



Influence of Social Networking Sites within Households: Insights from District Anantnag

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ABSTRACT

Family is the primary and fundamental unit of society. It is the basic building block of the society which socializes its members into a particular mode of thought and behavior. Family is a basic social institution and also is the basic primary group which is marked by intimate, direct and close interpersonal relationships. It is the basic source of security, love, belongingness and identity. However, change is the law of nature. Any social institution is susceptible to change under the impetus of various forces of change like modernization, industrialization, urbanization, globalization etc. Thus, as with other social institutions, the social institution of family has been impacted by various forces of change. The concern of this paper is with social networking technology as a source of change. The paper concerns itself with the impact of Social networking technology on the interpersonal relationships in the family. With the advent of new social networking technologies, people are becoming more individualistic and family members are spending less time together. Social networking sites are becoming a part and parcel of people's daily routines, displacing the warm, primary and direct interactions between the family members with the ones that are weak and secondary in nature. Therefore this study is set out to explore how the social networking sites within home are leading to an increasing privatization of members. Data was collected from the study area with the help of personal interviews from a sample of 15 households (15 male heads and 15 female heads of the selected families, one male and one female from each household). The findings reveal that SNSs are negatively impacting relationships within the household leading to individualistic pattern and social isolation among the individuals.

Key words: Anantnag, Family, Household, Privatization, Social Networking Sites,

I. INTRODUCTION

In the 1800's there was an explosion in the ways we communicated globally. Telegraphs, radio and telephones made a dramatic difference in how information can be conveyed. The continuous search for the innovative ways of communication lead us to the development of different social media. In recent years we have seen another boom in communication. With new technology we are now able to communicate across the globe (and even into



space) almost instantaneously. Social media is the interaction among people in which they create share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks, (**Govender, et al.2013**). Social media depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. As cited by Kulandairaj, A. Jin his work “Impact of Social Media on the Lifestyle of Youth”, Megan A. Pumper et al(2011) admitted that the increased use of the Internet as a new tool in communication has changed the way people interact. Recently, a new means of online communication has emerged with its own set of idiosyncrasies. This new communication style occurs through the use of social networking sites (**Kulandairaj, A.J**). The inclusion of recent technologies like SNSs within society is having a major influence on relationships within social settings such as the household. People are spending their time alone in their bedrooms on their smart phones or laptops.(**McGrath, S. 2012**).Thus Social Media is changing our world by fulfilling most of our purposes. It allows its user to find their voice, keep in touch, measure the impact of services, build an audience, monitor trends, and stay informed. It has impacted the way we view news, interaction, politics, learning, and business nearly every aspect of the way we live today. At the same end the SNSs are also negatively impacting our relationships within the households.

1.1 Purpose of using Social Networking Sites

Social Networking sites are an important part of our lives because it promotes the interconnectedness and interdependence of our culturally diverse world. SNSs allow people to communicate and engage with information that is quickly accessible on the Internet. In today’s society, there is an increasing number of Internet users so new social media has become more popular in daily patterns and routines. The communication that occurs in these online contexts promotes interactive dialogues that build understanding of different points of view. We know the busy schedule of people don’t allow them to have face to face interactions with their relatives, peers and other people in the society. In this regard, people use SNSs for many reasons. First, the need for connection and interaction with other people is evident. In relation to interacting with others online, people use SNSs to gain knowledge and learn about different opinions and perspectives of issues, topics, and events. Most importantly, new SNSs allow people the opportunity to participate in conversations and online dialogue without being face-to-face with others. (**Sawyer, R. 2011**). The popular types of social media and networking sites are Face book, YouTube, Twitter, Watsapp and the iPhone. Face book was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, whose mission was to bring people together with different backgrounds and encourage interaction. According to Mark Zuckerberg, “If Face book were a country, it would be the6th most populated country in the world.” This social networking among numerous countries enriches social lives through ignoring the factor of distance. Social media brings people together with different backgrounds and encourages interaction. YouTube is a video-sharing website that began in 2005 that “allows individuals to interact with the global community by viewing and sharing user generated video content” (**Ibid, p.5**).Twitter is a form of social media that allows people to communicate information through micro blogging. People use micro blogging to “talk about their daily activities and to seek or share information” (**Java et al. 2007**).Twitter has influenced intercultural dialogue



