A sociological study on the influence of social networking sites on the interpersonal relationships of college students in Bangalore and mysore cities

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ABSTRACT

In India at present the usage of Social Networking Sites (SNS) amongst college going students has vastly increased and the usage of SNS has extensive influence on these students in numerous ways, particularly on their interpersonal relationships. The present study is placed in this context to examine the influence of SNS on interpersonal relationships of college students and also to construct a profile which can capture the college students' usage pattern of SNS. Five hundred college students were selected from both Bangalore and Mysore cities for generating primary data; questionnaire and interview schedule methods were used for the said purpose. In the present study the concept of social network and social networking sites are explained in detail through sociological perspective. A greater section of this article is dedicated for discussing the growth of SNS in India, particularly among the college students. It was found that the usage of SNS has effect on interpersonal relationships of college students, particularly with their members of family, friends and teachers. It was also found that due to the availability of SNS the communication between college students and their members of family, between college students and their friends has increased. In this study college going students' usage pattern of SNS, their purpose of usage of SNS, the amount of the time they spend, their preferred SNS, degree of their trustworthiness of online friends and much more interesting aspects have been dealt keeping the scientific research as base. It provides an outlook for investigating the technological implications on society in the domain of sociology.

Introduction

In the last decades of the 20th century the world in general, and India in particular witnessed a remarkable and rapid advancement of information and communication technologies. During this era "communication" emerged as the most popular term. Today the communication revolution has brought people together regardless of geographical boundaries.

From time to time, new communication technologies have been invented for better individual as well as mass communication. First, by the invention of the printing technology the new era of mass communication began. Then came the invention of wireless communication, Radio. Later, the invention of Television made an immense impact all over the world. And, recently, Internet has emerged as the outstanding innovation in the field of communication in the history of humankind.

Rapid expansion of internet has changed the lives of many people worldwide. Very significantly internet has brought the world into a single room. Right from getting access news across the world to a wealth of shopping knowledge, job opportunities, and choice of life partners there is a whole gamant of information available to internet users. Internet is now used for communication, entertainment and information. For a long time access to 'information' used to be denied to the people on the basis of their gender, class or caste. But today these barriers are being breaking down by the Knowledge Revolution.

The contemporary period has come to be labelled variously as Information Age, Communication Age and, the present Networking Age[1]. The internet offers a wide variety of communication tools. Billions of people use facilities like search engines, web pages, e-mails, e-books, e-journals, e-newspapers, internet banking, internet telephony, conferencing, multi-media sharing, online news rooms, gaming, shopping, blogging, and importantly, social networking. Today internet is an essential communication medium in professional as well as personal life.

Among the various tools that internet has brought our way Social Networking became a global phenomenon. Millions of people now go online to engage in social networks. According to Wikipedia, an online encyclopaedia, there are more than 300 Social Networking Sites (SNS) and 1.5 billion members worldwide[2]. In recent years, usage of social networking sites has grown rapidly. It took 38 years to attract 50 million listeners for wireless radio system, 13 years for television to attract 50 million viewers; in 4 years the internet has attract 50 million surfers[3]. IPods took 3 years to reach 50 million users, but Facebook, one of the leading social networking sites, added over 200 million users in just 12 months[4]. This shows the penetration capacity and popularity of social networking sites.

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[1] Kumar, Keval J. (1994) Mass Communication in India: Mumbai, Jaico Publishing House, p. 1
[2] www.en.wikipedia.org
[3] Hannemyr, Gisle (2003) The Internet as hyperbole: A Critical Examination of Adoption Rates. http://hannemyr.com/en/diff/.php
[4] http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?timeline

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Social Networking Sites are a type of virtual community that has grown tremendously in popularity. Through social networking people can use network of online friends and group memberships to keep in touch with current friends, reconnect with old friends or create real-life friendships through similar interest or groups. Besides, establishing social relationships, social networking members can share interest and their ideas with other life-minded members by joining groups or forums. They can also participate in discussions through SNS. Members will be updated instantly about their friends and groups. In short, a SNS is a hub for communication, entertainment and information.

