

The Impact of Social Networking Sites on the Youth

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Abstract

The study of this research aims to create an immense level of awareness among the youth exposed to such social networking sites and findings will not only bear results as to how adversely and positively is the youth affected by the usage of these sites but also will help the youth to understand the usage of these networking sites efficiently. Facebook, My Space, Twitter, LinkedIn, Skype and Ning are a few such sites that attract maximum of the youth to tune in to them and thereby embodies their own merits and demerits that desperately need to create an actual picture among the youth. It has now become an evident and usual sight to face individuals being insensitive to chat in worshipping places, homes when relatives and guests are around, highways, schools, colleges and social gatherings wherein they are so preoccupied and engrossed into their phones that they do not even bother to look up as to where they are which results in their inability to prioritize as to what is important and what isn't. Attention has thus been shifted from real to virtual world and visible to invisible friends.

Keywords: Social networking; Facebook; Twitter; Internet

Introduction

Social Networking sites are termed to as web based services that give an opportunity to individuals to create their own personal profile with the choice of their own list of users and thereby connect with them in an altogether public forum that provides them with features such as chatting, blogging, video calling, mobile connectivity and video/photo sharing. People spend more than usual hours on social networking sites to download pictures, browse through updates seek entertainment and chat around with friends to keep themselves connected to one another. These sites have held an addiction to the youth wherein they find it difficult to concentrate on their work and prefer logging in and jumping across one site to another. Some have derived benefit out of these sites whereas some have become academically challenged by the use of these websites. Individuals have set their own limits as to when and when not to access these websites but we witness very few out of the lot who does not access or make use of these sites at all.

Evaluating the amount of research that surrounds the usage of social networking sites in the education system, it is important to determine whether or not, have these sites led to any impact on student engagement and achievement. This paper will be therefore able to review the available literature to study and present both the positive and negative impacts of online networking on the most high in demand segment of our society (The youth).

Literature Review

Impact of social networking websites on the education of the youth

The researcher tries to portray, social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter are gaining popularity with the pace of time and due to their attractive features the youth of today's generation is fascinated towards them. The study argues against the notion claiming that due to the rapid popularity of social networking sites the youth tends to distract themselves from their studies and professions but on the contrary is also developing friendly and social ties with the world that revolves around them [1].

Impact of social networking sites in the changing mindsets of youth on social issues

This paper elucidates that men spend more time as compared to

women on social networking sites to review these social issues and yet women are very sensitive to issues like these existing in the world. The youth takes active participation and also raises their voices in order to express their opinions and views on social issues being discussed on these sites. Also, the findings state that even though the youth reciprocates to these events they still do not take up discussions beyond web and forget about them once they sign off. Thereby, these sites prove to be a boon to the youth in terms of spreading awareness about these issues that arise [2].

Impact of social networking sites on students

This study establishes the fact that out of all the respondents targeted, nearly 55.4% of the total population from people ranging in the age group 15 to 25 use social networking sites and also states that most of the users from the same age group use these sites as a medium to seek entertainment. In terms of gender division, male users are more as compared to female users wherein male users generally derive knowledge based information from these sites. It focuses on the fact that most of the youth uses these sites due to influence of their friends and just because their friends have been using and accessing these sites. This also illustrates the academic performance of students using social networking sites. Students acquiring 3.0 to 3.5 GPA in examinations are most inclined to these sites for entertainment [3].

The effect of social networking sites on adolescents' social and academic development: Current theories and controversies

The paper offers a review of the emerging research surrounding social networking sites and youth. The technologies and offers of these sites are such that they fascinate and attract the youth and teenage. Determining its popularity, parents and educators have lend an ear

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to its concern and consideration. These concerns range from youth privacy, safety, time consumption, health issues, psychological well being and academic performance. However the study must be finally specified about theories as to how youth uses social networking sites and must enact communication behavior that should result in their benefit [4].

Effect of social networking sites usage on the studies of Nigerian students

This study evaluates the effect of social networking sites on the students and justifies that no significant effect of these sites are found to hamper their studies but there is no clear balance of its usage. Students do not realize as to when and where to use these social networking sites and are witnessed using them in areas such as lecture halls while lectures are going on and also during study and reading hours of their work schedules. This incorporates the suggestion to youth in order to efficiently allocate their time and reschedule their timings to face terms with what needs to be done [5].

