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Social Networking Sites: A Sociological Study of Interpersonal Relationships among Post-Graduate Students



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Abstract

Belongingness, the natural tendency of human beings is a baseline for the formation of relationships. Individual is the substance of society who learns our customs, values, morals and cultures through the substance of belongingness and transmit these to next generation. In this sequence, interpersonal communication is vital for belongingness as well as for existence and wellbeing of society. However, the new trend of communication emerging through Social Networking Sites has crucial impact on interpersonal relationships. The youth became techno-savvy therefore the usage of Social Networking Sites vastly increasing among students. The study based on 200 students of Aligarh Muslim University. The purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to investigate how social networking sites are affecting the interpersonal relationships of students towards their families, friends and others whether it is offline or online. The findings of the study reveals that, Social Networking Sites play crucial role in maintaining positive interpersonal relationships of students with their family members as well as negative interpersonal relationship with their friends classmates and others.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites, Social Networking Applications, Interpersonal Relationships.

Introduction

The advent of technological innovation life becomes so easy, communication also becomes faster and easier among people due to Information communication technology therefore the pattern of social networking evolving very fast. The advancement in IT led to the origin of Social Networking Sites and Social Networking Application henceforth (SNSs & SNAs). It is a unique platform to communicate anybody across the world as virtual communication therefore deeply integrated into daily practices of millions of young people, that they have caught the attention of academics worldwide. Social networking sites not merely affect the academic performance of students but also infect their social environment, mental health and interpersonal relationships. This new venue of relationship has greater impact on virtual and real relationships. Internet contributes to the individualization of leisure time and reduces the time spent socializing with friends and family members (Peng & Zhu, 2010, p. 569). Although, internet is helpful for developing new relationships and maintaining existing relationships, on average online relationships are weaker than those form and maintain offline (Peng & Zhu, 2010, p. 570).

This paper seeks connection between SNSs Interpersonal relationships. Belongingness is the natural tendency of human beings, which is a baseline for the formation of relationship. Individual is substance of society who learns our customs, values, morals and cultures through the substance of belongingness and transmit these to next generation in this sequence, interpersonal communication is vital for belongingness as well as for existence and wellbeing of society. However, the new trend of communication emerging through Social networking Sites which have crucial impact on interpersonal relationships. An interpersonal relationship emerged between two or more people when they feel strong, deep and close association between each other which may lead a relationship in enduring form. These relationships are based on love, emotion, intimacy, physical proximity, regular interaction, social commitment and feeling of self-disclosure. It is developed in the context of social, cultural and other influences and may be monitored by law, custom,

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or mutual agreement in society. Interpersonal relationship is crucial in the life of human being because it is the base of fundamental unit of society, interpersonal relationship basically lies in primary groups which can be characterized by physical proximity, face-to-face communication, long term association two or more people like spouse relationship, siblings relationship, parental relationship, friendship and couple relationship etc. Interpersonal relationships are vital for emotional strength in such complex world, which grow through day-to-day deep interaction. Indeed advancement in information technology led to the change in the pattern of interactions. Hence, in this new era of time, SNSs blurred the limits of distance and time. The impulsive use of SNSs and SNAs in daily routine has been made them integral part of our life therefore it is also affecting our interpersonal relationships. Social Networking Sites is an online platform to allow an exchange of ideas, information, videos, pictures, and graphics. Social Networking Sites: web-based services allow people 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, (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). Social network sites can be online virtual platform that provide users with facilities to communicate, construct, and cooperate with ties of their interest (Francis & Scaria, 2013, p. 2).

Conceptual Framework

Guy Debord in his book "The Society of Spectacle" stated that, late modern society can be called a society of spectacles and he further argued that in this world the image of things appeared more real than things themselves. This theory is a critique about contemporary consumer culture, commodity fetishism deal with the issue such as class alienation, culture homogenization and mass media. In his theory, he referred the central importance of image in contemporary society. He strain out the image supplanted the genuine human interaction. He argued that spectacle is not a collection of image rather it is social relationship between people that is mediated by images, further he explained contemporary society is a consumer society, in which social life is not about living, but about having. Consequently, social life moves further, leaving a state of "having" and proceeding into the state of "appearing" (Debord, 1967).

