RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of Cyberculture on Lifestyle: A Case of New Media Users

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ABSTRACT

Computers and the Internet have brought significant changes in our daily activities. They bring people together throughout the world, influencing the lifestyle of people, and creating a new culture of sharing information. This culture is known as cyberculture. The objective of this study is to identify the impact of using computers and the Internet on people's everyday life. Innovation in technology and new media has transformed the world into the digital age equipped with new tools and skills. The use of the internet has made us the first generation of artificial intelligence (AI) overcoming the limitation of time and distance. This study explores the changes brought about by information technologies on the lifestyle of the people of Pokhara Metropolis and the challenges they have faced. In this study, a quantitative research design has been adopted, using a descriptive-analytical method for the analysis of data collected from 52 respondents. The overall results indicated that participants have mixed views about influences as they have faced both opportunities and challenges in their lives while using media on daily basis. This study helps us understand the role of cyberculture in the process of fostering a sense of change in everyday life. It further helps the government to formulate digital policies and implement them among people.

KEYWORDS: Cyberculture, information technology, lifestyle, new media, social sites, virtual communication

INTRODUCTION

The advancement in science and technology has changed the world into the age of information. The proliferation of communication technology has enabled people in transforming their activities, bringing together the human brain through artificial intelligence (AI), thereby creating a globalized world. Computers and the Internet have created cyberculture changing the traditional practices of human beings and connecting different parts of the world. Similarly, various social media have relinked everyday praxis with the globalized network and have become an inseparable part of our daily

lives. Multifaceted communication opportunities have created disciplinary gaps by challenging our existing thoughts and opinions. As Haraway (2006) opines that by the combination of machine and organism, technology is capable of uniting diffuse alliances eliminating the notion of essentialism through hybridized post-human of techno-science. The new culture made by the flow of social media and various information and communication technology (ICT) has eliminated many cultural practices and has created a historical juncture. Various ICT tools have fostered globalization and enabled people to disseminate information. People have more data exchange and access to become conscious of the global trend. E-governance has also emerged for providing better services with improved quality in education, better resource management and efficient administration. People are encouraged about the issues like individual liberties and the rights of customers. In this regard, Gajjala et al. (2008) mention that growing access and extensive use of computers and internet technology fill the gap of the digital divide by participating people in cyber community building, creating intercultural awareness, and overcoming inequalities concerning human relations. The wave of new media and technology has contributed in shaping and forming global culture leading to new global identity.

The new forms of media including digital technology have influenced all aspects of lives ranging from online information sharing to medical guidance, shopping, banking, research and new inventions. Even academic scenario has been digitalized and critiques appear on computerized games, communication and digital culture. The concept of cyberculture began with thriving technologies through the development of virtual communities with multifarious and complex spaces. Various social network sites provide different opportunities for people like blogging, gaming, entertainment, political mobilization, hacking, new forums and radical subcultures. They are known by different names due to their various natures of actions. In this connection, Nayar (2010) includes cyberculture by multiple names such as new media, digital media, network culture, internet, digital art and culture, network culture, information society, and contemporary media having multiple functions that provides an integrated form of communication. At the same time, cyberculture provides access to online chats, internet and email, personal homepage, bioinformatics and biomedical technologies. To bring change in human activities, various ICT tools contribute in the process of collection storage, procession and transmission of information of all sectors of society among individuals, groups, institutions and nations. The flow of various social media helps in reflecting all kinds of cultures and promotes opportunities for multicultural integration. In this regard, Haqqo and Attas (2022) argue that the use of new media has replaced behavioural practices leading to a cultural shift by building online communities. Technology and new media have enabled people to move to a broader multicultural world in which they can utilize various platforms and share the valuable world culture. By constructing a global culture, cyberculture has enabled people in the process of cultural assimilation.

People do many of their activities online as new media have provided them with many platforms. With the flow of various media, the pace of life is also increasing and many behavioral practices of people have changed. Regarding the characteristics of cyberculture, You (2020) mentions that it has become a fair and transparent information platform which is democratic in nature different from the monopolistic mode in which both sender and receiver can participate freely creating a typical culture. By breaking the concept of time and space, these media have connected different places and individuals. They have created borderless spaces trying to maintain a similar culture all over the world. Social media like YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, MySpace, Facebook, E-mail, Messenger, Viber, Instagram, Skype and Blogs have made people more interactive,

conscious and better informed than they used to be. When various ideas interweave and converge with each other, there is an openness to sharing ideas. Even in the process of exchanging ideas and information, they provide opportunities by multidirectional platforms. They are useful not only in the circulation of ideas and information but also in receiving instant feedback. Making people active in participation, cyberculture, cyberspace and new media have become ubiquitous. Through the influence of these media and opportunities, people have also become creative as they make their own stories, post their opinions, do comment on some posts and share their thoughts. Everyone can do such activities as they are democratic in nature. The hidden talent of human beings can be reflected by these media. It is a synthesis of daily activities under the background of a network and lies between the duality of viewing the culture from the perspective of the network and the network from the perspective of culture.

