
INFLUENCE OF POPULAR NETWORKING SITES AMONG YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

The popularity of social media and its extensive use among the young generation make it a subject of research in the field of social science. Scholars and researchers have conducted many studies to investigate the various aspects of social networking sites. Here, an attempt has been made to study the impact of social networking on social and academic life of young generations. This study also focused to establish any relationship between social networking and mental health of youth. This study is based on secondary sources of data and data are mainly source out from articles, journals, books, magazines, published and unpublished sources. This is found out that the target group prefers spending an abundant amount of time on these social networking sites which keeps them away from their own natural surroundings and thus social gatherings are hampered. Due to which several mental health issues are emerging like Fear of Missing out, anxiety, loneliness etc. This study concludes that use of social networks provides a wide range of opportunities and could be both beneficial as well as harmful. Effects of social networking among young generations depend upon the way it is used by them.

Keywords: Social Networking, Academic Life, Mental Health, Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO), Youth Etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Internet is a knowledge technology that is widely used among the people particularly in youth as a means of information. The recent report highlights that total cell phone subscribers reached 117.3 crore in India (Mukul & Aryan, 2020). Advancement of technology and emergence of the Internet provide us several platforms like social networking sites to share information and to communicate with people. Social networking sites provide an individual various opportunity like participation, collaboration, interactivity, communication, sharing, networking, creativity, distribution, flexibility and customisation (Poore, 2013, p. 5). Although the purpose of networking sites is to facilitate several opportunities of sharing information, videos, photos, messages, and communication among the people, it has become a means of significant changes in individuals and society (Sahin, 2018).

Nowadays it has become easier to access social networking sites due to the rise of internet access speeds and smartphones. In the technological world SNSs are becoming much popular among youth. Great enthusiasm can be observed among youth about social networking. The number of social networking sites users is increasing immensely not only in India but also across the world. The massive growth of social networks and its ability to engage youth has emerged a crucial study for us as it may affect the youth positively or negatively. Kemp (2019) reported that 59% of the world's social media users belong from the age group between 18-34 years. This clearly shows the popularity of social media among the young generation. The extensive use of social networking among youth makes it a crucial area of study considering the risk and consequences associated with it. As we are living in the era of technology and networking, the tremendous growth of internet and social media has much influence on youth, as they are the heavy users of SNSs. Emergence of social media is significantly influencing the personal, social and academic life of youth. Many studies reveal that social networking sites are much popular among youth and youth are seen to engage on these sites too much. Which affect the personal, social and academic of the youth. There are several positives of using social networking sites. But the high engagement and long duration of the use of social networking sites among youth make it a crucial area of study.

Bashir and Bhat (2017) state that imbalance created by excessive use of social media among youth is a great concern for researchers and society regarding the many problems like anxiety, stress, depression, loneliness, change in communication patterns within and outside family members, imbalance in personal and professional life etc. Hence, the high engagement of youth on social media emerges several challenges. Also, social media has significant influence on different aspects of present digital life apart from online communication, from marketing to education, to health, to basic human interaction. So, it is clear that social networks have several advantages, however the excessive use and lack of understanding is a great concern in context of the present

younger generation regarding the negative effects associated with it. Social network is an easy tool for individuals to start and develop relationships as it provides a platform where individuals are able to meet people based on their own interest. Nowadays social networking sites are highly used for personal, professional and academic activities. So, it becomes important to address the impact of social networking sites on personal, professional and academic life and to understand the different perspectives of using social networks. Social networking sites are fast and becoming very popular means of interpersonal and public communication. These sites are virtual platforms which enable the people to connect with each one other, share information, ideas, experiences, pictures and messages of interest. With the development of technology, SNSs have become more and more popular among students, so it is important to understand the use of social networking sites among students, and its impact on their academic performance. Guedes, Nardi, Guimaraes, Machado, and King (2015) concluded that social networking sites are modern communication tools which not only benefits but excessive use of social networks has several negative impacts in the personal, professional, academic, social and family lives of a person.