Psychologists Irwin Altman and Daltus Taylor formulated the social penetration theory in 1973 to understand the relationship between people. The theory advocates that, as relationships develop, interpersonal communication moves from relatively superficial, non-intimate levels to profound, more intimate ones. They observed that relationships "involve different levels of intimacy of exchange or degree of social penetration". The urge of the theory is that the development of close or interpersonal relationship occurs primarily through self-disclosure, or intentionally revealing personal talks, feelings, thoughts, and experiences to others. Self-disclosure indulges in this theory as a major way to bring a

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relationship to a new destination in the level of more intimacy (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

Review of Literature

A qualitative research has been carried out by Andrew Chris Langat to find out the influence of social media networking on interpersonal face-to-face communication because this type of communication is intimate communication, which is vital for the wellbeing of most basic institutions like families. In his paper, the main argument is that, Social Networking Sites negatively affect the interpersonal communication. He used Face-Negotiation theory, Social Exchange theory, Social Penetration Theory and gratification theory. The findings of the study based on Face-Negotiation Theory. This Theory is concerned with how people in individualistic and collectivistic cultures negotiate face-to-face conflict situations. It has to do with the use of face-to-face interpersonal communication to resolve conflicts. The findings of this study shows that Social Networking is cost effective, faster and bridge distance by bringing people in diverse parts of the world closer to each other. The negative influence however in our context outweighs its strengths. These include being addictive, making one be too open to the world due to poor self disclosure communication skills, poor listening and break down of interpersonal communication opening ways to poor interpersonal relationships and inability to resolve conflicts (Chris, 2016, pp. 212-220).

A phenomenological research has conducted entitled "A Qualitative Investigation of College Students Facebook usage and romantic relationship: Implications for college counselors". To explore how undergraduate students experienced Facebook during college years to develop their romantic relationships, data was collected through the semi structured questionnaire format from 154 respondents. The researcher divided the research paper into six sub themes: support, communication intimacy, relationship status, dating and public nature of Facebook. The findings revealed that Facebook is a part of students' lives not only for social contact but also for social support, it provide a platform to display their romantic relationships, highlighting the commitment and status of each relationship. It also plays positive and negative role to maintain and dissolve their relationship (Sherrell & Lambie, 2016, pp. 138-153).

A study entitled 'The Influence of Social Networking sites on the Interpersonal relationships of Rogationist college students. They collected the data from 239 respondents through purposive sampling, by administering administered questionnaire to seek the answers of research questions. Result shows that, Social Networking sites enable students to interact more with their family members and friends to express themselves. Another important aspect of Social Networking sites is that it make the interaction easier with their teachers to keep in touch for academic-related activities and develop strong interpersonal relationship with their family, friend, teachers and with others (Asilo et al., 2010).

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A study entitled "Impact of Whatsaap on Youth: A Sociological Study" done by Bhatt &Arshad to find out the impact of Whatsaap on students. They collected the data from 100 students of Agra region. The finding reveals that Whatsaap is a medium of making communication easier and faster thereby enhancing effective flow of information, idea sharing and connecting people easier. It is also found that Whatsaap has also a profound negative impact on students it adversely affects their education, behavior and routine lives. It messes up much of study time of students and spoils their spelling skills and grammatical construction of sentences. This app has found to be highly addictive, which leaves a trace that becomes difficult to control. The impact is so powerful that users give up their real world interest (Bhatt & Arshad, 2016, pp. 376-386).

Subramanian in his study on 'The Influence of Social Media on 'Interpersonal communication' Attempted to investigate the proliferation impact of mobile devices and Social media on communication. Findings of the study reveal that Social media has transformed the communication pattern by enabling the users to stay connected with numerous people

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and well updated to the surroundings. On the other hand reduced face to face communication and make them isolated from the real world which negatively associated with interpersonal relationship. In addition, the emphasis proliferation use of Social media make them more lackadaisical and lazy (Subramanian, 2017, pp. 70-75).

