DISCONNECT AND STAY CONNECTED

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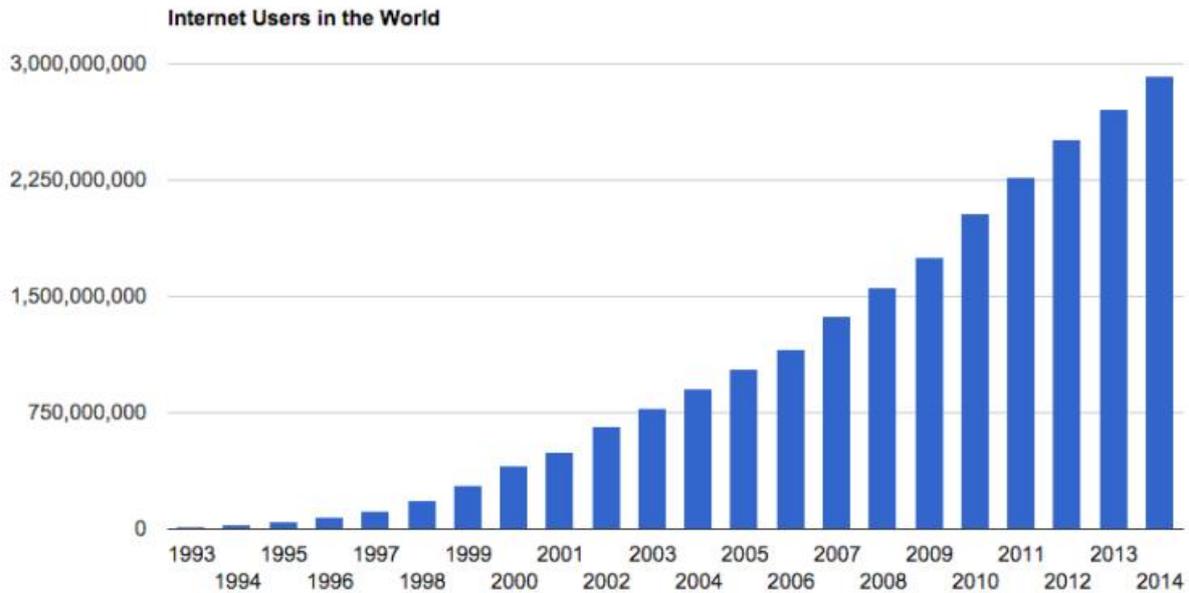
ABSTRACT

A mobile in our hand has the power to connect us with anyone from around the world, however far-off they may be. It has revolutionised how we connect to our near and dear ones and also those with whom ties would have been severed otherwise because of distance. Today teens prefer text messaging over face-to-face conversation. But as the technology ramps up, our emotional lives ramp down because in liking, commenting, posting and internet interactions, the purpose sitting right next to us are the ones whom we ignore the most. The present study argues that we may be free to operate from anywhere but we are also prone to being lonely everywhere. The study also emphasizes the rationale of some disconnect from digital communication to nurture our human spirit.

INTRODUCTION

Social media are computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. Social Media is the future of communication, a countless array of internet based tools and platforms that increase and enhance the sharing of information. This new form of media makes the transfer of text, photos, audio, video, and information, in general, increasingly fluid among internet users. Social Media has relevance not only for regular internet users, but business as well. Furthermore, social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content.

Applications that have developed within and around these platforms, websites, and tools are endless in number and functionality, but all make online sharing and searching easier in some fashion, regardless of their niche. As nearly every type of business has an association in the non-digital world, so too does the internet offer an endless number of niche social communities where members can gather around a common topic. Topics both general and specific now have living homes on the internet; anything from colon and digestive health to security and compliance can and do have active social media communities. The following graph shows how the number of internet users has multiplied in last two decades

Internet Users in the World

Source:https://www.google.co.in/search?q=internet+users+worldwide+graph&biw=1366&bih=667&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=0ahUKEwiOwMTkm-TOAhWJvo8KHSQzBx0QsAQIMw#imgrc=Yl38NryX5VjGpM%3A

But it is also a stark reality that these globally connecting devices are taking us farther and farther from the person sitting next to us and we are living all alone in the maddening crowd around us. The possible reason behind such kind of behaviour could be association of our growth with internet. For instance: - whenever we visit some places and the moment we realise that we have forgotten our phone. We realize we had left it behind, and we start panicking. This feeling of emotional dependence is the main focus of the present study. The study also examines the effect of FOMO on human health as well.

OBJECTIVE
The objectives of the study are
  ➢ To examine the impact of internet technology over human interactions
  ➢ To suggest steps for reducing the internet addiction in human behaviour

LITERATURE REVIEW
Review of Literature establishes the linkages of a study with other studies in the related field. In the present study the review of related literature helped in understanding the impact of digital devices on human behaviour and finding out the solution for reducing the impact.