People from all walks of life actively have involved in knowledge acquisition, sharing and transformation of information conveniently using smartphones, tablets, iPads and laptops. Various social media, ICT tools and the facilities of the internet have made global communication possible. Such innovation has profound impacts on our lives ranging from gaining knowledge to thinking and interpersonal communication. Various social media have made our lives not only easier but also complicated and we need to be conscious while using them. Cardoso and Castanho (2021) report that cyberculture allows co-presence and interaction, without any kind of restrictions being democratic for making people aware of their rights. Despite having many advantages of ICT tools, negative consequences on health, behaviors, sleeping patterns, cybercrime and gambling are noted. Shrestha et al. (2021) reported that social network sites have more positive effects on the overall performance of students as they are equipped with a lot of skills. Some people spend a significant amount of their time using social media and miss their assigned activities being addicted to these media. Singh, Amiri and Sabbarwal (2017) pointed out some negative effects of social media on the users' mental and physical health causing problems like fatigue, strain, anxiety and panic. Various social media have been introduced day by day for making our lives easier but we need to focus on their negative impacts so that they cannot be used as manipulative weapons for making our lives complicated. Thus, cyberculture should be utilized for getting useful knowledge and information not being victim of many kinds of crimes which are caused by using media.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The emergence of technology has transferred the notion of culture and the appearance of the computerized network that has enabled people to change their way of living, thinking and working. Growing numbers of organizations are looking for a new way of communicating and doing activities, adopting a digital environment. Castells and Cardoso (2005) opine about cyberculture that focuses on a change in human concepts, the formation of a hyper-social society and the reflection of identity in virtual mode enabling people to fold technologies into their lives by linking up the virtual and real world. Castells is credited to cyberculture theory that emphasizes transformation from different dimensions in a society like the economy, productivity, innovation and competitiveness. Schools, colleges and universities use many websites for providing rapid services to students. It also shows why some nations or societies are lagging and others are making progress. Zeebaree, Ameen and Sadeeq (2020) report that social media have created and enhanced cyberculture; hence, people need trainings on using such media to avoid possible threats they might create. Socialization these days has appeared in cyberspaces with the movement to virtual reality leaving physical limitations behind.

To receive information, people depend on smartphones, tablets, laptops, i-pads and computers that avoid their traditional sources. People handle these media as per their interests and needs as their relationship is shaped more by the digital medium.

The flow and waves of new media have revolutionized society that lead and encourage people to change their behavior. Due to their influence, people have changed their way of living, working and thinking about network technologies. The expansion of Internet facilities and the computerized world has promoted the globalization process by overcoming the barriers of geography, culture and temporal. They have not only intensified the communication process but also made the shift to virtual reality through various blogs, video games, websites and social networks for virtual-cultural spaces. As Cardoso and Castanho (2021) argue that new media have created new forms of culture and socialization techniques that make active participation of individuals and encourage self-expression with many interactive platforms. When people shifted to cyberculture, they use it as part of their daily life of working with computerized memories. The most significant change brought by new media is connectivity, avoidance of restrictions on small groups and construction of new culture. As Bell and Kennedy (2000) state that cyberculture is a way how people and digital technologies interact and live together being united by new media in global culture. The combination of biological and technological interventions shapes sociocultural and new order for life as cyberculture. New media have contributed to organizational reform to access medical and health information. They also make a shift in creating e-government with better services in an efficient manner.