Objectives of the Study

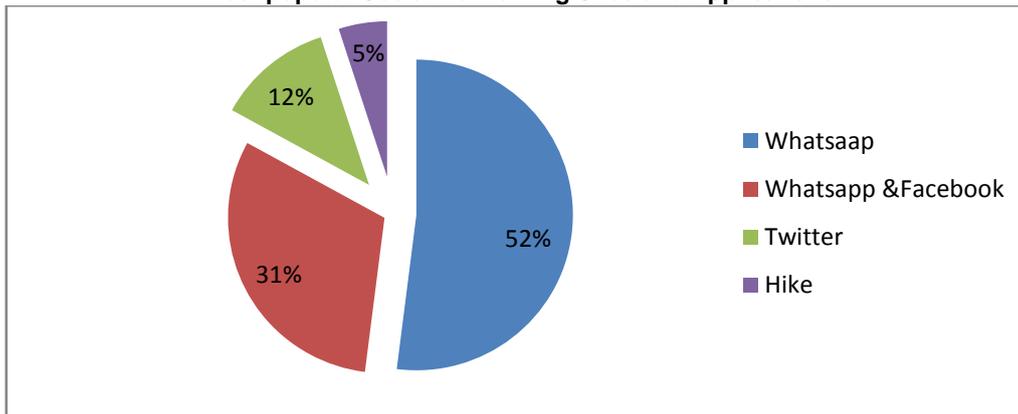
1. To explore the influence of Social Networking Sites on Interpersonal relationships among Post Graduate students towards their family and friends.
2. To know which kind of relationship is most trustworthy whether online or offline.

Methodology

This research paper followed descriptive research design to understand the qualities and antagonism between usage of Social Networking Sites and Interpersonal relationships. Purposive and Snowball sampling techniques were used to collect the data from 200 Post Graduate students of different Departments at Aligarh Muslim University.

Data Analysis

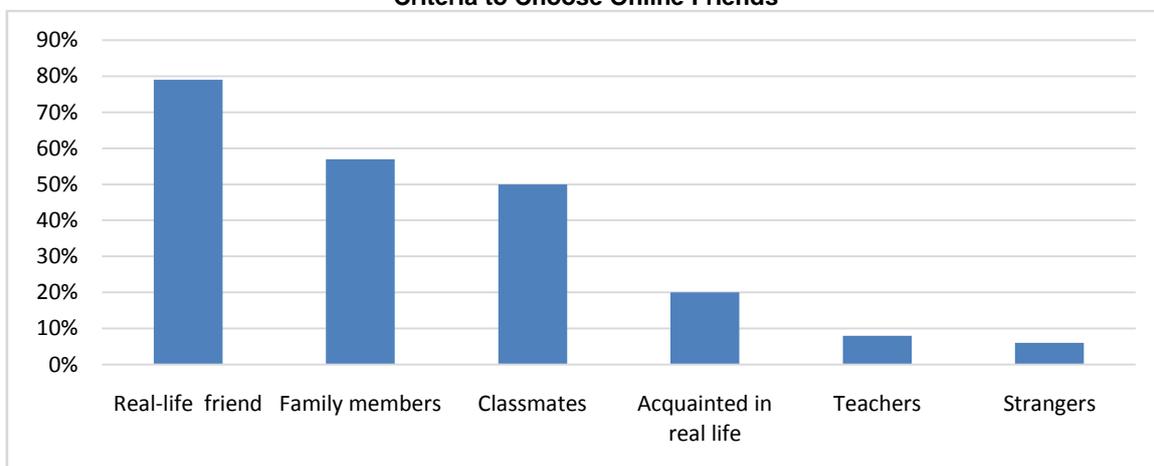
Figure 1
Most popular Social Networking Sites and Applications



Finding of the study shows in figure 1 that, majority of the students i.e. 52% use Whatsapp for being in touch with family, friends and acquaintances because it is cheap in cost and reduce the calling &

SMS expenditure also. 31% respondents use both Whatsapp and Facebook, only 12% and 5% prefer Twitter and Hike for virtual networking in online world.

