

Online Social Networking among Professional Students: Impact on Interpersonal Relationship

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Abstract:

This study was conducted to assess the correlation of online social network usage and quality of interpersonal relationship among 350 third students of four different year professional colleges of Manipal University. The study found that a weak negative correlation exist between online social network usage and perceived quality of interpersonal relationship.

Keywords:

Online social network (OSN), professional students, Perceived Quality of Interpersonal relationship

I. INTRODUCTION

Youths of today have a widespread and inexpensive access to internet. Computers are readily available for use in many high schools, colleges and university libraries.¹ Use of the internet has become a part of college students' daily routine. It is integrated into their daily communication habits and has become as ordinary as the telephone or television.²

A social networking service is a platform to build social networks or social relations among people who, for example, share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections.³ There are almost 76 million users for OSN sites according to statistics by Social bankers on 2013. Social networking statistics showed that Facebook use in India was 5.43% compared to the country's population and 69.35% in relation to number of internet users.⁴

Establishing interpersonal connections with both those with peers, such as friendships and romantic relationships, and those with parents, siblings, and other adults outside the family is one of the most important developmental tasks of adolescence.⁵ According to study, conducted in 2001–02, teens feel less psychologically close to their instant messaging partners than to their partners in phone and face-to-face interactions.⁶ Use of

OSN sites among American teens had increased to 73% and major users were young adults of 18-29 of age.⁷

According to Pew Internet survey online teens believe that the increased frequency of Internet use has improved their relationships with friends⁸ Adolescents feel more closeness towards friends as they found online communication was effective in self-disclosure.⁹

The main reason for people to use OSN sites was the easiness to contact others. People with poor social skills also used OSN sites to withdraw from real life as they felt more comfortable to express themselves through online interactions with friends and family.¹⁰

The beneficial effects of OSN usage were building and maintaining relationship with family and friends, maintaining new relationship based on mutual interests, helped in social interaction, created social awareness and a platform to express ideas and emotions. The ill effects included destruction of interpersonal ties, attacks from sexual predators, privacy concerns and increased feeling of excessive sense of self-worth.¹¹

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of the study was to identify the extent of online social network usage and to correlate its impact on, perceived quality of interpersonal relationship and academic performance among third year students from different professional colleges of Manipal University, Manipal, as Manipal University campus has full Wi-Fi connection and has various professional colleges.

In this study Online Social Network (OSN) usage refers to the usage of 'Facebook, MySpace' and 'Twitter' in terms of duration, dependency and reasons for usage as measured by Online Social Network Usage Scale. A correlational survey was adopted in this study. The research setting for the current study was Manipal University. It is a deemed university with 24 professional colleges. Four colleges were selected randomly to meet calculated sample size of 350.

OSN usage and the perceived quality of interpersonal relationship were measured by a four point Likert scales constructed by the researchers. Perceived quality of interpersonal relationship was assessed in terms of relationship closeness and relationship satisfaction with friends and family. Tool to collect back ground proforma was also constructed. All the tools were validated by five experts and pretesting done among five students. The reliability was established by Cronbach's alpha by administering tools to 20 subjects.

Ethical clearance obtained and questionnaires were administered after giving instructions to all the students in the classroom at a time. Data analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Correlation is computed by Spearman's correlation coefficient since the data is not following normal distribution.

III. RESULTS

Analysis was done using SPSS version 16. The sample characteristics are presented in the table 1.

Table 1: Description of sample characteristics (n=350)

In this study majority of the participants were females (66.3%). Most of the students were staying within the campus (61.1%) and main modes of internet access were personal computers (58.6%) and cell phones (25.4%).

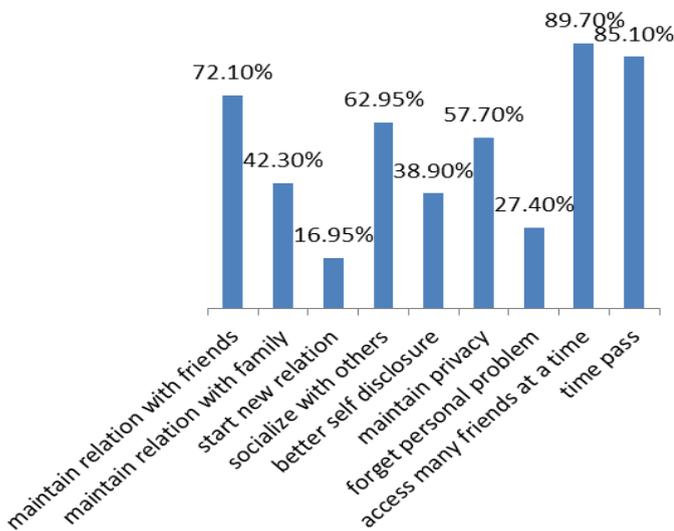


Fig 1: Bar diagram showing reasons for using online social network sites

The data shown in the bar diagram shows that the main reasons for the students to use online social network sites were to have access to many friends at a time (89.7%), for time pass (85.40%) and to maintain relationship with friends (72.90%). About 62.95% used OSN sites to socialize with others and

57.70% used OSN sites to maintain privacy. Of the whole subjects, 38.90% experienced better self-disclosure with peers than face to face communication and 27.40% were able to forget their personal problems by using OSN sites.