Cyberculture has promoted intercultural communication creating cyberspaces where people interact minimizing the traditional cultural barriers. The values of cyberculture are concerned with speed, reach, openness, quick response and feedback which are constructed from the perspective of global meaning. As Macfadyen et al. (2004) opine that cyberculture functions as a unifying factor through the construction of network culture and indivisible system making its theory. At the same time, it has promoted new literacy because new media are constructing new forms of thinking, recording and perceiving. Thus, cyberculture focuses on the search for a utopian world, which has broken various barriers and inequalities. Castells (2011) opines that the whole realm of human activity is pervaded by information technology including individual inventiveness, entrepreneurialism and interaction whereas technology is a society, and without its tools, society cannot be understood and reflected. The modern world society is more represented through various ICT tools. In an interview, Castells (2014) informs that new projects can emerge from the network with new initiatives for society whereas the internet offers public space with the help of permanent global connectivity. Similarly, ICT tools have enabled people to be connected with power making them think globally and live locally. These tools have provided access to all creating various platforms.

Cyberculture connects human activities with network technologies in people, and these activities focus more on global trends and value digital literacy. Students depend more on digital materials due to the easy availability of sources. Marcinkowski (2014) notes that the internet and social media like Facebook and Twitter have allowed both teachers and students to search reading materials, and analyze both appropriate and inappropriate postings in order to supplement of their texts. All kinds of institutions either governmental or non-governmental or educational, or business houses have inclined to change their daily activities for faster and better services. People depend more on virtual activities like online shopping, online reading, information sharing in virtual mode and many activities of daily life. As Cardoso and Costa (2020) state that cyberculture makes associations with human activities and it has revolutionized the

society forcing to change and adopt organizations digital environment with their target audience. It is created by humans which encompasses sectors like artistic manifestation, media, traditions, rituals, taboos, ceremonies, legends, beliefs, behavior, dress, food and language. In this modern world, technology represents cultural inventions and people are more dependent on these new media rather than traditional sources. Being fully dependent on these media, people have chances of forgetting their real-life activities and cannot separate good things from bad ones. The flow of new forms of media may also influence people negatively creating new problems. Cyberculture has thus contributed in all sectors bringing significant changes for the better and more advanced world. Problems may arise when people begin to be guided negatively while utilizing various new media.

METHODOLOGY

The present study reports an analysis of the experiences of the inhabitants of Pokhara Metropolis regarding cyberculture. The study is based on interpretive design employing structured interviews with the respondents using a questionnaire having multiple choices as suggested by (Cohen et al., 2013); such questions can help find levels of response from the participants as much as they agree or disagree. Likewise, a quantitative approach was applied in the process of data collection as suggested by Creswell (2003), which emphasizes an extensive engagement in events focusing on the experiences and stories of the respondents. A total of 52 respondents from different localities were selected based on the reported information about their involvement in using various online platforms. They were approached through personal contacts for the interview. They were found to be utilizing the devices such as laptops, smartphones, or i-pads for sharing information and making some videos like TikTok. The respondents were followed by face-to-face closed-ended questions to find how much they are influenced by the media use. They were reported to be doing activities like banking, shopping, getting medical guidance and so on. The respondents were purposively selected dividing into various categories based on gender, age group, educational background and work experience as they were using available social media on daily basis. The interviews were conducted during the time of six weeks on multiple occasions and collected data were saved for a systematic analysis. Various archived documents were studied against the data gathered through interviews. After the interviews with the respondents of Pokhara Metropolis data and information were thematically categorized into specific themes to follow a systematic analysis using the thematic analysis approach as suggested by Clarke et al. (2015). A wide range of data were organized and presented into specific themes to derive results and conclusions. The data were analyzed by using a descriptive approach as suggested by Smith and Shinebourne (2012). The application of the descriptive analytical approach enabled to recognize and bring out the experiences and perceptions of the respondents who involved in the interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the presentation and analysis of the data. It presents quantitative statistics using descriptive methods to find the impact of cyberculture on the lifestyle of the people of Pokhara Metropolis.

Results

The results have been presented thematically in tables and figures. They include gender and group of the respondents, social media used by respondents, promoting

relationships and business, time for the social media use, and posting information and sharing videos.

Gender and Age Group of the Respondents

In this study, 54% of the respondents were male and the remaining 46% of the population were female as shown in Figure 1. The age of respondents (32%) were from the age group 16-30 years old, 32% were from the age group 31-45 years old, 31% were from the age group 46-60 years old and 6% were above 61 years old. Among the respondents, 19.2% were students, 23.1% were teachers, 19.2% were businessmen, 19.2% were government employees and the remaining 19.2% were unemployed people. 61.5% were married and the remaining 38.5 % were unmarried respondents. The respondents of various age groups, professions, educational levels and gender ideas from all kinds of people were categorized to find out the influences of people of various groups.