Figure 2
Criteria to Choose Online Friends



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Graph clearly shows that 79% of respondents revealed that, they include only those persons in their online friendship list with whom they have strong ties like real life friends and 57% respondents revealed that they include only family members in online friend list. 50% respondent were those who invited their classmate in online world for chatting purpose while 20% responded that they include only those people in Social Networking sites to whom they are well acquainted in real life. A very low percentile in this order i.e. 8% and 6% of students chose teachers and strangers for online friend list. Thus, the study reveals that students give a high priority to their personal preferences and likeness rather than other logical or rational reason.

Table: 1

Frequency of the usage of SNSs & SNAs

Respondents (%)	Frequency in a week
79% Respondents	More than 100 times in a day
18% Respondents	50 times in a day
03% Respondents	20 times in a day

Technology tremendously affects the communication. Hence, the culture of online networking is getting higher among students. Result of the study showed that (98%) of the respondents

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are having mobile phones, hence they are used to Social Networking sites. Table: 1 shows 79% of respondents use SNSs & SNAs more than 100 times in a day. While 18% of them check their SNSs & SNAs 50 times in a day and only 3% of respondents use SNSs & SNAs 20 times in a day. It can be said that majority of the respondents use SNSs & SNAs more than 100 times, which is a remarkable fact.

Table: 2

Effect of SNSs Usage on Interpersonal relationship

Respondents	Responses
51% Respondents	Positive
42 % Respondents	Negative
7% Respondents	Neutral

Result of Table: 2 shows that majority of the respondents i.e. 51% state that they have positive impact of Social Networking usage on their interpersonal relationships, while 42% respondents were negative about the usage of SNSs and its application and believed it has negative impact on their interpersonal relationship and face-to-face communication. 7% respondents were silent about the response.

Table: 3

Impact of SNSs usage on Interpersonal relationship with family

Responses	Respondent	Respondent
Due to usage of SNSs Increase Interpersonal communication with family members.	34% Agree	
Due to Usage of SNSs & SNAs spending more time with your family	46% Agree	
Easy way to share your feeling with your family	9.5% Agree	
Minutely observe liking & disliking of your family members through SNSs & SNAs.	4% Agree	
		6.5% Neutral

During data collection the researcher amazed to know that students have positive attitude towards the usages of SNSs & SNAs. They revealed that SNSs complementary to maintain interpersonal relationship with their family members. Table: 3 shows that 46% students spend more time with their family members due to the usage of SNSs & SNAs, because majority of the students in AMU, are hostlers who can visit their home only in vacations, in that circumstances SNSs & SNAs are best mean to be in touch with their family members for communication. 34% respondents viewed that due to the usage of

SNSs their Interpersonal communication increased with their family members. SNSs and SNAs like Facebook and Whatsapp are providing the facility of video chat, which can be treated as tool of physical proximity which also promoted interpersonal communication that's inevitable for Interpersonal relationships as well. A few percentile about 9.5% students stated that SNSs providing easy way to share their feeling with their family members, while 4% of them minutely observed liking and disliking of their family members through SNSs & SNAs.

Table: 4

Impact of SNSs & SNAs usage on Interpersonal relationship with friends

Responses	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Due to usage of SNSs & SNAs spending more time with friends.	72%	22%	6%
Due to Usage of SNSs & SNAs increase interpersonal communication	42%	51%	7%
SNSs & SNAs helps to maintain friendship	52%	39%	10%