Concept of Social Networking

Hussain, Loan and Yaseen (2017) revealed that the journey of social networking sites started in 1997 with Six.Degree.com a social network website. After that many networking sites such as LiveJournal, Friedlander, LinkedIn, Myspace, Flickr, YouTube and Facebook have been developed. Many of these networking sites deal with special purposes like LinkedIn for business, classmates for education, ResearchGate for research, My Creative Community for writers, Shefali for books, TravBuddy for travel, Mychurch for religious etc. Also, there are content sharing SNSs like Flickr (photo sharing), Twitter (text sharing) and YouTube (video sharing).

Social networking is the use of internet based social media where people interact freely, sharing and discussing information about each other and their lives by using a multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, videos and audio (Gaikwad, 2015). It is a global phenomenon that has highly changed the interaction pattern. Social networking service is an internet-based platform which allows the users to share emails, instant messaging, online comments, wikis, digital photos and videos, and post blog entries (Sadiku, Omotoso, & Musa, 2019). Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social networking sites as "Web based services that allow the users to construct a public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and, (3) view and transverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Singh and Gill as cited in Hussain, Loan, and Yaseen, (2017) define a social networking site (SNS) as web-based service that allows individuals to become part of the specific group and establish profiles within a closed system, manage connections with other users and share activities, ideas, interests and events. Mainly social networking sites (SNSs) are virtual communities where users can create individual public profiles, interact with real-life friends and meet other people based on shared interests (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011).

Social networking sites are becoming much popular around the globe as these sites provide users the platform to create individuals' public profile, interact with their friends and other people on the basis of their shared interests. Social Networking Sites (SNSs) helped the people to become closer to their friends, even when they are miles away. SNSs have become an essential part of life around the world due to ease with which users can make profiles, share information, upload photos and videos and interact with friends and family. The Internet has rapidly changed the information sharing pattern due to availability of several social networking platforms to share contents, stories, opinions, and information. Social networking now affects nearly every domain of our life like education, politics, healthcare, social relationships, communication and personal productivity (Sadiku et al., 2019). Social networking sites has revolutionised the interaction pattern and they are used as a mean to interact with people around the globe.

Currently there is a plethora of social networks with various features meant to suit the different interests of their users. As SNSs are much popular among youth, and this study is an attempt to understand the impact of social networking on personal, professional, social and academic life of young generations. Therefore, following are the main objective of this study:

- To study the trend of use of social networking sites among youth.
- To assess the impact of social networking on the social life of the youth.
- To examine the academic impact of social networking among youth.

- To analyse the impact of social networking on the mental health of youth.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the secondary sources of data. The data for this study are sourced out from printed as well as electronic materials. This includes books, journals, reports, thesis, online data available on the internet etc. For the purpose of data collection many articles, journals, books, magazines have been studied. The resources helped in collecting relevant data.

III. DISCUSSION

The popularity of social media and its extensive use among the young generation make it a subject of research in the field of social science. Scholars and researchers have conducted many studies to investigate the various aspects of social networking sites. Many researchers focused their study to understand how these sites may influence personal, professional, academic life of youth and interpersonal relationships. Here, an attempt has been made to address the usage of social networking sites and how it effects the social, academic and mental health of young generations.

Usage of Social Networking Sites Among youth

Bharti and Bansal (2019) in a survey paper reported that approximately 74 million male users and 23.4 million female users of Facebook in India are in the age group 18 to 24 years whereas 62.6 million male users and 18.5 million female users belong to the age group 25 to 34 years. Moreover, the number of social media users in India were 142.23 million in 2015 which continuously increased and data showed that there were 226.06 million SNS users in the year 2019. It is expected that if SNS users keep on increasing with the same rate in 2022 it will become 370.77 million. Hussain, Loan, and Yaseen (2017) carried out a study in "University of Kashmir" among 212 students and results of this study show that 85% of youth use social networking sites whereas 15% of students do not use social networking sites. The students who do not use networking sites mention many reasons such as 40 % of them are not interested in networking sites, 33.33% due to lack of time, 26.67% have privacy concerns whereas 20% consider it as a useless exercise.

