ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORK AND THEIR INFLUENCE: A STUDY*

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Social networking is the sociological term which means the social structure made up of the set of social actors, which can be an individual or an organization, and social interaction between those actors. In other words, social networking means the interaction among social individual or organizations. Many sociologists like Emile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tonnies in their research of social group coined the term social network in the late 1890s. When the interaction goes on the internet it is known as Online Social Network and service provider’s portal known as Social Networking Sites (SNS). As it is clear by name only that it is an online platform to build social network among the social actors of those who share a common ideology, activity, interest and common background or some real-life connection between them. These are the web based portal which allows the individual or organization to create a profile, create a list of users who can interact with them. There are many types of social networking sites like email or instant messaging. Instant messaging sites are more prevalent in today’s time. Very few of them use or check their mails regularly. Most of the people use instant messaging services like Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIN, and many others. According to a statistics, there are total 1.44 billion monthly active users of Facebook only. There are more than 250 social networking sites.

The online social network has potential to connect people from different corners of the world. These portals provide a platform to the person for interaction through various methods. These social networking sites give instant messaging service, sharing of photos, videos and audios, which attract people. They share photos of every single occasion with others. There are various benefits from these SNS. Through these SNS Person can get the news about every single issue before any print and electronic media. That’s why it is also called Social media, where any person can be a reporter. It is beneficial in many ways like education, communication, disaster management, trading, hosting business, business, employment facility and a descending platform of contact with each other.

Apart from these benefits, there are many issues in the social networking sites. In many cases it has been seen as the addiction to the young and teenagers. Its consequence has been

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seen worse than drug addiction. To stop such type of addiction many internet deaddiction centre has been open in many cities like Delhi and Bangalore. Apart from this there are many other issues like privacy, potential for misuse, unauthorized access, data mining, and access to private information, conflicts due to ideas and the posts, risk for child safety, online bullying and many others.

2. Online Social Networking or Social Networking Sites (SNS)

Online Social Networking is an online platform to build social network among the social actors of those who share a common ideology, activity, interest and common background or some real-life connection between them. SNS gives every individual an opportunity for their representation by making a profile and allows them to make a list of those who can interact with them. We can divide social networking in two parts e-mail and instant messaging. Instant messengers are also of two types mobile based and web based. Mobile based instant messengers are generally applications, which works only on mobiles and web based instant messengers are those which works on the internet and can be used either on computer or on mobile. People often check their mail, but regularly use their instant messengers. The most widely used instant messengers are Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Google+, Skype, Tumblr, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, etc.

2.1 Emerging trends in Online Social Networking

Social media or social networking is no longer in their infant stage. Since the emergence of the first social media networks nearly a half century ago, social media has continued to evolve and offer consumers around the world new and meaningful ways to engage with the people, events, and brands that matter to them. Now year’s later, social media is still growing rapidly and has become an integral part of our daily life. Today, social networking is truly a global phenomenon. The number of people using social networking sites (SNS) is increasing day by day³.

According to a study conducted by eMarketer, more Indians are logging into Facebook and Twitter accounts, as evident from a record growth of 37 percent in social networking which is the world largest growth in the year 2013⁴. According to that study India is expected to have the world’s largest Facebook population in the world by 2016⁵. There are total 1.44 billion monthly active users of Facebook only. According to a British newspaper ‘Independent’ Facebook is used by half of the world’s online population⁶. More than 73% youth in the USA uses at least one social networking site (SNS).

When we talk about social networking sites we quickly think about our mobiles. In other words, it’s all about mobile phones or tablets or specifically we can say that particular app. App usage now accounts for more than a third of social networking time across PCs and mobile devices. Compared to last year, consumers increased their social app time by 76 percent, spending more than seven times more minutes on apps than the mobile web⁷. The main reason of this was easy access. An app gives the direct access of the social networks without opening different portals or pages. Due to this mobile app number of social networking site user increased rapidly. And from these things mobile app based social networking sites like WhatsApp gradually emerged.