Table: 4 reveals that, majority of the respondents i.e. 72% agreed with the statement that, they spend more time with their friends due to usage of SNSs while 22% disagreed and 6% respondents were silent. Moderate respondents about 51% disagree to the use of SNSs & SNAs in order to increase interpersonal communication among friends because majority of them i.e. 67% prefer face-to face

communication for self-disclosure, which is crucial for formation of Interpersonal relationship. 52% reported that, they maintain friendship through SNSs & SNAs instead of interpersonal relationship. The main cause is that majority of people share pleasure and fabulous experience of their life on SNSs. When other people compare the real life situations with the experience of online world then it creates serious interferences for

Table: 5
Impact of SNSs& SNAs usage on Interpersonal relationship with teachers

Responses	Respondents
Due to usage of SNSs& SNAs feel free to Interact with teachers	52% (agree)
Teachers become friends because of the usage of SNSs& SNAs	33.6%(agree)
	14.4%(neutral)

According to 52% respondents due to usage of SNSs & SNAs they feel free to interact with their teachers while 33.6% stated that teachers become friends because of the usage of SNSs & SNAs, in which 14.4 % were silent about the responses.

Table: 6
Impact of SNSs& SNAs usage on Interpersonal relationship among couples

Responses	Respondents
Have positive Impact In their relationship	43%(Respondents)
Have Negative Impact In their relationship	57%(Respondents)
SNS & SNA easier medium for constant chatting with couples	22%(Respondents)
Due to Usage of SNSs & SNAs couple create his and her Interest in their personal relation	17%(Respondents)
SNS are better way to know more about partner	18%(Respondents)

Table 6 shows that, SNSs usage influences emerging adults romantic relationship both positively (43%) and negatively (57%). SNSs& SNAs positive because it is beneficial form of social integration for shy individuals, which provide platform from constant chatting to know more about partner and create interest in their personal relations through interpersonal relationships. However, the usage of SNSs& SNAs negatively influence relationship in terms of less verbal communication between students' partners and reduce personal space.

Table: 7
Trust over the relationship

Responses	Respondents
Feel offline relationship trustworthy in their life	87% Respondents
Feel online relationship trustworthy in their life	9% Respondents
Neutral	4% Respondents

Although, Social Networking application altered our day-to-day communication, however data reveals the adverse fact that, a vast majority of respondents i.e. (87%) believe in offline relationship in their life while only 9% respondents believe in online relationship, in which 4% were neutral about the response.

Discussion

The finding of the study shows majority of the respondents use Whatsaap for being in touch with family members, friends. This study reveals that the positive impact of SNSs and SNAs in strengthening interpersonal relationship of Post Graduates students with their family members. SNSs and SNAs are connecting Post Graduate students with their families through online media modes by literally maintaining the feeling of physical proximity. However, a new sub theme, 'Trust' emerged in our study. Most of participants realized that, the level of trust increases with those who are physically present than those who are online be in touch. Making face-to-face communication more preferable by students for self-disclosure than online communication. It has also resulted into some negative impact supported by the theory 'The society of the spectacle' given by Guy Debord, who perceived the world to be skeptical with regard to superficial imaginary aspect of life in which one pretends to live. It can further be validated by the

position that appearances have substituted the real world of lived experiences of individuals at large. The contradiction thus, is inherent into the inbuilt roots of version of reality in which reality itself is appeared to be losing its own reality with respect to exaggerating the real life event disassociating others from users. SNSs represent typical kind of virtual world where image derives the relationship between users signifying a situation in which real world appears to be less real than the world created in imaginations through the mode of hyper reality. This can also discourage the possibility of reciprocity between individuals. The sharing of real concrete existing world no longer has any association producing one's increasing differences with other social beings.

Conclusion

The above discussion discloses that the usage of Social Networking sites influenced the interpersonal relationships among college students. Social Networking sites are highly successful in enhancing relationships. The usage of SNSs brought lot of changes in interpersonal relationships between the students and their family members, which helps students to have more communication with them. The present study proved that SNSs and SNAs have positive as well as negative impact on the interpersonal relationships. The exaggeration of real life event on SNSs and SNAs disassociate other

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individuals from users, which cause user's segregation and creates a sense of alienation and depression which incompatible with the cultivation of healthy relationships.

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