Objectives

- To determine the usage of specific social networking sites by the youth.
- To analyze the credibility over the information received from social networking sites.
- To understand the pros and cons of social networking sites known by the youth.
- To study the influence of social networking sites on the personal and professional life of the youth.

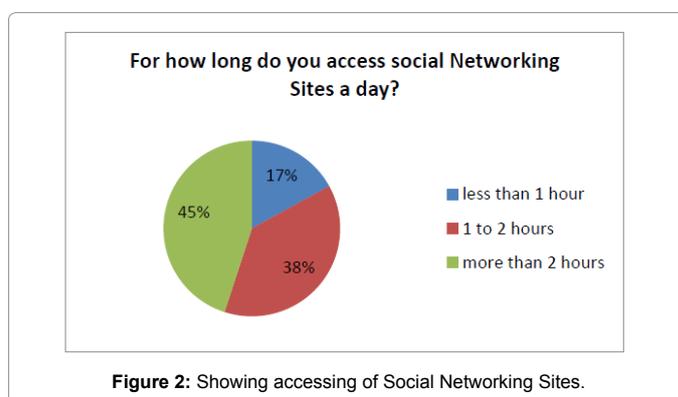
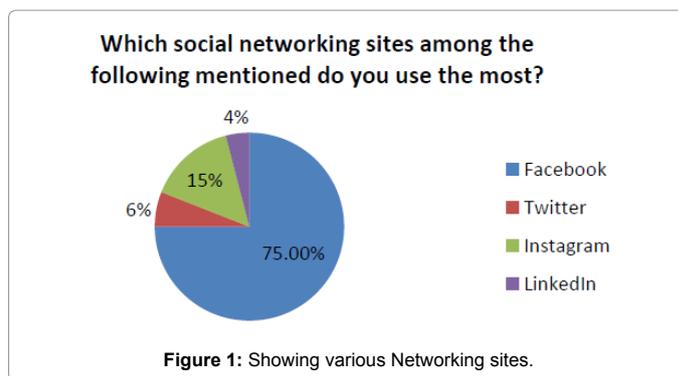
Hypothesis

- Social Networking sites are more of a demerit as compared to merit if both the parameters are evaluated.
- The youth is more inclined towards fields of entertainment other than relevant information derived sources.
- The participation of youth is invisible in social gatherings due to overutilization of social networking sites.

Research Methodology

This paper incorporates the quantitative approach to study the research objectives. Sampling has been done effectively and the tool that has been employed to work on the data collection is particularly questionnaires where the questions were close ended along with usage of tools such as pie charts. A survey was conducted in order to target the age bracket (15 to 24). The sample has been taken mainly from Delhi/NCR region. In all, 100 questionnaires were filled and reciprocated enthusiastically by the respondents. They were asked a total of 10 questions. On being asked as to which social networking site the target audience uses the most, 75% responded to Facebook holding the maximum share amongst the rest. 15% responded to Instagram, 6% responded to Twitter and only 4% responded to LinkedIn thereby proving that maximum of the audience's share is inclined towards the platform of social utility that connects them with their friends and peers who live around them other than a professional platform that offers them an opportunity to professional networking (Figure 1).

When respondents were asked about the amount of time they spend on accessing Social Networking Sites a day, the majority spent more than 2 hours bearing a total of 45%, whereas 38% spent 1 to 2



hours and 17% spent less than an hour on these sites indicating that a major part of our youth spends more than 2 hours accessing social networking sites a day, thereby highlighting an extensive impact of social networking sites on the youth on the grounds of an ability to attract a large number of population's time (Figure 2).

In order to know about the kind of information the youth usually derives from these social networking sites, 37% responded to updates from family/friends, 31% seek to these sites as a source of entertainment, 23% derived information about general awareness and only 9% lookupto them as a source of job related information. The data evidently shows the inclination of the youth towards an urge of knowing as to what goes around in their near and dear ones lives. This in a way keeps them connected but simultaneously leads to a loss of focus towards their own goals, since only a small proportion of the youth seeks interest in gathering relevant information pertaining to jobs and general awareness (Figure 3).