Figure 1
Socio-demographic Distinction of the Respondents
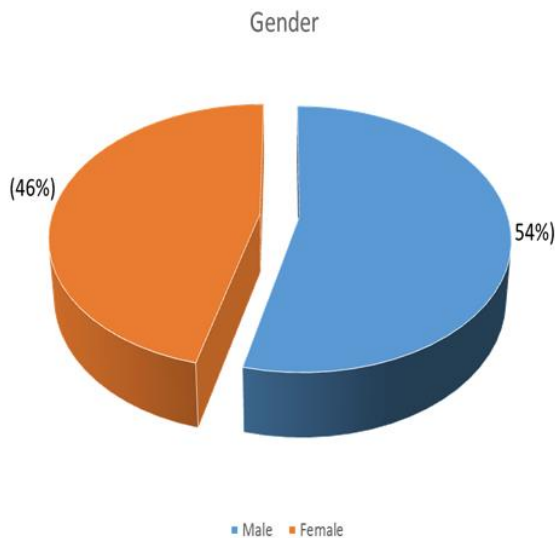
Social Media Used by Respondents

The use of various social media reflects the type of social site, which is more liked by the respondents and how they have been influenced. Table 1 presents a number of respondents who use social media. All the respondents or 100% were found using Facebook, which is a more popular site. It has become a platform for sharing and receiving information as people can also upload some videos and photos using it as a means of recreation. Having global access, it also connects people of the whole world. Next, 80.8% were found using YouTube, 73.1% were found using email, 53.8% were found using Viber, 34.6 % were found using WhatsApp, 34.6 % were found using Instagram and 30.8 % were found using Twitter. The extensive use of media like Facebook reflects that people like to share and receive information from their friends as they have been connected through media.

Table 1
The Intensity of the Use of Social Sites

Social Media	Frequency	Percent of cases (%)
Facebook	52	100
YouTube	42	80.8
Twitter	16	30.8
WhatsApp	18	34.6
Instagram	18	34.6
Viber	28	53.8
Email	38	73.1

Promoting Relationships and Business

Socialization has been promoted by the use of media as the world is engulfed by new forms of media. Human relationship is also promoted by the media use. Table 2 showed that 34.60% of respondents agreed that they had used social media for the promotion of business and relationships, and 65.40 % of respondents disagreed about using social media for the promotion of relationships and business. Similarly, 67.30 % of respondents agreed that the use of social media has brought changes in their daily activities and 32.70 % of respondents disagreed about the changes brought by social media in their daily activities. 63.46 % of respondents were satisfied that social media had improved the quality of life and 36.60 % disagreed about the change in the quality of life brought about by social media. 53.80 % of respondents agreed that social media caused negative impacts like depression, misguidance and loss of self-confidence, and 46.30 % of respondents disagreed about the negative impacts of social media. 50% of respondents agreed and 50 % of respondents disagreed that they have utilized their leisure time using available social media.

Table 2
Use of Social Media for Socialization

Promoting relationships and business	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	10	19.2
Agree	8	15.4
Disagree	14	26.9
Strongly disagree	20	38.5
Total	52	100

Time for the Social Media Use

Figure 2 indicated that 51.90% of respondents agreed that they had time to use social media and 48.10% of respondents disagreed that they did not have enough time to use social media. Similarly, 38.50% of respondents agreed that they had time to talk with other people in physical mode and 61.50 % disagreed that they did not have time to talk with people physically. 40.40% of respondents agreed that they missed their assigned work due to their involvement in social media and 59.60% disagreed about missing the assigned work due to the use of social media. Some people are busy with their daily activities and they do not have sufficient time to use new media. They use only some sites like Facebook and YouTube utilizing their leisure time.

Figure 2
Opportunity for Media Use
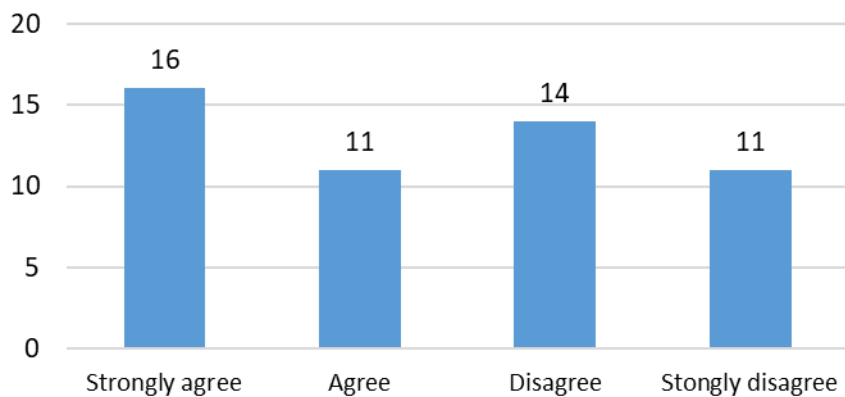
Posting Information and Sharing Videos