Bargh and Mckenna (2004) examined the effects of Internet use on the user's psychological well-being, the formation and maintenance of personal relationships, group memberships and social identity, the workplace, and community involvement. Results of their study evidenced that while these effects are largely dependent on the particular goals that users bring to the interaction---such as self-expression, affiliation, or competition---they also interact in important ways with the unique qualities of the Internet communication situation.

Burke, Cameron and Lento (2010) in their research paper suggested that directed communication is associated with greater feelings of bonding social capital and lower loneliness, but has only a modest relationship with bridging social capital, which is primarily related to overall friend

network size. Surprisingly, users who consume greater levels of internet have reduced their bridging and bonding social capital and increased loneliness.

Dede Tisone and Goodell (2012) explored the relationship between the development of children, adolescents and social media. A core point made by them is that outcomes relate more to the way in which technology and social media are used, rather than to the devices and media themselves. The researchers argued that technology and social media are not going away from us and will continue to have, a major impact upon the connection, communication, and relationship abilities of children, youth, and adults. Virtually every interpersonal context of life is now significantly impacted. This major social change brings with it both risk and opportunity.

Billieux (2012) made an assumption that dysfunctional use of the mobile phone is part of a spectrum of cyber addictions that encompasses a variety of dysfunctional behaviors and implies involvement in specific online activities (e.g., video games, gambling, social networks, sex related websites).

O'Donoghue (2014) suggests that the brain may interpret this digital interaction as the same as in personal interaction while others maintain that differences are growing between how we perceive one another online as opposed to in reality. This a concern due to the potential loss of our ability to partake in face-to-face communication, although there are certainly advantages to new modes of interaction as well. Certainly, the ways humans are interacting with each other are changing, and this is changing us.

These studies reveal that with digital communication ramping up, the social bridging and bonding has reduced and the loneliness increased. The present study assess the impact of internet addiction in form of FOMO.

METHODOLOGY
Secondary data has been used to find out the impact on our social interactions and self care suggestions are given to control and reduce the impact of FOMO.

Internet Addiction
The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) defines Internet Addiction, *"As a chronic brain disorder, officially proposing for the first time that addiction is not limited to substance use. All addictions, whether chemical or behavioural, share certain characteristics including salience, compulsive use (loss of control), mood modification and the alleviation of distress, tolerance and withdrawal, and the continuation despite negative consequences."* Mental health practitioners have also seen excessive internet use as a symptom of another disorder such as anxiety or depression rather than a separate entity. Internet addiction could be considered an Impulse control disorder. Yet there is a growing consensus that this constellation of symptoms is an addiction. Internet addiction has been called Internet dependency and Internet compulsivity. Indisputably mobile, facebook, whatsapp, e-mail and twitter etc. are tools of fast communication but these have swept their users as the most toxic and infectious disease i.e. FOMO (Fear of Missing Out).

FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)
Coined by Dr. Dan Herman, Fear of missing out or FOMO is "a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent". This social angst is characterized by "a desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing". Infact, FOMO is a state of mental and emotional stress caused by missing an opportunity of social bonding usually a party or friend related excursion.

The Global Report by Tata Communication also reveals the following facts:-

- Indian men spend more time on the Internet than women, it is Indian women (21%) who outdo men (16%) in feeling anxious or lost when not connected to the Internet
- More than half of surveyed Indian internet users (56%) admit they can't survive more than five hours without internet connectivity
- This study further discloses that tablets and smartphones are rapidly replacing television as the preferred screen as nearly twice as many surveyed Indians (43%) are willing to give up television for the Internet, compared to Americans (17%) and Europeans (22%) respondents
- In the report, the Internet's ability to 'connect people globally with incredible speed' is cited by more than three quarters of the Indian respondents as its principle benefit to society, as opposed to 'providing a democratic platform for expression' (10%), 'enabling e-commerce' (4%), 'making shopping easier (3%)' or a 'social equaliser' (5%)

A study by UK telecom regulator "Ofcome" came up with interesting but disturbing results on the effect of smartphones:

- Smartphone addiction was admitted to by 37% of adults and 60% of teens.
- 51% of adults and 65% of teens admitted to using smartphones while socialising,
- Mealtime was confessed to by 23% of adults and 34% of teens
- 22% of adult and 47% of teens have used or answered their smartphone in the bathroom

It is clear from these reports that undoubtedly the digital technology has ramped up and we have got many more alternative opportunities of social interactions but the emotional dependence on the use of these devices has resulted in sleep deprivation, binge eating, binge drinking, lack of focus, anxiety, less participation in academic events, a cluttered schedule, and insomnia. FOMO has affected all types of people; most people have a chronic fear that someone somewhere could be having a better time without them. Internet addiction has spread in such a way that the modern youth feels that it is a way for them to stay connected and that is why they check social media sites frequently to make sure they are not missing out anything. Many check facebook at least once an hour when they are awake. Due to FOMO, people are quick to respond the opportunities and to adopt new behaviours, styles, products and brands. They are constantly on the lookout for new experiences preferring instant gratification to the good things which come to those who wait.