When the question of cyber-crime was raised to the respondents, a remarkable 70% of the sample was proven to be immune from them validating the improved privacy and account settings these sites provide to their users. However, on the contrary 19% of the respondents were a victim of hacking, 7% being the victim of fake profiles and 4% being attacked by fake profiles thus imparting to our knowledge that even today a noticeable proportion of the youth is being victimized by cyber-crimes (Figure 4).

Amongst this sample, the majority being 43% were the ones who had added 5 to 10 unknown people/strangers in their profiles and 26% were those who had added 10 and above unknown people in their profiles, presumably because the youth is attracted to expand their network by connecting with new people across the globe. Breaking the data down further, 26% still existed amongst those who had no

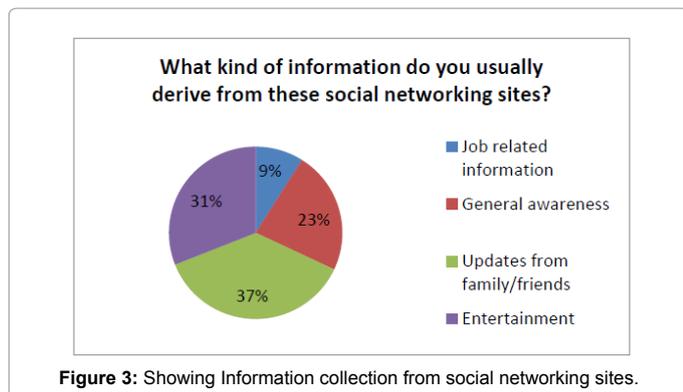


Figure 3: Showing Information collection from social networking sites.

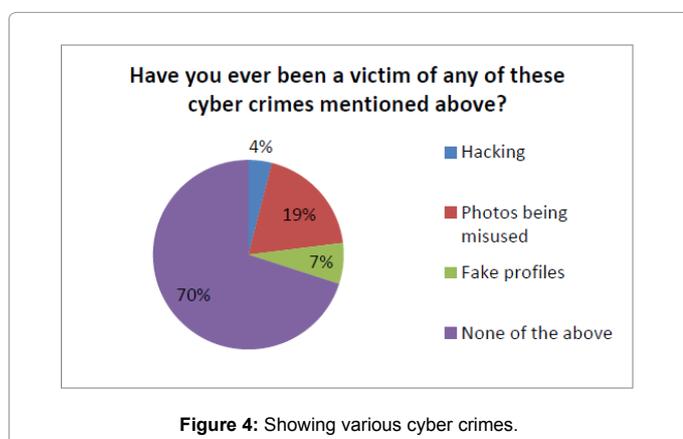


Figure 4: Showing various cyber crimes.

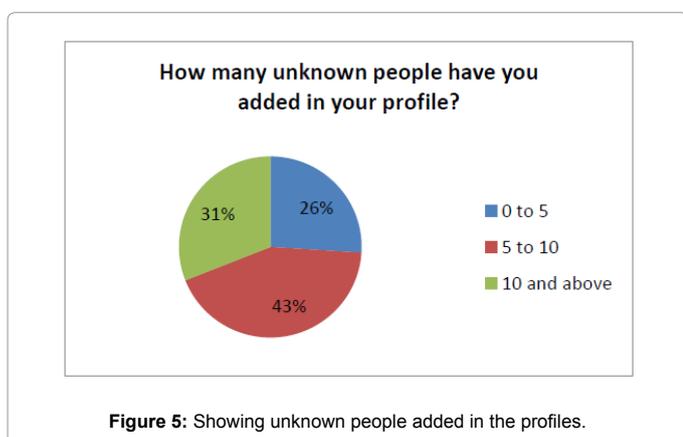


Figure 5: Showing unknown people added in the profiles.

unknown people added to their profiles for reasons preferably being non evasion of privacy and secrecy (Figure 5).

When asked whether or not do these social networking sites build relationships on personal and professional front, nearly 74% agreed whereas, 26% disagreed elucidating the fact that Social Networking sites offer a huge networking platform to people across various zones to connect with one another on both personal and professional fronts. It has brought about a revolutionary change and also has proven to be beneficial in all walks of life. Thus, it proves to hold its own advantages in every individual's life across the globe (Figure 6).