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³ The state of the media: the social media report 2012 by Nielsen and nmincite
⁵ Ibid 3
⁷ Ibid 3
Social networking sites have also become one of the greatest sources of advertisement. As an advertisement is more beneficiary where the no. of viewer is more and the social networking sites have more no. of visitors than any other thing. Many brands create a profile on SNS and also solve the problems of consumers and costumers on SNS. Some brands share their posts on SNS about anything which attract the SNS users and some of them get attracted from this.

3. **Positive Influence of Social Networking Sites**

Social networking forms an important part of online activities of Web users. Web sites such as Facebook, Myspace and twitter have millions of users using them every day\(^8\). Social network analysis is particularly useful in identifying mechanisms of social change; however, the science of social work is incomplete unless an understanding is linked to the processes that promote positive change\(^9\). Social media is helping the world in many ways. Social Media is being used in many fields like Science, education, professional, learning, employment procedure etc.

3.1 **Social media and Education**

The world is changing very rapidly. Social media is often seen merely as a way to pass the time or stay connected to friends and family. Social media, which is considered as a great distraction for students, is no more a distraction for students. Libraries have morphed from structures filled with books to repositories of information. Information and knowledge come in many forms including DVDs, eBooks, and YouTube videos. However, its use is rapidly expanding also into the educational sector. In general, the survey found that faculty are becoming more interested in the ability to leverage social tools to facilitate engagement with course material and to encourage the learning process. Roughly 59% of educators agree that the interactive nature of e-learning and other mobile technologies results in a better learning environment for students. That said, 56% also believe that the same online and mobile technologies can result in more distractions\(^10\). The number of college students taking online classes continues to grow. On YouTube and many other websites there are lecture series of various intellects and professors of various universities, which helps the students in studies. Social media like Facebook, LinkedIn and twitter have become a platform for many debates of various issues. There are various groups on these Social media on which people discuss issues, problems, and have a great debate of their field. For example there are a lot of pages and groups about CLAT in which they discuss lot of question, they have a great debates for an answer, a good source of knowledge is shared on these groups or pages.

3.2 **Social Media and Professionalism**

Social media is now a days touching every possible aspect of individual’s life. Social networking sites like LinkedIn, PartnerUp, and Cofoundr etc. are sites which has become the integral part of recruitment process. Today, with the advent of social media, hiring managers and recruiters find that they need to be more proactive in their approach, by engaging with talent across a wide range of social networking platforms. Essentially, companies and recruiters need to be where their candidates are in order to engage them in the recruitment process. Like in USA when anybody applies for a job in any company they ask the link of individual’s LinkedIn profile link. They analyse the profile of individual before recruitment. It also give the variety of jobs to the users related to his profession. There are two ways of

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recruitment process through social media. The first is as a marketing tool; jobseekers can use SNSs to market themselves to potential employers and vice versa. Many multinational firms are moving toward these type of recruitment methods. The major contribution in this field is of LinkedIn. This type of recruitment process is beneficiary and efficient for both recruiter as well as jobseeker. In this recruiters simply post a vacancy ad on their profile which is visible to all the related job seeker. Peoples can apply from the various methods available after that recruiters review the profile of applicant. It works as the resume of applicant, as it has all the details of achievement and academics record of individual. It gives the recruiters an edge to recruit the best candidate as a employee.

3.3 Social Media and Government

Social media has become a platform where u can directly talk to the government and your suggestion and complaints are taken very seriously and in most of the cases it is resolve so quickly. It has become the best and easier mode, as it is cheaper and in reach of greater population where government can work while living among the citizens. We can see today almost every ministry of Indian government is on almost every social media sites. Social media has greatly changed the way the public communicates and expectations of the responsibility of government have also shifted. Social technologies can make networking and engagement with the public simple and powerful, make research faster, provide mechanisms for combating negative publicity, and measure public sentiment to help inform public policy. In my opinion, there is a good deal of opportunity for bi-directional engagement between the government and its citizens. Today as we can see when any policy is launched by Indian government u can find a social media page on every major social networking sites. Citizens can complaint about their problems, give their suggestion about the various policies. Mygov.in, an initiative by Indian government, has also taken the form of social media, where government seek feedback or suggestion from citizens of various community, class and region. The most common example of use of social media in democracy is twitter. Every minister and every ministry properly maintain their profile on twitter. Anybody can send message through tweet or by massage personally. There are a lot of example where peoples tweet about their complaint and ministry took a very fast action on that.