because many people worldwide are focused on the individual lives of others and have the desire for connection and knowledge of events. This example of social media has shortened the ties of distance into knowing exactly what someone is doing without physically communicating face-to-face with another person. Lastly, the iPhone is a device introduced by Apple in 2007 that combines the function of a mobile phone, MP3 player, and instant messenger (Nowak, 2008). The iPhone combines new innovative features, such as the touch screen and wireless Internet access, and it encompasses different applications that include Face book, YouTube, and Twitter. People can use the iPhone to connect with others on social media sites in a convenient, accessible manner; they can interact on the Internet without being face-to-face with others or even at a computer. According to Wilcox, & Stephen (2012) social online-networks can influence self-control, which is an important mechanism for maintaining social order and well-being. Research demonstrates that because people present a positive self-view to others on social networks, it momentarily increases the self-esteem in users who are focused on close friends. This leads them to display less self-control after browsing a social network compared to not browsing a social network. Greater use is associated with poor self-control in a number of important domains (i.e. health, mental persistence and spending/finance). Thus social network use may have a detrimental effect on well-being by leading certain people to exhibit lower self-control. Given the ubiquity of online social networks, their ability to lower users' self-control could have widespread impact. This may be particularly true for the current generation of adolescents and young adults who are the heaviest users of social networks. Social media has an impact on human brain and human identity. Greenfield stresses that the outside world i.e. the influence of new technologies might be changing especially young people in ways that could be problematic for their identity. (Zeital, N 2014).

1.2 Use of SNSs in World Context: Facts and Figures

The below data give an idea about important facts and figures around the global Internet environment. In 2013, over 2.7 billion people were Internet users, which correspond to 39% of the world's population. In the developing world, one third (31%) of the population is online, compared with three quarters (77 %) in the developed world. Europe is the region with the highest Internet penetration rate in the world (75%), followed by the Americas (61%). In Africa, 16% of people are using the Internet –only half the penetration rate of Asia and the Pacific. In the developing countries almost three quarter (70%) of the under 25-year-olds (a total of 1.9 billion) are *not* online. This signifies “a huge potential if developing countries can connect schools and increase school enrolment rates” (International Telecommunication Union, 2013).

There is an increasing shift from the use of the 'classical' computer as a communication tool to the mobile phone. Even if nowadays, almost all people on Earth live somewhere within reach of a mobile cellular signals, there is still a huge gap of having access to those networks which have been upgraded to 3G technology, necessary to qualify as mobile broadband and provide high-speed access to the Internet: 74.8% in the developed world, only 19.8% in the developing countries (International Telecommunication Union, 2014). But as networks are being upgraded and services accordingly offered in the market, mobile-broadband subscriptions will continue to grow strongly. These facts and figures are underlying the importance of the Internet for the



social communication system in general but above all the importance of exchanging news, information and learning tools on the individual level. The frequency of communication via Social Media is continuously increasing. Almost half of the 18-34 year old check Face book as soon as they wake up or before they get out of bed (28%). The average number of friends per Face book user is 130 and an average number of pages, groups, and events a user is connected to is 80. 205 photos are uploaded per day (Zeital, N 2014, p.1184). These numbers are underlying the intensity, importance and time consumption by using the Internet.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sawyer, R. (2011) has admitted that new social media have become increasingly popular components of everyday lives in today's globalizing society. They provide a context where people across the world can communicate, exchange messages, share knowledge and interact with each other regardless of the distance that separates them. In today's society, there is an increasing number of internet users with the result SNSs have become more popular in daily patterns and routines. His study showed that people use SNSs multiple times a day and the amount of time the interviewees spent on SNSs varies from about 5 minutes when checking updates to a few hours. **McGrath, S (2012)** in his study has highlighted that digital technologies lead to social isolation and a growing privatization within the households. Thus digital technologies are negatively affecting social interaction and communication between individuals. With the result, there is a drastic change in family relationships and family values have become eroded. **Zeital, N (2014)** has highlighted the impact of use of media on social relationships, social well-being and time available for sleep, school related study and other activities. As cited by author in this study that Pea R. et.al (2012) has conducted an online survey of 3461 North American girls aged between 8 and 12 years and examined the relationships between social well-being, media use and face-to-face communication. Analyses indicated "that negative social well-being was positively associated with levels of uses of media that are centrally about interpersonal interaction e.g., phone, online communication. Media multitasking was associated with a range of negative social indicators like feeling less successful socially, not feeling normal, having more friends whom parents perceive as bad influence and sleeping less. It was associated with more intense feelings toward online friends than in-person friends. The level of face-to-face communication was strongly negatively associated with media multitasking. The results suggest "that even media meant to facilitate interaction between children are associated with unhealthy social experiences. The idea that online communication would open up a rich social world that benefits young girls' social and emotional development is belied by these findings. Furthermore the study suggests that face-to-face communication and online communication are not interchangeable.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Objectives of the study

This study was undertaken with the following objectives:



1. To study the possible consequences of the use of SNSs on interaction of people within households in the study area.
2. To investigate the impact of using SNSs on the behavior and health of the people in the study area.