59% of the target audience has disagreed to have made stronger contacts on social networking sites and 41% on the contrary have

agreed to have done so. The data thus justifies a thin line of difference between the two options laid down by stating that majority of the respondents feel that even today the real world exists on a larger scale than the virtual to reside in. Perhaps, the faith and trust they hold onto people only validates and strengthens beyond the boundaries of social networking sites. Also, these sites have not influenced the youth to such an extent where they would build stronger contacts on social media than in person (Figure 7).

From the data collected above we already have analyzed that a huge sum of the youth tends to spend more than two hours a day on social networking sites justifying the reason to have hampered nearly 66% of the youth's social gatherings. Since abundant of their time is being spent surfing these sites for various purposes they happen to neglect their social gatherings and prefer sitting back home with an alternative to access these sites. On the other hand, an average of 34% people existed in the sample who disagreed to have admitted about their social gatherings being hampered due to these sites (Figure 8).

73% being a large proportion of the youth targeted have not had their professional lives and schedules being adversely affected through their use of social networking sites highlighting the fact that people have developed a mindset to prioritize their tasks by keeping work first. However clarifying that though these social networking sites have been expanding to gain momentum in their popularity but have not affected the youth to the level of their inability to prioritize their own schedules and realize as to what is more important (Figure 9).

On being asked to compare the positive aspects to the negative ones these social networking sites bear on one's life, a notably 68% of the targeted group chose former to the latter. In turn vindicating the

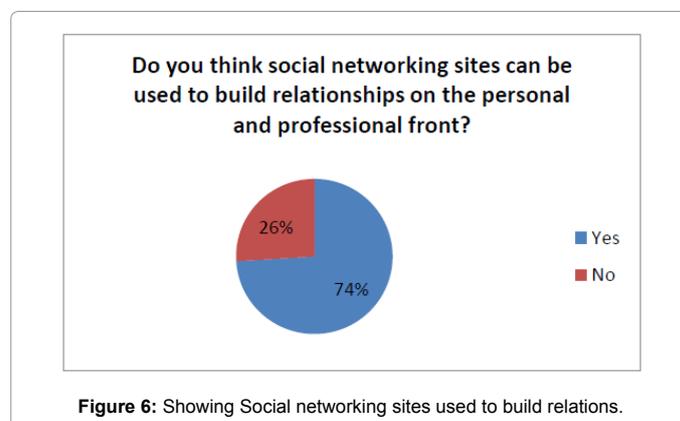


Figure 6: Showing Social networking sites used to build relations.