3.4 Social media and Consumerism

Social media has become the great portal for various companies’ advertisement. Social media websites allow the companies to conduct their page on the sites, which is helping them in advertising as well as consumer complaint solution. Technology gives consumer the power to investigate products to label them and criticize them in equal measure, and more. Therefore many companies today have pages on social networks to complement the information held about products, held by the feedback of consumers about products and tend to relate more to a company after reading various reviews. The use of social media in this field leads to revolutionary change in the field of rise of consumerism. Now a day’s almost all the companies’ products have a Facebook and twitter page where consumer gives their feedback and complaint or problem they face in the product. Social media has enabled a new style of consumerism. Consumers are no longer passive recipients; instead they are assuming active and participatory roles in product design and production, facilitated by interaction and

collaboration in virtual communities. This new participatory culture is blurring the boundaries between the specific roles of designer, consumer and producer, creating entrepreneurial opportunities for designers, and empowering consumers to influence product strategies.  

4. Negative influence of Social Media

Apart from various positive influences of social media there is darker side also. On one hand it is making many work easy but on the other hand it is giving birth to the cybercrime. A lot of case are being registered in past years of cyber fraud and hacking. A lot of issue are been raised due to the use of online social media. There is a great concern of privacy, hacking and spam in the use of social media.

4.1 Privacy

Privacy concerns with social networking services have been raised growing concerns among users on the dangers of giving out too much personal information and the threat of sexual predators. It is major concern among many community people the condition is like that they doesn’t use the social networking sites. Users of these services also need to be aware of data theft or viruses. However a large service providers are trying to prevent these type of issues. Furthermore, there is an issue over the control of data—information that was altered or removed by the user may in fact be retained and passed to third parties. Obscene content or virus is being shared by the account of user without their knowledge. A real example of this could be seen from the issue of Facebook which could be seen when in the month of February a link was shared on Facebook through many people’s account when the receiver open that link his profile get infected and so much obscene content is shared by that account in various groups and personal message without the knowledge of the user. Privacy on social networking websites will also be undermined with the aid of many factors. For example, users may reveal individual information, sites may not take adequate steps to guard consumer privacy, and third party customarily use expertise posted on social networks for a form of functions. "For the online new release, social networking websites have become the desired forum for social interactions, from posturing and position playing to effectively sounding off. However, since such boards are slightly handy to entry, posted content material will also be reviewed by means of anybody with an interest in the customers’ individual information".

4.2 Cyber-bullying

The immediacy provided by social media is available to predators as well as friends. Kids especially are vulnerable to the practice of cyber-bullying in which the perpetrators, anonymously or even posing as people their victims trust, terrorize individuals in front of their peers. The devastation of these online attacks can leave deep mental scars. In several well-publicized cases, victims have even been driven to suicide. The anonymity afforded online can bring out dark impulses that might otherwise be suppressed. Cyber-bullying has spread widely among youth, with 42% reporting that they have been victims, according to a 2010 CBS News report.

4.3 Negative health consequence

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14 Ian de Vere, a new consumerism: the influence of social technologies on product design; International conference on engineering and product design education 4 & 5 september 2014, university of twente, the Netherlands  http://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/11354/1/Fulltext.pdf  accessed on 7.4.2016
Social media creates negative health consequence on individuals. A 2010 Case Western Reserve School of Medicine study showed hyper-networking (more than three hours on social networks per day) and hyper texting (more than 120 text messages per day) correlated with unhealthy behaviors in teens, including drinking, smoking and sexual activity. Hyper-networking was also associated with depression, substance abuse, poor sleep patterns, suicide and poor academic performance\textsuperscript{16}.

