EFFECTS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY BASED SOCIAL NETWORKING ON SOCIAL LIFE OF YOUTH IN ISLAMABAD

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Abstract: ICT based social networking includes communication and interaction through social networking sites (SNSs) and cellular phones. SNSs and cellular phones have become the most common source of communication among youth. The paper highlights the effects of ICT based social networking on social life of youth. The research was conducted in two colleges of F-7, Islamabad by selecting a sample of one hundred and ten students through purposive sampling technique using both qualitative and quantitative tools. Cross tabulation and percentile analysis revealed that 62.7 percent of the youth were daily users of ICT, addicted to major social sites like Facebook 73 percent, Skype 14 percent and Linkdn or twitter 13 percent. The excessive use of SNSs was found to be directly associated with decreased face-to-face interaction as 72 percent of the respondents agreed that remaining online all the time effected their social, communication interactional skills within and outside family.

Key Words: ICT, Social Networking Sites, Social life, Youth, Social Effects

INTRODUCTION
Information and communication Technology (ICT) based social networking can be defined as social networks which coordinate communication and interaction among people through social networking sites and cellular phones. In the past few years, social media has become a central source of information and communication and its use has been increased rapidly among people of all ages but youngsters have become more captivated by these sites than others and the eminence of social media into their life has been increasing enormously day by day. Social networking sites (SNSs) have a lot of significance in today’s electronic world but there are also some risks associated in the overuse of these sites. Now people prefer to communicate and socialize through these sites. There is a large group of internet community specially youngsters who became addicted to SNSs. According to a report there are 25 million internet users in Pakistan in which 15 million are mobile internet users. According to another report in March 2013 the total number of Facebook users has reached to 1.11 billion (Facebook statistics 2014).

Social network sites can be defined as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd and Ellison 2007). People are societal and for their survival they need associations with others (Coyle and Vaughn 2008). On one hand SNSs are easily accessible source of information and communication in this globalized world, however, on the other hand these SNSs are affecting the youth negatively and there are many detrimental effects allied with the overuse of these sites (Gustavo 2006). Some youngsters spend a lot of their time on SNSs and this overuse causes many detrimental effects on their social life. As this web-based communication is replacing the real world communication which undermines the essential skills such as reading body language (Thompson 2013). On one side SNSs are providing a best source in making people more social through online communication whereas on other side these sites weakening real world relationships, and overuse of these sites is decreasing the offline communication with family and friends (Kraut, et al. 1998). Internet addiction causes harmful effects on social skills which are required to maintain a healthy social life as it may spoil the communication skills of addicts in real world (Rahman 2013) and can also cause many serious issues, such as depression and anxiety by having no access to internet even for just a short duration of time (Breedon 2009). The symptoms of internet addiction are "obsessive thoughts about the internet, tolerance, lessened drive control, failure to stop utilizing the internet, and withdraw” (Davis 2001). Similarly ICT based social networking has also changed the way of interaction among people now it has changed from traditional ways of...
face to face communication to electronic based communication. SNSs have also an effect on family life of youngsters. They are spending more time on these SNSs as compared to time with their parents and family. An increase in frequency of online time results in an increase in family conflicts and decrease in family cohesion (Gustavo 2006).

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present research was conducted in two colleges of F-7, Islamabad: Islamabad Model College for women, F-7/2, and ICMC F-7/1. A sample of one hundred and ten students was selected by using purposive sampling technique. The respondents were students and the researcher selected those students who used SNSs. Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected during the research. Data was collected by using various research methods and tools which include socio-economic census form, participant observation, interview guide, questionnaire, and focus group discussion.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1: Distribution of Sample According to Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The socio-economic census survey form provided the researcher, the following basic information about respondents: 30 respondents were males and 80 were females (whereas most of the respondents were 19 to 20 years old).