Majority of the students use smartphones (88.24%) to access social networking sites whereas 35.29% and 4.71% use laptops and desktops respectively and 48.23 percent students spend 1-2 hours' time on social networking sites per day whereas 24.70% and 15.29% students spend less than 1 hour and 2-3 hours respectively on social networking sites. Only the few students (11.74%) spend more than 3 hours per day on networking sites (Hussain et al., 2017). This study also reported that Facebook is the very popular networking site among students with 77.65% of usage. Whereas 69.41% students use Google+, 51.76% use YouTube, 32.94% use twitter and other networking sites like LinkedIn, Orkut, Friendster, Bebo, Hi-5, and Instagram are less popular among the youth. Gramlich (2019) in a report state that 2.44 billion monthly active users of Facebook belong to the age group 25 to 29 years worldwide and India is a top among all the countries. Two billion monthly active users of YouTube belong to the age group 15 to 25 years, 1 billion monthly active users to 18-24 years, 330 million monthly active users of Twitter to 18-24 years, 303 million monthly active users to 25-29 years and 210 million monthly active users to 18-24 years. Bharucha (2018) reported that 2% of youth spent 5 hours in a week on these networking sites, 8% spent 5 to 10 hours in a week, 15% spent 15 to 20 hours in a week, 24% spent between 20 to 25 hours a week whereas 20 % of youth spent above 50 hours per week on networking sites.

Social Networking sites are used for various purposes like to gain knowledge, to share information, to search new friends, to contact family members etc. Majority of students (82.35%) use social networking sites to gain knowledge, 60% percent for the purpose to contact family and friends, 58.82% to share information on networking sites. However, 31.76% students use social networking sites to promote awareness among people and 28.8% use it for passing time on networking sites (Hussain et al., 2017). A study indicates that social networking sites are mostly used for social purposes and mainly to maintain the established offline networks. This study further added that extroverts use social networking sites for social enhancement whereas introverts use it for social compensation (Rithika & Selvaraj, 2013). Bharucha (2018) remarked that social networking sites provide opportunities to connect with friends and people and found that only 10% of SNSs users consider all social network contacts as their friends, 27% of youth consider majority of these network connections as

their friends, whereas 46% approved that very few contacts of social networks were their friends. It is interesting to point out that 71% of youth do not meet their online friend to whom they talk on a regular basis.

Influence of Social Networking in Social Life of Youth

Kumari and Verma (2015) investigated the impact of social networking sites on social relationships among college students. They found that some students hesitated to interact with few people but can interact on social networking sites very confidently. However, some students are found in intimate relationships with strangers or their online friends. About 20% youth were found to be good friends with virtual strangers and boys and girls both spent approximately equal time on social networking sites to interact with their friends, parents and teachers and no significant difference was found. About 33 percent of youth believe that social networking sites helped them in interacting with parents, whereas 33 percent students found that networking sites are mostly helpful to connect with their parents especially when they are living away from the home. Students approved that they used WhatsApp and Facebook to interact with their teachers and could connect to their teachers anytime. Thus, the use of social networking sites has not been limited to interacting with friends only but it is preferred by college students to connect with their parents and teachers. So, it can be concluded that the use of SNSs among youth has several advantages like to connect with peers and teachers, to explore relationships by getting a supportive environment and to get information easily. On the other hand, this study found that many students are not aware of the privacy policies of networking sites and they share their personal information. This creates many problems like cyber bullying, exposure to illegal content and privacy violation.

Nandisha and Anand (2017) reported that 80% of the youth agree that social networking helpful to create awareness among youth, 97.5% told it help them to connect with users, 53% said use of social media spoils their social benchmarks whereas 70% of respondents said that social networking becoming hobby for the youth.

