society through Internet-based communication, to bring together patients to social support community through online forum, etc. However, at the same time, it is unavoidable to bring together the adverse effects that lead to negative impacts on personal well-being, for example, addiction to cyber-porn websites leads to stress and to mental disorder. Find out more in the book.

Will W.K. Ma, Editor, September 2012

ISBN 978-988-16292-1-0



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