

# Impact of Social Networking on Family, College and Society

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## Abstract

*Social Networking is becoming ever more intertwined in our lives to share information and to develop social and professional contacts. Constant use of social media have a huge impact on family, college and particularly the whole society as the number of people using these platforms have been increasing day-by-day. Last decade has seen a continuous rise in the utilization of social networking sites among teenagers especially among college students. This scenario has affected the communication of youngsters with their family. Therefore this paper attempts to highlight the use the social networking sites among youngsters and what influence this trend have on communication and relationships with their family and friends and what difficulties they face understanding emotions and developing strong relationships with their peers.*

**Keywords :** *Social Networking sites, social media, communication, relationships, teenagers*

## Introduction

### Social Network Sites

Social Networking Sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook has become a major platform to build social relationships among individuals and groups and connect with people around the world.

Social Network Sites can be described as web-based operations that allow people to design a public or semi-public profile within a closed system, make a list of other users in this system, and share information with these people using the same social network system. These sites let users manage, build and represent their social networks online. They may contain not only the individuals themselves, but may also include public activities, companies, political parties, even officials. Users of social network sites have the possibility to add other users

in the same network as a 'friend' or a 'contact'. Social networking is a kind of computer-mediated communication in which users share news or information, basically called 'profiles', with their 'virtual' friends on social network sites. These virtual friends may be known or unknown online users.

The information or the news that is shared by the users on their own profiles can be personal files, pictures, fun stuff and other documents sent by e-mailing or instant messaging via the internet. In this sharing process, permissions are extremely important issues during social networking. It means that users have the possibility to control who can see or access their profiles, information, connections and other stuff. The level of permission may change depending on which social network site is being used.

Moreover, there are some general settings for permission that include:

- Keeping the user's information private depending on to whom the user gives permission to access,
- Restricting the visibility of the user's information,
- Making the user's information public. It means that any user from all over the world can see the information given by the owner of the account.

*"Social networks . . . are always there, exerting both subtle and dramatic influence over our choices, actions, thoughts, feelings, even our desires."*

NICHOLAS A. CHRISTAKIS AND JAMES H. FOWLER, *CONNECTED*

## History of Social Networking

Social networking is an online service focusing on reflecting and building of social networks or relations among people sharing same interests, activities or backgrounds. These services or sites allow the user to create a virtual representation or profile showcasing one's likes, dislikes, interests, activities etc and also providing some additional services. Most of these services are internet based thus providing the users to interact with other fellow users easily. In 1994 the first social networking site was developed and the AOL messenger service was amongst the first popular instant messaging services evolved in 1997. These social networking sites have evolved and now have become extremely popular worldwide. Some of the popular networking sites are: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Friendster, Hi5, Orkut, Hyves etc.

A brief history of the evolution and popularization of social networking among the masses is summarized as follows:

Geocities was the first web-based social networking site developed in 1994. It allowed the users to create their own websites.

In 1995 THEGLOBE.COM emerged allowing users to publish their content and interact with the other users sharing similar interests.

It recorded an IPO of \$850m but fell substantially to \$4m in 3yrs.

In 1997 AOL INSTANT MESSENGER was launched which popularized the concept of instant messaging.



SIXDEGREES.COM was also launched in the same year which allowed users to create their individual profiles and listing friends.

Friendster was the real breakthrough in the field of social networking. Launched in 2002, Friendster was the pioneer of using the concept of online networking between real-world friends. The user base of Friendster grew to 3 million users.



In 2003 MYSPACE was launched which though was a Friendster clone at the beginning but was developed in the following years and is still popular.



Many other social networking sites like LINKEDIN, JAIKU, TRIBE.NET, CLASSMATES.COM etc were launched in the following years.

In 2004 FACEBOOK was launched at Harvard University as a way of connecting all the U.S. college students.



In 2006 Twitter was launched which has been a huge success with 300 million users presently.



In 2008 Facebook overtook MySpace to become the leader among the social networking sites. Presently Facebook has a user-base of more than 845 million!

