

Emirati youth's level of addiction to New Information Technology: Opportunities, challenges/dangers, and solutions

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This project presents and reflects upon Emirati youth's use of new information technology (NIT) and the implications of that use in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). With over 3.8 million Internet users, the UAE, located in the Gulf States region of the Middle East, is one of the most connected countries in the world. It has a global community and economy that is embracing NIT faster and more effectively than any other Arab nation. While NIT is building bridges between Emirati youth and distant others, it is also building ever stronger walls between them and close individuals, including family members, relatives, and neighbors at the same time. These youth admit that they surround themselves with NIT tools while paying little attention to their own needs as well as the needs of others. In addition, they are fully aware that the misuse of and growing addiction to NIT tools can lead to destructive behaviors.

While dependency on NIT tools in this region reflects a similar world-wide trend among youth, this addiction has specific implications for Emirati Youth. How does dependency on NIT tools affect family relations, study habits and interactions with the opposite gender? How does NIT tool usage differ from other NIT usages in other regions of the world? On the other hand, how does NIT competency help Emirati youth stay globally connected? Do NIT tools help Emirati youth compete in the local economy? What are the implications of the Emirati youth competency and dependency on NIT tools? These questions and others will be addressed in this final research report.

Therefore, a representative sample of Emirati Youth was selected from Emirati public and private universities of all seven emirates (638 subjects) wherein Emirati students attend in great numbers. Students/subjects ages 16 and above were given the opportunity to fill out a questionnaire that was explained and administered to them by seven trained Emirati research assistants. Reasons for the stated problems and recommendations to deal with them are provided in the course of this project.

Key words: Media addiction, UAE, Sharjah, Emirati youth, media dependency, new information technology.