The respondents are reported to be posting various information and videos through social media like Facebook, YouTube, Viber and TikTok. Some have posted a lot of pictures and some others are trying to post and share videos and pictures. By posting and sharing opinions, people have also got responses from others and have become more responsive. Some people have already learned about sharing and posting things through social media. By posting many kinds of information through social media and people have become conscious of the activities happening around the world. They can also be active in such activities after getting feedback from others while using social sites.

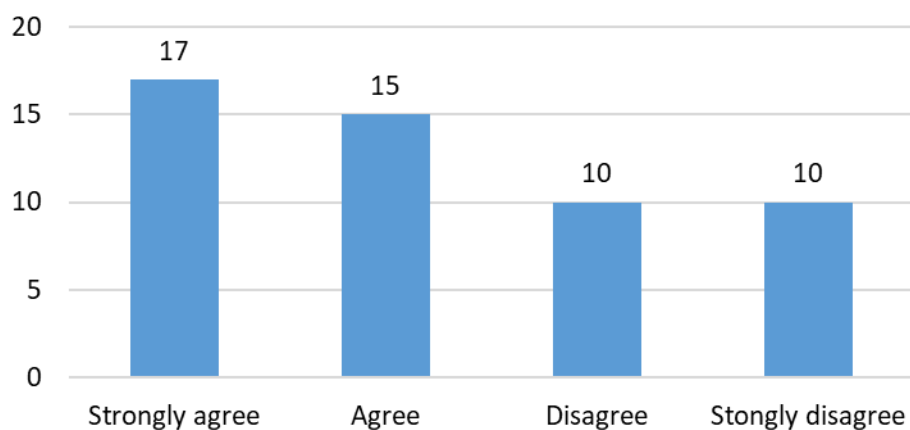**Figure 3**
Media Used for Dissemination of Information

Figure 3 demonstrated that 51.92% of respondents agreed that they posted information and shared videos using social media and 48.10% disagreed that they did not post information and share the video using social media. More people were found using social media for the dissemination of information. People depend more on the information they have received from social sites and do less communication in face-to-face mode. The number of users for information sharing through media is increasing every day.

Discussion

The results presented above suggest that all the respondents use various available social media on daily basis. They have appreciated the functions of new media for the rapid dissemination of information. Various platforms created by the media have provided them opportunities of working with new technology. They have also developed a new communication process making themselves globalized. The use of various social media indicates that people, today, are more conscious than they were in the past. At the same time, people see negative aspects of these media as well. Their ideas align with the findings of Chukwuere and Chukwuere (2017) that social media have promoted good and healthy societal norms as a positive sign and by posting irrelevant, racist, abusive, anti-cultural and religious contents and links promote hatred among people in the society. Cyberculture has transformed the conditions of human life and its role cannot be underestimated though it has some problems as You (2020) showed the similar findings. It has brought changes in daily activities of human life as people do many things from home taking social media as part of their daily lives. The findings suggest that Facebook has become a common social media platform used by people of all ages and professions as the idea resounds with the findings of Jha, Lin and Savoia (2016). It has become an easier tool for people to share and receive information as it promotes interaction and engagement of people. When people of all ages either youths or old people are found to be using media, they are highly influenced by the flow of social media.

The respondents during the interview appreciated the role of social media which has become part of daily lives. People have utilized various media and ICT tools for acquiring knowledge, exchanging thoughts and making their lives easier as they have promoted freedom of expression through various platforms of interaction. They have forced service providers to renew and improve the quality of products and services. Similarly, they have enabled people to think globally, being aware of their duties and rights, and promoting liberalization. People have become dependent on media for many purposes; however, some people have used them negatively. As Shrestha et al. (2021) show that despite some demerits of social media, overall positive impacts are seen in the life of university students for learning performance and communication with teachers. The proper use of technology has brought immense benefits to both teachers and students though some students are reported to have been using these media negatively, which has negative consequences. Even for the general public, similar impacts can be noticed and people need to be aware of using social media for having a positive outcome. People are shifted more to the use of smart technologies and are demanding e-governance practices for transparency, efficiency and easy access. Cyberculture has made people better informed, conscious of their daily activities and creative being exposed to the global world. They do many possible activities through virtual mode, avoiding physical activities. They have also transformed themselves from the passive recipients to active producers and receivers of information due to various media and ICT tools. New media have contributed to the promotion of business and relationships. By sharing ideas and techniques from the media, people have learned many new things to make their lifestyles easier.