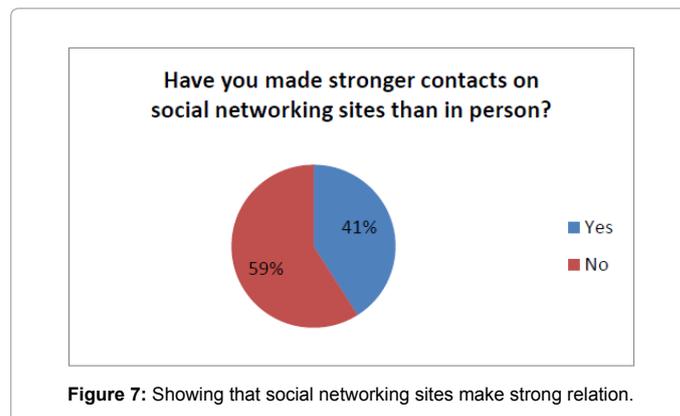
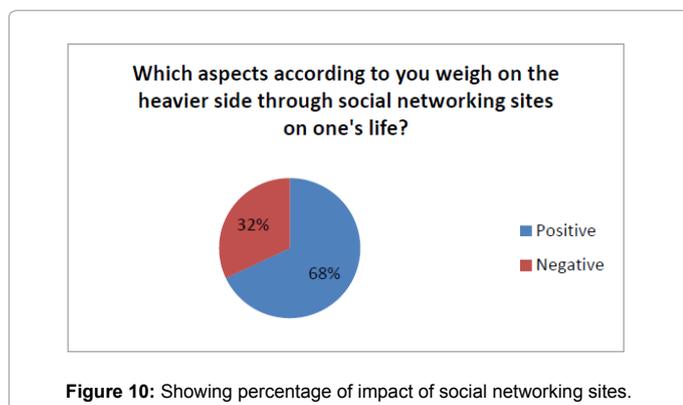
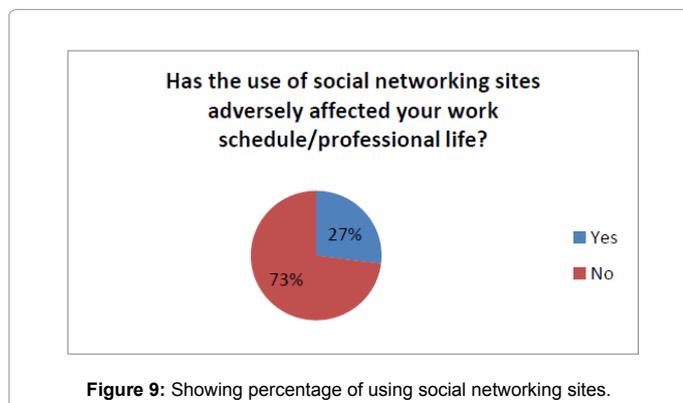
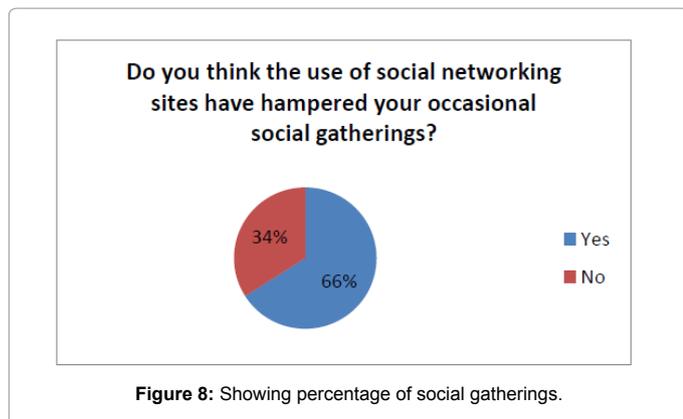


Figure 7: Showing that social networking sites make strong relation.



sense of realization each individual embodies about the proper usage of social networking sites that has led to a positive impact in each of their lives. The positive aspects thereby weigh heavier when compared to the negative ones ranging to almost 32% (Figure 10).

Conclusion

The primary objective of the research undertaken was to throw light on how effectively has the usage of social networking sites affected the youth by evaluating both of its positive and negative aspects. With reference to the study it was evidently figured out how smart, intelligent, witty and aware the youth is in the current era. Through the aid of the data that was collected and analyzed quite a few conclusions have been drawn down which can be detailed and elaborated as follows- The youth today is not only aware of what fits in best for them

but are also keen and enthusiastic to draw their own priorities and fix on to which ones are most important and how. Similarly these sites serve to their purpose of connecting them with people all across the globe by not hampering their work hours and schedules. However, social networking sites offer them a platform to connect with new people, share experiences and gain exposure. The youth comes to terms with gaining relevant and quick information about what goes around in their near and dear ones' lives through the source of social networking sites offering them a ground to updates. The youth can thus discriminate between the real and virtual world and admits to the fact that social networking sites do not provide an opportunity to build stronger contacts with people than in person. The level of trust and faith weighs higher on their contact building in the real world than in virtual for the plain reason of cybercrimes still attacking a significant number of people which has thereby been justified in the findings.

Perhaps, like a coin with two sides, social networking sites also have in their own way adversely affected the youth. The target group prefers spending an abundant amount of time on these social networking sites on an average of more than 2 hours a day which keeps them away from their own purpose of existence and interacting with their own natural surroundings. Their social gatherings are hampered because surfing these social networking sites keep them more involved for which they are bound to ignore other significant social events in their lives. Also, the credibility of these sites have not been clearly validated because the kind of information derived by the youth from these sites has a greater part of its inclination towards entertainment and updates from family and friends than general awareness and job related information. The objectives meant to have targeted have been achieved to an extent through this study. With reference to the expected outcome the study has diverted to a different angle wherein not only negative impacts have proven to exist through the usage of social networking sites but also the existence of positive impacts have occupied a place in one's life. The youth have determined their own boundaries and have set their own limits as to how and when to use social media irrespective of the positive and negative effects it imparts. The youth today is not only techno savvy and socially existent but also embody social consciousness.

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