

# ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORK AND THEIR INFLUENCE

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**Abstract** - Teenagers are among the most prolific users of social network sites (SNS). Emerging studies find that youth spend a considerable portion of their daily life interacting through social media. Subsequently, questions and controversies emerge about the effects SNS have on adolescent development. As technology improves and advances, social networking sites have an even bigger impact on society and human relationships, both positive and negative. Social networking sites have influence on teenagers in the way they develop socially. The way teenagers are connected to these global SNSs is both a frightening prospect for parents and educators and an intriguing area for social science research. Further there is no comprehensive knowledge of the activities adolescents do on these sites as well as how they impact their social life.

The use of social networking by college students has become increasingly relevant to their academic lives. Smartphones have added great potential by enabling an increase in the use of social networking and in the number of hours spent on such sites. Being online for a long time and being able to access different information from different sources at the same time could cause information overload. Students could face problems in filtering the information they receive and they might find it difficult to decide which sources they can trust and, therefore, which to select.

## Introduction-

The increased use of Social Networking sites has become an international phenomenon in the past several years. What started out as a hobby for some computer literate people has become a social norm and way of life for people from all over the world (Boyd, 2007). Further Boyd points out that teenagers and young adults have especially embraced these sites as a way to connect with their peers, share information, reinvent their personalities, and showcase .Social media communication is characterized by reduced anonymity and off-to-online social interactions. These characteristics require scholars to revisit social influence mechanisms online. The current study builds on social influence literature to explore social network and gender effects on online behavior. Findings from a quasi-experiment suggest that both network-related variables and gender are significantly associated with online behavior. The influence of social media on adolescents and teenagers is of particular importance, not only because this particular group of children is developmentally vulnerable but also because they are among the heaviest users of social networking. According to a report by Common Sense

Media, 75 percent of teenagers in America currently have profiles on social networking sites, of which 68 percent use Facebook as their main social networking tool. While social networking undoubtedly plays a vital role in broadening social connections and learning technical skills, its risks cannot be overlooked. The lack or difficulty in self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure makes adolescents vulnerable to such evils as Facebook depression, sexting, and cyberbullying, which are realistic threats. Other problems such as social network-induced obesity, Internet addiction and sleep deprivation are issues that continue to be under intense scrutiny for the contradictory results that have been obtained in various studies

## **Benefits of social media for children and adolescents**

### **Learning strategies and current events**

Another benefit of social media on adolescents is that it can enhance users' learning opportunities, whether it is traditional or online learning. Students can use social media to connect with each other on projects or homework. Social networks provide a forum to exchange ideas and information outside of school. In addition, some schools utilize blogs as teaching tools, which provides the benefit of reinforcing creativity, written expression, and English skills.

Social networks help the businesses in a variety of ways. Traditional marketing mediums such as the radio, TV commercials and print ads are completely obsolete now and demand for thousands of dollars. However, with social media the businesses can connect with their targeted customers for free, the only cost is energy and time. Through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or any other social site you can lower your marketing cost to a significant level.

2. The increasing popularity of social sites like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, social networks has gained attention as the most viable communication choice for the bloggers, article writers and content creators.
3. These social networking sites have opened the opportunity for all the writers and bloggers to connect with their tech savvy clients to share your expertise and articles. Your audience will further share your articles, blog or expertise in their social circle which further enhance your networks of the followers.

4. Social networks have removed all the communication and interaction barriers, and now one can communicate his/her perception and thoughts over a variety of topics. Students and experts are able to share and communicate with like-minded people and can ask for the input and opinion on a particular topic.

#### **Negative effects-**

Cyberbullying appears easy to the bully because they do not see their victims' reactions in person, and thus the impact of the consequences is small. In reality, however, the consequences can be life altering to the extent that the victims could go as far as taking their lives or become psychologically distressed enough to require medical intervention. The ironically individualistic nature of social networking activities makes it difficult to recognize a victim of cyberbullying, but tell-tale signs include avoiding or being anxious around the computer or cell phone and sudden change in behavior patterns.