The role of new media and technology has transformed many physical activities including the level of consciousness. The respondents accepted that they have realized many changes in their lives due to the shift to the digitalized and virtual worlds. Many of their previous ideas have been extended, substituted and transformed by digital and virtual realities. They also realized that digitalization and virtual worlds have become inseparable parts of their everyday lives as many activities have been extended due to their influences. This idea coincides with the thought of Yurtsever and Tasa (2009) that

virtual communities and the convergence of new media have created not only the possibilities of communication but also new models of perceptions and thinking. New media have an impact on many human activities like social interaction, learning styles, political mobilization and lifestyle. They also contribute to producing a different kind of generation that is fast, dynamic and confident. Their belief aligns with the findings of Sulistyawati and Santosa (2020) that cyberculture is shaped by global trends and information marketing is endemic to every generation. People fold technology into their lives in any way either by linking virtual reality with reality or by linking reality with virtual reality. They articulate technology as they need it creating their new culture.

People are sometimes reported to have become a victim of the negative influences of social media. Some are found misusing them and creating problems in society. From the findings of Famuyiwa and Ani (2014), it is reported that students who do not have knowledge of various ICT tools have negative impacts on their health and academic activities ranging from sleeping patterns, sexual behavior, nutrition pattern, assignments and project work. Even people do not know about the manipulative aspects of social media, which are sometimes used to exploit others by creating problems. Sometimes, the ineffective use of such media is found to have the negative result among people as they forget daily activities. People also become passive due to the improper use of such media. To the majority of people, it is quite impossible to get benefits from social media, but they are compelled to use media due to the inability of finding companions and overcoming their isolation. People away from the network culture cannot be included in it. The improper use of cyberculture results in low self-esteem, alienation, depression and collapse of human relations. This idea aligns with the findings of Kross et al. (2021) that significant negative effects of overall social media use are noted on the well-being of people. Some other people see the negative side of them as they have become weapons of exploitation. Some manipulate data and information to fulfill their vested interests and enter secretly into our private matters.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the aforementioned discussion, it can be inferred that the majority of respondents were improving the way they acquire knowledge, disseminate information and receive news concerning world events. These virtual media have promoted them to be free in terms of expression of feelings, connectivity, posting and sharing opinions through social media. This reflects that various social media have been used as the platforms of interaction converting the world into the digital age. The use of new media and networks has created a multicultural world through globalization and shifted them to work through the AI systems. The influence of cyberculture was found to have both positive and negative impacts based on how people use the available media. Most of the respondents were found to be developing new relationships and getting more entertainment facilities than in the past through the use of social media, network sites and ICT tools. Such media have been used as space to express thoughts and opinions for awareness and interaction among people with a minimal cost. A number of users is increasing as many things are digitalized and the concept like e-governance has become popular for efficient services. This indicates that the positive influence of cyberculture has a tremendous impact on government, non-government sectors, business houses, research centers and academic institutions. The study also shows the negative consequences of the involvement of people in new forms of media in terms of causing low self-esteem, depression and alienation. Some of the respondents reported that they have spent more time than their expectation neglecting other activities and resulting in poor job performance. The findings conclude that there are more positive influences of

cyberculture on the lives of people than the negative impacts as it has enabled them to think globally. The influence depends on the ability to manipulate tools. To conclude, cyberculture has the positive impacts on the lifestyle of the people of Pokhara Metropolis.

As suggested by the findings of the study, it is recommended that the public should be made conscious of the negative influences of cyberculture on living while utilizing its benefits. Some people are reported to have been cheated using such media; they should be careful about using them wisely. People have become addicted to using various media, websites, games, prone videos and many other harmful programs ignoring their duties and responsibilities. The excessive use of such media has made some people depressed as they only emphasize a virtual world without making any connections with the outer world. Further studies including anxiety, loss of creative power and cyberbullying through new media should be conducted for making the public aware of negative influences. In addition, the policies of the government should be to utilize cyberculture positively in order to avoid adversities. Thus, people need to be aware of how their lives can also be controlled by new forms of media and social network sites.

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