3.2. Sampling plan and techniques used in the study

In order to discover the impact of SNSs have on family relationships, Researcher conducted interviews of heads of 15 households, comprising of 15 male heads and 15 female heads, by selecting one male and one female from each household. The sample was taken purposively to get the reliable findings. The interviews were designed to see how much time users of SNSs spent within the family members, how often they maintain face to face interaction with their family members and to see the consequences of frequent use of SNSs on their health.

3.3. Significance of the study

This investigation will have great significance in the contribution that it will make to the world of sociology. New media technologies and the impact they are having on social interaction within the household is a topic that is evident and of great importance to the present world. It is through this research work that one of the most important institutions of society; the home and the family will be looked at in greater detail and it is in this institution where society functions. Therefore, the present investigation will study the household (family) and the role that new media technologies play in the development of social interactions in family life.

IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the field study are as under:

4.1. SNSs users and time spent with family members

Technology has the potential to either facilitate social interaction between the family members or to hinder it. It can facilitate social interaction between the family members through its emphasis on the shared activities. Technology can strengthen family bonds by creating opportunities for interaction and communication and can facilitate more frequent contacts between friends and families. One of the ways via which it facilitates interaction is when one individual in the house who is more equipped with the technical knowhow engages in teaching the other members how to use technology, thus creating a shared experience. Also technology can provide opportunity for family collaboration and communication in the way that parents and children can play games together and collaborate on software installation (Mesch, 2006). However, this is only one side of the coin. The technology, in this case SNS, have the tendency to hinder social interaction between the members of the family. The tendency of internet technology to be used individually rather than collectively has serious implications for social interaction thus undermining natural family interaction. In this context the question was put to respondents to inquire into the impact of social networking sites in their families.



Table 4.1.SNS and Time Spent in Family

S. no.	Time spent within family members	Male head of family	Female head of family	Number N=30	Percentage
1.	Adequate	3	2	5	16.66
2.	Less Time	12	13	25	83.34
	Total	15	15	30	100.00

Source: Field data

As per the above table, majority of respondents i.e., 83.34 percent expressed that their family members spend less time interacting with each other. As per the respondents the use of social networking sites has adversely affected the family interaction pattern. Even when the family members are in the same room, they seldom talk to one another. Thus, they are immersed in their own world of virtual reality which has created boundaries around them that hinder interaction. The prevalence of smart phones in every home and virtually its prevalence among all age groups has rendered the impact visible. As per the respondents the internet is negatively related to time spent within the family. The use of SNS has led to the creation of an artificial world in which anonymity and alienation prevail. People prefer to interact with secondary contacts thus sidelining primary contacts.

4.2. SNSs and face to face interaction within family

With respect to the impact of SNS on the direct face to face interactions, the respondents were asked a direct question about the occasions on which they had face to face interactions with their family members.

Table 4.2. SNSs and face to face interaction

S. no.	Face to face interaction within family members	Male head of family	Female head of family	Number N=30	Percentage
1.	On breakfast/ lunch/dinner	13	14	27	90.00
2.	Other than breakfast/ lunch/dinner	2	1	3	10.00
3.	Usually remain within family members	-	-	-	-
	Total	15	15	30	100.00

Source: Field work



As per the table above, majority of respondents which is 90 percent reported that they had face to face interaction with their family members on breakfast/lunch or dinner. As per them, the incidence of face to face interaction has decreased substantially. The respondents argued that the technology driven world has given rise to bedroom culture, particularly among the children and young people. A significant portion of young population is prone to spending their time at home on the SNS, rather than in families or communities. This has resulted in their social exclusion, thus severing communication and social interaction between family members. The use of SNS has brought the outside world indoors by encouraging social contacts which are outside the family circle. Only 10 percent of the respondents reported that they get to see other members of their family on time other than breakfast, lunch or dinner.