Networking Sites and Academic Performance of Youth

Poore (2016) in her book "Using Social Media in the Classroom" marked that use of social networks enables the students to share and discuss class topics by posting useful videos or links or commenting on someone's wall. Thus, by use of social networks students can regularly interact with each other over a period of time in order to enhance their knowledge of a topic. Moreover, the discussion forum elements of a social network are very helpful to promote deep and rich conversation among students. On the other hand, social networks provide easy tools to share knowledge, information, videos etc. That enables students to locate and quickly circulate topic related resources among peers. Best advantage of social networks is that it enables the teachers and students to connect outside the classroom. Teachers and students can create their class network and can add experts in the class network. Also, students can link up with class in a different school or even in another country. Thus, using social media can be highly motivating for students, particularly when they have control over their media-based learning environment. Omekwu et al. (2014) revealed that there are several academic benefits of using networking sites like meeting with co-research scholars on virtual platforms, self-esteem and well-being, research and learning, boosting interpersonal relationships, development of web skills etc. The researchers reported that Facebook and other sites help the youth to develop their identities, beliefs and understanding on various issues such as political, religious, and to develop relationships with virtual friends.

Jordan and Weller (2018) carried out a study to address the benefits, challenges and problems in professional engagement with social networks. They analysed a wide range of benefits and problems associated with engaging with social networking. This study reported that 72% of respondents saw social networking as a problem rather than academic benefits and only 11% agreed that it benefits their academic works, whereas 39% described social networking as both benefits as well as problems in their academic work. This study found that social networks such as blogs and twitter provide a wide range of opinions on various issues that could be accessed any time. Social media is used as a virtual address book and helps the youth to remain in contact with their professional and colleagues particularly when they move away from college and institutions. Study also pointed that SNSs provide opportunities to reach the recruiters and professionals for recruitment and specific purposes. However, 15% respondents indicated that SNSs are not useful due to unreliability of information available online and on social networking sites. Major problems with most social networking sites are that

these sites are purposely served and none of them care about the goals of the people and youth. Study suggested that use of social networks need to be viewed within the border frame especially in higher education. Boateng and Amankwaa (2016) suggest that academic life of students is significantly influenced by social networks and institutions are trying to adopt social media to educate the youth and students. Present day social media is considered as a suitable platform by the institutions to connect with students and other higher authorities. More the students spend their time on networking sites less the time students have for academic work (Celestine & Nonyelum, 2018). Hence, there is a significant relationship between the time spent on networking sites and time doing academic work such as assignment, research, seminars etc. Nandisha and Anand (2017) carried out a study among 200 students and found that 90% of students told social networking sites helpful to gain knowledge but 80% of students said that social media play a negative role in education. Al-rahmi, Zeki, and Saged (2017) remarked that there is a significant relationship between collaborative learning and student satisfaction on networking sites, social media use and student academic performance and student satisfaction and learner performance. Whereas, this study indicates that there is no significant relationship between collaborative learning and engagement of youth on social networking sites.

Valkenburg and Piotrowski (2017) revealed that parenting is not an easy task in the twenty-first century and most difficult task for parents to enforce rules about social media use among young generations. Setting rules in social media use among youth and teens are more difficult because restriction can easily lead to boomerang effect. It is also pointed out that the young generation is less tolerant of parental interference with social media use. Although media enables the family members to keep in contact with each other but it also offers new generations various platforms to display risk behaviour at an early age. Hence the extensive use of social media among young generations can cause great concern and fear for parents.