Indian Scenario of FOMO
Tata Communications, a leading provider of A New World of Communication, in its global report, titled 'Connected World II,' reveals habits, attitudes, understanding and expectations of Indian internet users. The report concludes that 82% of surveyed Indians admit to a 'Fear of Missing Out' (FOMO) when not connected to the Internet, the highest percentage globally. The report captures responses from 9,417 internet users across six emerging and developed countries – France, Germany, India (2,117), Singapore, the US, and the UK – to better understand how users engage and connect with the Internet today.

- The study reveals that in India, not only did 46% of respondents spend 6 hours or more a day actively using the Internet (in comparison to 29% globally), but an alarming 82% of respondents admit to the 'Fear of Missing Out' (FOMO) when not connected (the highest globally)

The Treatment of Internet Addiction
Staying connected is one thing but behavioural psychologist say intervention is necessary when social media users become abusers. Sherry Turkle, a clinical psychologist has well said "What

technology makes easy is not always what nurtures the human spirit." There is a general consensus that total abstinence from the Internet should not be the goal of the interventions and that instead, an abstinence from problematic applications and a controlled and balanced Internet usage should be achieved. So the following treatment strategies known as the cognitive-behavioural approach should be used to reduce this addiction.

(a.) The internet addict should be advised to log off or set goals with regard to the amount of time for the internet interactions
(b.) The FOMO affected should be advised strongly to abstain from a particular application or some reminder card should be used to remind him the benefits of breaking it.
(c.) By disrupting the addict's patterns of internet use and suggesting him some new time schedules, addiction can be checked.
(d.) By using family therapy, the person should be engaged to address relational problems in the family due to his excessive use of digital devices.

FOMO can be problematic, Dr. Reiner said, when individuals begin to have feelings of envy, depression, or anxiety when surfing social media sites. So according to him, the best way to treat FOMO is to gradually make patients put their smartphones down and to encourage them to live in the "here and now."

Some psychological approaches emphasise Motivational Interviewing (MI), Reality Therapy (RT) and also Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) have been used to solve this riddle. Individuals with addictive behaviours should be motivated to new behavioural skills, using techniques such as open ended questions, reflective listening, affirmation and summarization to help them express their concerns about change.

Reality therapy (RT) is supposed to encourage individuals to choose to improve their lives by committing to change their behaviour. It includes sessions to show clients that addiction is a choice and to give them training in time management; it also introduces alternative activities to the problematic behaviour. According to Kim, RT is a core addiction recovery tool that offers a wide variety of uses as a treatment for addictive disorders such as drugs, sex, food, and works as well for the Internet. In his RT group counseling program treatment study, Kim found that the treatment program effectively reduced addiction level and improved self-esteem of 25 Internet-addicted university students in Korea.

Twohig and Crosby used an Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT) protocol including several exercises adjusted to better fit the issues with which the sample struggles to treat six adult males suffering from problematic Internet pornography viewing. The treatment resulted in an 85% reduction in viewing at post-treatment with results being maintained at the three month follow-up (83% reduction in viewing pornography).

CONCLUSION
Digital technology has contributed much in our development and we feel overwhelmed by the lives technology makes possible. We our free to work from anywhere, but we are also prone to being lonely everywhere. We turn to new technology to fill the void, but as technology ramps up, our emotional lives ramp down. The virtual world has implications that are very real; for one thing, we stand to lose the pleasure of spontaneity. It is easy to break-up with someone, discuss personal issues, avoid unpleasant conversations and try to reconcile differences with a friend or spouse with an online message. Being on our smartphone is a source of constant anxiety as we feel compelled to participate in the exchange of messages and can lead to life-changing

addiction. The need to connect online gets so strong that we end up peeping into every aspect of others' lives and sharing the same. "When we are with our family and are on the phone constantly, it sends out the message to them that they are not our priority. We are role models for our kids and complaining about their excessive usage of devices will not help, rather we should reflect on our own habits. Also, the use of smartphones should be limited strictly to necessary interactions. The crux of the paper is No place is sacred and smartphones have breached every last citadel of privacy. Sometimes you have to disconnect to stay connected. Remember the old days when we had eye contact during a conversation? When everyone wasn't looking down at a device in their hands? We've become so focused on that tiny screen that we forget the big picture, the people right in front of us.

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