4.4 Isolation

While on the surface it appears social networking brings people together across the Internet, in a larger sense it may create social isolation, according to a BBC News report\textsuperscript{17}. As people spend increasing amounts of time on social networks, they experience less face-to-face interaction. Scientists have evaluated social isolation in many studies, and have determined that it can lead to a host of mental, psychological, emotional and physical problems including depression, anxiety, somatic complaints and many others. In fact, a University of Illinois at Chicago School of Medicine animal study showed social isolation impaired brain hormones, which is the likely reason socially isolated people experience tremendous levels of stress, aggression, anxiety and other mental issues\textsuperscript{18}.

\textsuperscript{16} http://case.edu/medicus/breakingnews/scottfrankhypertextingandteenrisks.html accessed on 07.04.2016
\textsuperscript{17} http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7898510.stm accessed on 07.04.2016
5. Internet Addiction

To find the rate of internet addiction a survey was conducted by the researcher, in which total 100 responses was collected. Findings of the survey are as follows

Table no. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Time spend on internet</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0-2 hours</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2-4 hours</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4-6 hours</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6-8 hours</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8-10 hours</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10+ hours</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No. 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Time spend on Social Media</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0-2 hours</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2-4 hours</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4-6 hours</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6-8 hours</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8-10 hours</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10+ hours</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be easily seen from the data found in a survey that 45% peoples are using internet more than 6 hours a day. More than one third of population uses social networking sites more than 4 hours a day. It shows the involvement of people in the social networking sites are very high. In which almost 10% use social media 8-10 hours or more. In the survey it is also found that 90% of the peoples uses social media regularly. It shows their great affection and involvement in social media which can be termed as internet addiction. Spending so much time on social networking may give rise to various problems as discussed earlier.

In India also a large no. of cases are found of internet addiction. To cure these cases National institute of Mental Health and Neuro Science has established an internet de-addiction center namely shut clinic in Banglore in 2014 later on Delhi also get an internet de addiction center.

According to various study and data available on Yourstory.com

Manoj Sharma, a clinical psychologist who leads on the efforts at NIMHANS, shared some of his findings with a website. According to the data provided by him in Indian context, 5% of youth (n=275 males) in the age group 18-25 years has addictive use of social networking sites and 24% (n=350-200 females and 150 males) have problematic usage of internet.

Indian Council of Medical research work on 2755 subjects (50.5% males & 49.5% females) in an age group of 18 to 65 years (from low to higher socioeconomic status) were interviewed using door to door survey methodology from an urban locality in Bangalore. It revealed Addictive use was present for – 1.3% (2% males & 0.6% females) for internet; 4.1% (5% males & 3.1% females) for mobile phones; 3.5% for social networking sites; Shopping (4%) (male-3.2% & female-4.8%); Sex/online pornography (.2%) (0.3% male&0.1% female) and 1.2% (offline & online) had gambling addiction.
Statistically significant differences were observed in relation to family status for internet and Facebook addictions. It was more among singles, unmarried and lesser in joint families. The number of years of marriage has negative correlation with shopping, sex, mobile, internet and Facebook addiction. Physical (eye strain) / Psychological distress (decrease sleep, irritability and restlessness) was present as a morbidity- 6.8% with mobile phone addiction; 4.2% with internet use and 3% with social networking sites. 3.3% wanted to change their internet activities and 4.2% wanted cut down expenses on mobile phone. These graph are continuously growing. In some Children of the age group 3-7 years are also becoming the addictive of phone. In many cases it is found that they generally use their parent’s phone for game and hearing ringtones on phone. These condition are leading towards inauguration of more such internet de-addiction centers which may be dangerous for the nation at large.

6. Conclusion

Social networking sites, which is considered as one of the best forum for social interaction, has become the portal for many beneficial things. Social media recently emerged as the one of the best forum for education. Recruitment procedure also made the social media as integral parts. Concept of e-government emerged as a revolutionary step through social media. Consumerism has also reached to a significant level.

Apart from these we can’t ignore the negative side of social media. Privacy is one of the major issue. Every consumer should have at least some amount of privacy. Cyber bullying also emerged as the one of the major issue among the youth. Too much use of social media have also negative impact on individual’s health. Isolation which may leads to various mental problems like depression, suicide etc.

Too much use of social media is also causing problem to the individuals. A lot of case of Internet addiction are found in various part of country which is giving birth to various internet de-addiction center. It is not good for nation at large.