Social Networking and Mental Health of Youth

Social networking not only enhances the youth with various opportunities but also raises several mental health issues. Bashir and Bhat (2017) reported that social media has adverse effects on present generations especially the younger ones. Younger generation is in their emerging state of life and is at higher risk of serious mental health problems like anxiety, stress, depression etc. These are the major problems among youth and proper measures are required to reduce the risks. Proper awareness movement can be organised to understand the impact of usage of social networking sites among youth. A number of studies established a connection between use of social networking and its undesirable outcomes like increase in anxiety, stress, depression and loneliness. The extensive use of social media by the young generation raised many challenges regarding its negative impact on mental health. Also, the various studies reported that there is a link between social networking and compulsive behaviour. Stephen and Edmonds (2018) suggested that evidence about the roles of social media play in relation to our mental health is still emerging and there may be both positive and negative impact of social media on mental health. But extensive use of networking sites among youth creates several challenges as follows:

Anxiety

Link between excessive use of social media and anxiety has been reported by various studies. Rosen, Carrier, and Cheever (2013) reported that young generations frequently check the messages on their social networking applications and feel restlessness when they were not able to access messages on social networking sites, which create the problem of Phantom Vibration syndrome (PVS). PVS is a kind of perception of an addict regarding the vibration of his mobile phone.

Nandi and Das (2013) in a survey found that around 46% Indian youth who used social networking sites suffered from mental tiredness whereas approximately 28% and 22% Indian youth suffered with strain on mind and anxiety respectively. Rosen et al. (2013) reported that younger generations are checking their messages on networking sites frequently and when they were unable to do so, they reported more anxiety in comparison to older generations. Research revealed that four of the five most used social media platforms make young people suffer with anxiety and rates of anxiety and depression in youth have risen about 70% in the past 25 years. There are various reasons due to which young people developing anxiety, and cyber-bullying is one of them (#StatusofMind, 2017).

Stress and Depression

In present social networking is much popular among youth and addiction to social media is incredibly increased, once an individual gets attached with networking sites it becomes very difficult for them to refrain from its use as comments and likes on networking sites acts as positive reinforcement. Hence, it becomes difficult for youth to stop the use of networking sites. Few people also compare their lives with their peers on virtual sites. Park, Song, and Lee (2014) indicated that a social network like Facebook is positively associated with acculturative stress of college students. An investigation of stress on mental health of students suggests that there exist various negative impacts of stress on mental health of students. Therefore, we can conclude that excessive use of social networks among youth creates the problem of stress, which affects the mental health of the younger generation.

Excessive use of social media leads an individual to suffer with many mental health issues, which starts with anxiety and leads to depression. Rosen et al. (2013) reported that symptoms of major depression were found among the individuals who spent most of their time on social networking sites for several purposes. Palyan (2019) in a study on the impact of social media on mental health revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between the number of hours of social media use among youth and depression, which indicates that more hours of use of social media is associated with depressive symptoms among youth. In addition, the data gathered in this research showed that 48% of respondents use social media 1 to 5 hours in a day and 65% respondents use social networking sites more than 15 times in a week. This study remarked that individuals who used social media 2.7 times per day were likely to suffer from depression, and individuals who spent more time on SNSs had 1.7 times the risk of depression.

Loneliness

Social networking is very popular in youth and having greater interconnectivity among young generations but many studies suggest that the present young generation is lonelier than other groups. According to Yao & Zhong (2013) excessive, unhygienic and compulsive usage of social networking sites among the young generation enhances loneliness and higher the level of internet usages among youth, higher the emotional loneliness. Berryman, Ferguson, and Negy (2018) in a study examined several aspects of social media use among youth and their relationship with various mental health problems including loneliness, suicidal thoughts, decreased empathy and overall mental health. This study revealed that social media use is a poor predictor of mental health problems and concern about mental health issues due to social media use may be unwarranted. The exception was vaguebooking, which predicted loneliness and suicidal thoughts. In addition, this study pointed out that how individuals use social media is more critical than time spent online in regards to mental health.

Yavich, Davidovitch, and Frenkel (2019) conducted a study to explore the associations between social media usage patterns (based on Facebook) and loneliness among 157 students in higher education institutions. This study found that there is no significant relationship between loneliness and Facebook use and it may be due to youth spending more time on other social media containing photos, videos and clips. This study further suggested that associations between social media usage and loneliness might be community specific.

FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)

Social networking is one of the major contributing factors to FOMO (Fear of missing out) among youth. Smartphones enable people to connect with their professional and social network continuously. This may create a compulsive and continuous checking of messages and status updates as people fear to miss such opportunity. Jessica et al. (2016) suggested that fear of missing out influences decision-making and behaviour. Most of the people on social networking sites relate their life to what they are seeing on social media and the level of FOMO significantly related with social media consumption among people. This study concluded that as social networking becomes popular among the people, it is important to understand the relationship between FOMO and social networking. Youth get emotionally attached with networking sites because of various reasons such as posts, interaction with friends, news, live videos etc. Social networks allow the youth to see all the fun things, videos and the posts available on networking sites. Therefore, youth hardly seek to leave networking sites. He or she fears to miss out the things and opportunities available on networking sites. Swainston (2020)

in her study suggested that social media often get us down when we start to compare our lives to others or experience fear of missing out.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Younger generation has put social networking sites at the top of their priority list. This literature review is done with the purpose to address the various impacts of social networking among youth. To fulfil this purpose this literature review divided into several parts based on the objectives. Literature search shows that youth are the heavy users of social networking sites. Data showed that media users are continuously increasing and there were 226.06 million SNS users in the year 2019. It is expected that if SNSs users keep on increasing with the same rate, in 2022 it would become 370.77 million. Greater numbers of electronic devices are available to youth. They use Smartphones, Laptops, and Desktops to access the social networking sites. Facebook is the very popular networking site among students followed by Google+, Twitter and other networking sites like LinkedIn, Orkut, Friendster, Belo, Hi-5, and Instagram. Many students have more than 300 friends and only about 50% of the virtual friends are personally known to them. Social networking has a significant role in the social life of youth. Many students believe that social media is not promoting good societal norms and values, immoral and unethical posting of pictures and photos on networking sites negatively affect their interaction pattern in the society. Social media has changed their behaviour, opinion, interaction in a group and with individuals and created awareness among youth. Considering the academic and professional impact of social networking sites, it could be concluded that a student spends their more time on networking sites less the time students have for academic work. There is a significant relationship between the time spent networking sites and time doing academic work such as assignment, research, seminars etc. Extensive use of social media that is not related to the academic work negatively affects the academic performance of students. However, many studies indicate that if the students use the social networks for academic purposes such as discussion on academic work, topics taught in class, this will enhance their academic performance.

“As they something online is free, you are not a customer you are a product” (Zittrain, 2012). This is very clear that social media comes with lots of benefits like sharing information, news, videos and connecting with peers, friends, teachers, parents, people across the globe, getting exposure to the supportive environment to explore the relationship but excessive use of networking sites have several adverse effects among youth. The youth are acquiring an addiction to the particular activities and believe that interacting with friends is the best way to live in a society. Youth are trying to impress their peers on networking sites and doing so, several times they compare themselves with their virtual friends. As a result, youth are suffering with several mental health issues like anxiety, depression, stress, loneliness, fear of missing out (FOMO) etc. On the basis of secondary sources of data this study concluded that use of social networks provides a wide range of opportunities and could be both beneficial as well as harmful. Effects of social networking on youth depend upon the way it is used by youth.

V. SUGGESTIONS

- The studies are required to examine additional issues of social networking sites such as ethical and intellectual aspects.
- Future studies should be conducted to access academic use of SNSs in educational institutions.
- There should be conscious use of social media among youth and more research should be done to determine the effect of social media on mental health and social life.
- We need to investigate the impact of excessive social media use on youth loneliness and psychological well-being.
- Future research should consider interviewing both youth and their parents together at the same time to get both parties perspectives on the same issues.
- Heavy users of social networking sites should moderate the use of these sites to create a balance between their offline and online communities and to avoid addiction.

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