Being able to access information about health concerns anonymously is another benefit to teenagers and adolescents using social media. Topics such as safe sex, stress reduction, and signs of depression are of particular interest to teenagers and information on these subjects is now readily available to anyone with access to these networks. Children and teenagers with chronic illnesses are able to access support through various sites and networks and communicate with others who experience similar conditions and symptoms .

“Facebook depression,” defined as emotional disturbance that develops when preteens and teens spend a great deal of time on social media sites, is now a very real malady. Recent studies have shown that comparisons are the main cause of Facebook depression; the study showed that down-comparison (comparing with inferiors) was just as likely to cause depression as up-comparison (comparing with people better than oneself). However, there are contradictory reports as well. Another study showed that Facebook makes us happier and increased social trust and engagement among users. Given that our brains are wired to connect, it seems logical to expect that social networks, by enabling sharing, could cause a self-reinforcing sense of psychological satisfaction. These studies show that the effect of social network on well-being hinges on how social networks are used — whether to connect or to compare.

### **Privacy concerns on social media**

A young person's digital footprint is a large risk to their future reputation. Minors who use the internet without awareness of these privacy issues may post inappropriate pictures, videos, and messages without really comprehending that what they put online will stay there. Employers and college admissions boards are able to view the things that users post and one's future job or college acceptance can be put into jeopardy by a split-second click of a mouse. 6% of students reported having gotten into trouble at school as a result of an experience on a social networking site.

### **Targeted social media advertisements**

Another risk associated with teenage and adolescent social media use is advertisement. Social media sites often utilize several advertisement techniques, such as demographic-based ads aimed to target people based on specific factors (in this case: age) and behavior ads, which target people based on their browsing history and behavior. These ads do not just influence buying patterns, but can alter an adolescent's view on what is considered normal. Teens and preteens are particularly vulnerable to suggestion and their exposure to advertisements has the ability to manipulate and warp the way these kids see themselves, others, and the world around them.

### **The impact of social media on personal relationships**

One of the effects of social media is encouraging people to form and cherish artificial bonds over actual friendships. The term 'friend' as used on social media lacks the intimacy identified with conventional friendships, where people actually know each other, want to talk to each other, have an intimate bond and frequently interact face to face.

### **Impact on Politics**

Every politician worth his salt needs to jump on the social media bandwagon. This is because social websites have played an important role in many elections around the world, including in the U.S., Iran, and India. They have also served to rally people for a cause, and have inspired mass movements and political unrests in many countries.

## **Impact on Business**

Net savvy companies are using social media to advertise their products, build customer loyalty and many other functions. Interactions and feedback from customers help businesses to understand the market, and fine-tune their products and strategies. Many firms organize contests and give away prizes to enthruse consumers to visit their social website page more often. Compared to television advertisements and other expensive forms of marketing, social media presence is a cheap and effective means to enhance brand image and popularity.

One of the negative effect of social media or network is it leads to addiction. Spending countless hours on the social sites can divert the focus and attention from a particular task. It lowers the motivational level of the people, especially of the teenagers and students. They mainly rely on technology and the internet instead of learning the practical knowledge and expertise of the everyday life.

Kids can be greatly affected by these social networking sites if they are allowed to use them. The reason is that sometimes people share photos on social media that contains violence and sex, which can damage the behavior of kids and teenagers. It put the negative impact on overall society as these kids and teenagers involve themselves in crime related activities.

Another downside of the social media is that the user shares too much information which may pose threats to them. Even with the tight security settings your personal information may leak on the social sites.

## **Are Social Networks a Force for Good or Evil?**

As with most things in life, there are positive and negative sides to social networking, both of which we have now explored. My ultimate belief is that when used in moderation, with checks and balances on how younger people in particular are using them, social networking sites are either good or evil.

## **Conclusion-**

Adolescence is the time to spread wings and take the tentative first flight out into the world, and parents and caregivers must be part of the process. In the domain of social networking, this entails parents becoming educated about the advantages and disadvantages of social networking and themselves joining social network sites, not to hover, but to be aware of the activities of their teenage wards. It is essential that parents are aware of and monitor privacy settings and online profiles of their wards. Open discussions about social network protocols and etiquettes would go a long way in establishing .global digital citizenship and healthy behavior.

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