

Impact of Social Networking Sites on Indian Youth: Boon or Bane?

Rashi Ahuja^{1*}, Aradhna Bharadwaj²

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to find out whether the social networking sites are a boon or bane for the youth of India. The importance of Social Networking Sites (SNS) in people's life is increasing each day. Social Networking Sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Myspace, Orkut etc. though have a number of positives for the individuals using it, such as job opportunities, easy connect with people, education etc., it poses some prominent and undeniable dangers to its users as well. Some of the common negatives include, low self-esteem, distraction from studies or work, cybercrime, cyber bullying etc. Thus, in this paper we focused on some of the potential positives and negatives of social networking sites on Indian youth as well as on the ethical responsibilities of the users of these websites.

Keywords: *Social Networking Sites, Indian Youth, Impact*

Computers were born in 1975, and have never looked back ever since then. Yet, until two decades ago, people seldom used computers for personal use. However, the past two decades have seen a remarkable change in the usage of technology globally and even more noticeably in India. Today, individuals aged from 5- 70 years are using technology for some or the other purpose. While, some use technology for professional purposes, most use technology for personal needs. Technology via computers or smart phones clubbed with internet has made technology usage more of a necessity than a luxury. The exponential increase in the usage of computers and internet has further led to the emergence of Social Networking Sites. Currently there are 2.1 Billion Active Social Media Users out of 3 billion internet users across the globe (Pew Research Centre, 2015). Hence, it is obvious to say that internet and especially social networking sites has a huge impact on the society.

Social Networking Sites have been defined differently by different authors. Such as, according to PC Magazine, A Social Networking Site is a Web site that provides a venue for people to share their activities with family, friends and colleagues or to share their interest in a particular topic. Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and Twitter are the leading social sites, While Federal Bureau of

¹ Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida, India

² Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida, India

*Responding Author

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Investigation, United States refers to them as websites that encourage people to post profiles of them—complete with pictures, interests, and even journals—so they can meet like-minded friends.

Social networking sites such as Friendster, MySpace, and Facebook have become immensely popular. The rapid adoption of these systems raise questions about the functionalities they offer that make them so popular, and about the communicate dynamics that are shaped by their use. The diffusion of social networking sites can be seen in various usership statistics: MySpace attracted over 114 million visitors globally by July of 2007 (Comscore, 2007). LinkedIn, which allows users to connect with each other for professional and social purposes, recently reached the “10 million member mark” with 130,000 new members joining every week (Allen, 2007). Another common and popular SNS is Facebook, with an estimated 1.44 billion members across the globe (as per 31st March, 2015), and 125 Million Indian users, Facebook is now the second most trafficked website in the World (Abram, 2015) and the third most used web site in India, as a million new users establish accounts each week (Levy, 2014). India is the second biggest market for facebook after USA, wherein maximum number of users are amongst teenagers and youth. It is a portal where users can create profiles that describe various attributes about themselves such as their hometown, birthday, preferred activities, etc. Thus, there is no doubt on the increasing membership of Indian youth in these websites, thereby bringing our attention to the potential possible benefits and drawbacks of these sites.

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Poor Communication Skills

Students nowadays, are mostly involved in virtual communication that is communication over the internet, which reduces their ability to communicate effectively with other face-to-face.

Poor Grades

Multiple studies have indicated that social media usage is inversely propotional to grades in school and college. It is assumed that over exposure of students to the internet, takes away a lot of their time which could be otherwise utilized for studies.

Poor Self-Esteem

One characteristic of SNS are that they are a platform utilized by individuals to post pictures, share stories etc., hence this attribute of these websites are said to have an impact on an individual’s self- esteem. Frequent comparisons are made in terms of the pictures one posts, the number of likes, views, comments etc. all of which leads to a teen evaluating himself/herself in light of these attributes.

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Time Wastage

Youth has a tendency today to search for everything online. While it opens doors to a wide range of information, somewhere one also tends to search for or browse through irrelevant content, which wastes a lot of their time.

Poor Relationships

Nowadays, most phones are smart phones with internet and mobile applications which are a mobile version of these SNS. Having a mobile in hand always, results in the children and adults checking their phones at multiple short intervals, which may take away their family time/ quality time spent with family.

Effect on Health

SNS have an impact on physical as well as mental health of an individual. Since a lot of time is being utilized in using the multiple SNS, individuals seldom get time to eat and sleep on time as well as since they are spending a lot of time on these websites, there is hardly any time left for physical activity, all of which impacts an individual's health.

While we have stated a number of negatives, Social Networking Sites go beyond them as well and have a number of positive effects of people as well.

POSITIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Social Networking Sites are an important part of our lives today. Thus, it is unavoidable to even imagine that it doesn't have any positive impact on us. Some of the positive impacts of Social Networking sites are:

Ease of staying in touch with people

Social Networking Sites, enable people all of the world to be in touch with each other, via instant messaging, sharing pictures, posting messages etc.

Education

Large pools of information is available on the internet which can help students in their studies. Thus, there is ease in doing research.

Access to Varied Information

Social Networking sites give us access to things happening all across the globe thus keeping the youth abreast with the current scenarios.

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Starting a social movement

Another common use to SNS nowadays is to initiate a movement or create a buzz about certain issues for instance depression, sexual abuse etc., thereby creating awareness amongst a large group of people in a short span of time using different modalities such as videos, stories etc.

CONCLUSION

Considering all of the above pros and cons, it is necessary to develop certain regulations over the use of such social networking sites, especially for high school and college students. My ultimate belief is that anything done in moderation enhances the positive impact of a particular thing and reduces the negative impacts. Undoubtedly SNS has great impact on the Indian youth it has lot of challenges which we have to face. Thus, in my opinion students should get the choice to spend time socializing in an effective way. It should not hamper their school or college performance, and it should be kept in mind that social networking sites create virtual worlds that drastically differ from reality. Students should be helped in developing the cognitive and intuitive ability via awareness which will help them in analyzing how much time they want to spend on social media.

Thus, a number of questions arise when one think about the impact of these SNS that what it means to manage online privacy in an ethical manner. How much they want to share on social media? How much time they would like to spend on social media? Deciding ways to keep SNS away during study time? Whom should I allow to see my profile? What will happen when an unintended audience can read a young person's revealing blog? Thus, we should focus on the ethical usage of these Social Networking Sites so that it serves us in a right way and the youth can play an important role since SNS is a boon and curse both for the Indian society.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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