## The Social Phenomena

While we use the term “social network site” to describe this phenomenon, the term “social networking sites” also appears in public discourse, and the two terms are often used interchangeably. We chose not to employ the term “networking” for two reasons: emphasis and scope. “Networking” emphasizes relationship initiation, often between strangers. While networking is possible on these sites, it is not the primary practice on many of them, nor is it what differentiates them from other forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC).

What makes social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks. This can result in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made, but that is often not the goal, and these meetings are frequently between “latent ties” (Haythornthwaite, 2005) who share some offline connection. On many of the large SNSs, participants are not necessarily “networking” or looking to meet new people; instead, they are primarily communicating with people who are already a part of their extended social network. To emphasize this articulated social network as a critical organizing feature of these sites, we label them “social network sites.”

After joining a social network site, users are prompted to identify others in the system with whom they have a relationship. The label for these relationships differs depending on the site—popular terms include “Friends,” “Contacts,” and “Fans.” Most SNSs require bi-directional confirmation for Friendship, but some do not. These one-directional ties are sometimes labeled as “Fans” or “Followers,” but many sites call these

Friends as well. The term “Friends” can be misleading, because the connection does not necessarily mean friendship in the everyday vernacular sense, and the reasons people connect are varied (boyd, 2006a).

### **The Global Phenomena**

While MySpace attracted the majority of media attention in the U.S. and abroad, SNSs were proliferating and growing in popularity worldwide. Friendster gained traction in the Pacific Islands, Orkut became the premier SNS in Brazil before growing rapidly in India (Madhavan, 2007), Mixi attained widespread adoption in Japan, LunarStorm took off in Sweden, Dutch users embraced Hyves, Grono captured Poland, Hi5 was adopted in smaller countries in Latin America, South America, and Europe, and Bebo became very popular in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia. Additionally, previously popular communication and community services began implementing SNS features. The Chinese QQ instant messaging service instantly became the largest SNS worldwide when it added profiles and made friends visible (McLeod, 2006), while the forum tool Cyworld cornered the Korean market by introducing homepages and buddies (Ewers, 2006).

### **The ‘EFFECTS’ Phenomena**

American Academy of Pediatrics that outlines some of the positives that social media can bring to family life. Most of the times when you think about kids and cell phones statistics mainly pop up like the one found in the article that " 22% of teenagers log on to their favorite social media site more than 10 times a day, while Seventy-five percent of teens now own cell phones, and 25 percent use them for social media, 54 percent for texting, and 24 percent for instant messaging.

The idea that social media can be a positive is not accepted by most people and especially parents. The American Academy of Pediatrics listed several positive aspects that it may bring "Engagement in social media and online communities can enhance communication, facilitate social interaction and help develop technical skills. They can help teens discover opportunities to engage in the community by volunteering, and can help youth shape their sense of identity. These tools also can be useful adjuncts to—and in some cases are replacing—traditional learning methods in the classroom."

There has been studies that suggest that the families that use social network together will grow closer. Brigham Young University noted this pattern after looking into the social media habits and relationships of 491 adolescents and their parents. They found that "joint use of social networking sites was associated with heightened connectivity between adolescents and parents." So the more that parents and kids used social media together the more they would connect.

## Conclusion

Social media sites feed narcissistic behaviour and the need to be popular and they are being bombarded with half-truths and some facts. It creates addictive natures as teens become dependent on their phones, which has the effect of breaking strong communication and relationships with friends and family.

In whichever way we choose to pursue it, the natural consequence of our need to connect is that there are always some kind of impact, whether positively or negatively, and this, rather than the platform we use, is what lies at the crux of our social issues. When we have fragile communities, it's because we haven't taken the time to nurture our friendships, or because we have fallen into negative ways of relating. We are as vulnerable to these problems when we interact face-to-face as we are when we connect over any social media platform at our disposal, and they have long repercussions—not only to our mental health as individuals but to our collective health as a society.

If we hope to use social media constructively, we need to concentrate on using social networks as a practice arena for learning *public* social skills and for toddlers to learn *intimate* or one-on-one social skills. The purpose of connecting with others, whether online or offline, is to foster positive relationships. As the evidence suggests that we are rather more personally the architects of our own destruction. It only takes a cursory glance at our history to confirm that we always have been.

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