Table 2: Distribution of Sample According to their Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 years old</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 years old</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years old</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 years old</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: User of SNSs Time spend on SNSs. Cross tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much time do you spend on SNSs, whenever you log in?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15min-1 hour</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effects on Social life**

ICT based social networking has changed the way people interact with one another. The use of SNSs caused both positive and negative effects on social life. Most of the respondents believed that they are being social by using these sites and SNSs play an important role in making people more social. According to them through these sites they remain in touch with their friends, family members, and relatives who are living far away and with whom it is not possible to have face to face conversation at regular basis. Through these sites they remain connected, share their daily updates, videos and photos of important events and much more. SNSs have made communication and interaction very easy all over the world. The respondents affirmed it as trouble-free and inexpensive source of communication and transfer of information in today’s world. Simultaneously, it was also shared that the excessive use of SNSs adversely effects the quality of social life, time spent with parents and family members. Moreover, it also reduces their outdoor physical activities and face-to-face interaction.

**Internet Addiction**

SNSs have been integrated into our lives. People are becoming addicted to these sites. Internet addiction is the biggest negative effect of SNSs and it causes numerous harmful effects and spoils the lives of addicts. The students who spend a lot of their time on SNSs whenever they log in are among the daily users of SNSs. So the daily users whenever they log in, spend most of their time on SNSs as compared to those who are not daily users. The students who used SNSs as a part of their daily routine slowly become addicted to these sites and they start spending a great amount of time on these sites as compared to those who are not daily users.

Now cellular phones with internet facility made people more addicted to these sites, especially the youngsters. 31% respondents admitted that they have an access to internet on their cell phones. They also reported that they check their Facebook account, several times in a day due to the availability of internet on their mobile phones. It was also observed that the most popular SNS among youngsters is Facebook and 73% of the respondents have an account on this site. The second most popular SNS is Skype. 14% respondents have an account on Skype whereas 13% respondents have an account on other SNSs e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.
Time Spend with Parents and Family
Youngsters spend a lot of their time on SNSs and this time has an effect on their time that they spend with their parents and family members. There is a negative association between the amount of time that youngsters spend online and the time that they spend with their parents and family members. An increase in online time decreases the amount of time that they spend with their parents and family as according to 54% students SNSs greatly affects the interaction with their parents such as they spend less time with their parents and more on these sites. These results correspond with the findings of a research conducted by (Gustavo 2006). He suggested that the time spent on the internet is “at the expenditure of time that parents and children spend in common activities”.

Face to Face Communication
When respondents were asked about their preference of using SNSs as compared to face to face communication, 72% respondents admitted that they spend most of their time on online conversation than face to face communication. Respondents were asked various questions and the results showed that electronic communication has an effect on face to face communication as due to the increased involvement of SNSs in youth’s lives, face to face communication has reduced. This less face to face conversation can result in poor communication skills.

Outdoor Activities
SNSs also produced an effect on outdoor activities. Excessive use of SNSs reduces the outdoor activities as 66% students admitted that SNSs have reduced their spare time activities such as sports, social gatherings, etc. and now they spend most of their free time on these sites.

**Figure 1**, shows that most of the respondents (46%) spend 2-3 hours on SNSs whenever they log in, whereas 35% respondents spend 15min- 1 hour and 19% respondents spend 4 or more than 4 hours on these sites. It shows that majority of the respondents spend a greater amount of their time on SNSs as compared to other activities.

**Figure. 1: Online Time that Youngsters Spend on SNSs**

CONCLUSION
Youth is fascinated by the cyber world and SNSs are becoming an important medium of communication among them. A large number of youngsters use SNSs and many of them log in daily into these sites, and even several times in a day. They spend a great amount of their time on these sites. Now cellular phones made youngsters more addicted to these sites. SNSs have changed the way of interaction and communication among them. On one side, these sites cause constructive effects on social interaction as they bring people close together who are living far away and provide them a great medium of communication but on the other side, these sites also cause some adverse effects on social interactions such as reducing face to face communication, reducing outdoor activities, spending less time with parents and family, reducing social gatherings etc.

REFERENCES


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