4.3. SNSs and isolation/privatization

The emergence of bedroom culture has led to increased privatization and as a consequence to the social isolation of the individuals. The use of SNS has given rise to the emergence of a virtual reality which has disconnected individuals from the real world, confining them to their private spheres, protecting them from the gaze of other members be it their parents, siblings or elders. In this connection, the respondents were asked about the prevalence of isolation among their family members.

Table 4.3. SNS and Individualism/ isolation

S. no.	Use of SNSs lead to Privatization within household	Male head of family	Female head of family	Number N=30	Percentage
1.	Yes	13	14	27	90.00
2.	No	2	1	3	10.00
	Total	15	15	30	100.00

Source: Field work

As per the table above, majority of respondents which is 90 percent agreed that the use of SNS has led to privatization and social isolation within the households. As per the respondents the occasions where individuals especially children and youth head straight towards their room back home, is a frequent occurrence. The individuals are increasingly spending their time apart. The increased use of SNS and internet has given rise to individualized lifestyles and a bedroom culture which has led to the separation of individuals from one another. Thus as Morrison and Krugman (2001) puts it, technology is a 'one person' effort, demanding absolute and full attention. So in this technology driven world, people are busy in giving their full attention to this entity, thus undermining all other primary relations.



4.4. SNSs and health problems

The consumption of technology is indoor in nature. Thus the use of SNS occurs mainly in sedentary position. The increased inclination of people towards SNS have restricted their involvement in outdoor activities thus dragging them into a solitary world of technology. This certainly has implications for the health of the people. In this context the respondents were asked about the impact of SNS on health conditions of people.

Table 4.4. SNS and Health of the Respondents

S. no.	SNSs and Health Problems	Male head of family	Female head of family	Number N=30	Percentage
1.	Vision Problem/Obesity/ Headache	13	12	25	83.34
2.	No health complaint	2	3	5	16.66
	Total	15	15	30	100.00

Source: Field work

It is obvious from above findings, that 83.34 percent of respondents argued that the continuous usage of SNS has resulted in health problems viz, vision problems, obesity and headache. As per the respondents, the harmful rays from the electronic devices and the continuous engagement of individuals towards SNS has led to problems in the eyesight and headache. The sedentary nature of social networking technology has led to inactivity thus leading to obesity. As mentioned previously, the preference of individuals towards their smart phones rather than collective activity has hindered their outdoor involvement. Thus giving rise to many health problems.

V. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

It becomes evident from the above tables that the integration of social media technologies into social settings within society, such as the household, is having a major influence on social interaction within households in many different ways. New media technologies can assist in increasing interaction amongst families by bringing generations and family members together. As a result, it can help bridge generational and digital divides. On the other hand however, new media technologies within a household can lead to a growing privatization within family life, with individuals increasingly using technology independently rather than collectively leading to a family divide. The findings show that family ties are weakening due to the excessive use of SNSs by the people. Although a person already has social contacts in real life (i.e. in-person friends) but people are more focused on creating a virtual social contact (i.e. online friends) which is badly effecting individuals and subsequently society. Young people are spending significant proportions of their leisure time at home with the mass media rather than spending their time in family space which is resulting in isolation of people within families. People are becoming more individualized causing a major impact on family communication. Therefore, the findings



showed a negative association “between spending time in the bedroom and spending free time with the family”. The SNSs are perceived as the technologies that consume time that people could be spending with their families and alienates people from interaction.

No doubt social media has facilitated global communication in seconds, connects deserted areas with the civilization, played an important role in the participation and democratization process but simultaneously it is threatening the primary, face to face interactions and relations. Thus, Social media acts both as a boon and bane at the same time. The long term effects of the social media revolution are not known yet neither on the society as a whole nor on the individuals, since the effect of social media is subtle and develops over time. As Wilcox (2012) has rightly suggested that “Ultimately, the way you counteract this is by raising your self-awareness. It's not about don't spend time on Face book, Watsapp, and other SNSs but just be aware of what it might be doing to you.”

VI. SUGGESTIONS

1. These results suggest that the impact of media multitasking with regard to family relation should be viewed by the researchers with much concern.
2. Users of SNSs should give first priority to their health instead of continuous use of SNSs.
3. SNS users must be aware of what it might be doing to their primary relations/ contacts.

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