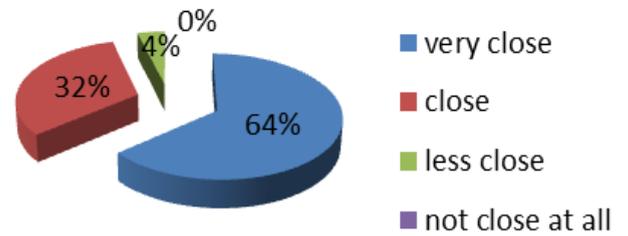


Fig 2: Pie diagram showing relationship closeness of students

Among the subjects, 4% were less close to their family members and friends. Students who maintained close relationship were 32% and those who had very close relationship with family and friends were 64%.

Sample characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	118	33.7
Female	232	66.3
Place of stay		
Within the campus	214	61.1
Outside the campus	136	38.9
Major mode of internet access		
Personal connection	205	58.6
Internet café	12	03.4
Using other's net	12	03.4
Library	32	09.2
Cell phone	89	25.4
Mode of living		
Alone in a room	82	23.4
With friends	248	70.9
With family	20	05.7

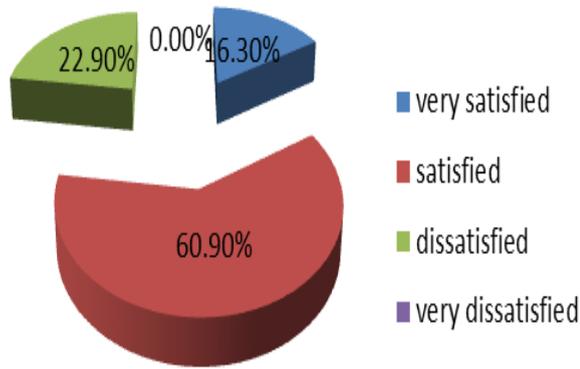


Fig 3: Pie Diagram showing relationship satisfaction level of students with friends

About 60.90% were satisfied, 16.30% were very satisfied and 22.90% were dissatisfied with their relationship with friends. None of the subjects reported being very dissatisfied with friends.

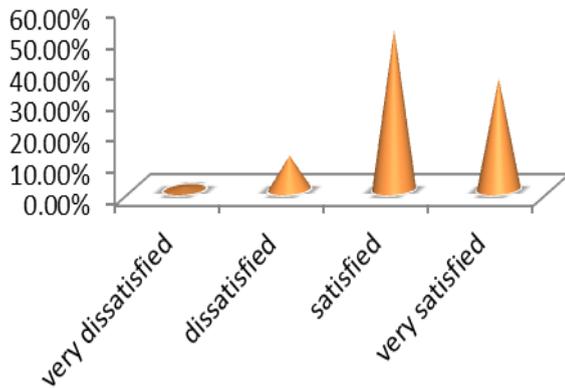


Fig 4: Diagram showing relationship satisfaction level of students with family

Among the samples, 51.7% were satisfied, 36% were very satisfied and 11.10% were dissatisfied with their relationship with family members. About 1.10% showed a very dissatisfied relationship with family members.

Table 2: Correlation between online social network usage and perceived quality of interpersonal relationship

Variable	r value	p value
Online Social Network usage	-0.185	0.001
Perceived quality of interpersonal relationship		

p<0.05 level

The study established a weak negative relationship (r=-0.185, p=0.001) between online social network usage and perceived quality of interpersonal relationship. Hence it could be

inferred that increased use of online social networking sites can lead to decreased relationships with family and friends among the students.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study showed that among all the subjects, 64% had a very close relationship and 32% maintained close relationship with friends and family. About 60.9% of students expressed satisfaction, 16.6% were very satisfied and 22.9% were dissatisfied in their relationship with friends. Among the subjects, 51.7% were satisfied, 36% were very satisfied and 11% were dissatisfied with their relationship with family members. The study correlated that there existed a weak negative correlation (r = -0.185, p = 0.001) between online social network usage and perceived quality of interpersonal relationship.

The findings of the present study support results of a study conducted by Mesch which stated that there was a negative correlation between family relation and frequency of internet usage¹². Porter, Mitchell, Grace, Shinosky and Gordon stated that there existed a weak negative correlation (r= -0.2) between online social network usage and relationship satisfaction among the 219 subjects took part in the study¹³.

The present study findings contradicts the findings of explorative study by Baym, Zhang, Kunkela, Lin and Ledbetter on OSN usage and relational quality among 496 college students who concluded that there was no significant difference in relationship quality due to online social media usage¹⁴.

V. CONCLUSION

Easy accessibility and availability of the OSN result in young adults to develop excessive use of these networks which may cause dependency and addiction on these sites. Dependency on online social network sites has become a major problem among youth populations. We must identify youth who are engaging in non-normative behaviours online and its impact on academic and interpersonal relationships. Training programs can be conducted to the students regarding online safety issues and for the problems arising due to dependency on online social network sites. Parents can be made more vigilant about the dangers of excess online social network usage patterns in the youth.

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