Apparently it is evident that the majority of the users of social networking sites are college going students, worldwide. Students are one group that is eager to know the technological advancements and latest trends and they accept these changes with an open mind. In India too this fact is acknowledged by various studies and hence today the usage of SNS has become large part of the student's lives in Indian society. The EDUCAUSE data shows that the percentage of students who said they never use SNS has fallen from 25% to 11% in 2008[5]. The increasing usage of social networking sites has far reaching impacts on interpersonal relationships of students, which is the major theme of the present study. SNS influence the interpersonal relationships of students in many ways. For example through SNS, users come to meet other people and these people can affect the user's relationships and this influence can either be positive or negative for the users. An interpersonal relationship is a relatively long-term association between two or more people. This association may be based on emotions like love and liking, regular business interactions, or some other type of social commitments. Interpersonal relationships take place in a great variety of contexts, such as family, friends, marriage acquaintances, work, and neighbourhoods. They may be regulated by law, custom, or mutual agreement and are the basis of social groups and society as a whole. These impacts are so widespread that they caught the attention of social scientists worldwide. However, the range of studies conducted to deal with the usage of SNS among college students is negligible in India. Hence, the proposed study makes an attempt to fill in this gap, to some extent, by concentrating on the impact of SNS on college students.

Methodology

This study primarily uses descriptive research design. The survey technique is used to collect demographic data about respondent's behaviour, beliefs, opinions, interests and the like and the data thus generated is organized, analysed and interpreted. A purposive sample of college students in Bangalore and Mysore cities was selected for eliciting the study data. 500 students were selected from ten colleges in Bangalore and Mysore cities. A detailed list of all the colleges providing education for degree courses and pre-university level in Bangalore and Mysore cities was obtained from university sources.

The primary data for this study was generated from four selected colleges in Bangalore and Mysore cities. The choice of Bangalore city is primarily rooted in the fact that it is considered

India's IT hub and is also home to the highest number of Internet connections in the state. Further, these cities have large number of educational institutions and colleges, where majority of the students are well aware of the modern information technologies and studies have shown that they are constant users of social networking sites.

Bangalore is the capital city of Karnataka state, located in the south-eastern part of Karnataka, having the population of 84,25,970 (2011)[6] and it is known as India's third most populous city and fifth-most populous urban agglomeration. A demographically diverse city, Bangalore is a major economic and cultural hub and the second fastest growing major metropolis in India. Bangalore is home to many well-recognized colleges and research institutions in India. There are 540 colleges affiliated to Bangalore University, 150 MBA colleges and more than 50 Engineering colleges in Bangalore.

Mysore is one of the important cities in Karnataka state and it is the second-largest city in the state. According to the census of India – 2011, the population of Mysore is 8,87,446. Mysore is also called as a traditional city and it is located southwest of the state capital Bangalore. In Mysore tourism is the major industry. There are more than 127 colleges are affiliated to the University of Mysore.

In order to gather data from the respondents questionnaire, interview schedule and survey forms as research instruments were used as research tools. The Questionnaire which is the primary tool of data collection is framed taking into consideration the primary objectives of the study. With the help of few sample questions a brief questionnaire was distributed to all the selected colleges in order to identify the users of SNS. After collecting these questionnaires, a list of the respondents who are SNS users was organized and the copies of the main questionnaire were circulated.

Objectives of the study

1. To engage in a Sociological analysis of the concept of 'interpersonal relationship' with a special focus as the changing nature of inter-personal relationships.
2. To analyse the growth in the number and the pattern of impact of Social Networking Sites on college going students, particularly on their changing interpersonal relationships.

Social network and social networking sites

In the discipline of sociology the concept of 'social network' refers to a social structure made up of individuals who are connected to each other and have a complex set of relationships or ties between themselves. In the study of society the analysis of social network is vital. Today social network analysis has become one of the major paradigms in contemporary sociology. Emile Durkheim, Ferdinand Tonnies, George Simmel, Jacob L. Mareno, Bronislaw Malinowski, Alfred Radcliffe – Brown, Claude Levi-Straus, John A. Bareen and many other sociologists have given prime place to social network in their respective studies.

George Simmel, a German sociologist stated at the importance of studying social network by emphasizing the dynamics of triads and web of group affliations. It is also important to note that another eminent sociologist Jacob Mareno had developed the first sociograms in the 1930s to study interpersonal relationships. The major theme of social network is to understand social interaction is that social phenomena

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[5] Alexander, B. (2006). Web 2.0: A new wave of innovation for teaching and learning? [Electronic Version]. *Educause Review*, *41*, 32-44.

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[6] Census of India - 2011

should be primarily conceived and investigated through the proportion of relation between and within units.

Hence, the inner base for the creation of SNS is nothing but the concept of social network. Social Networking Sites can be broadly defined as internet-based social spaces designed to facilitate communication, collaboration, and content sharing across networks of contacts. Social Networking Sites allow users to manage, build and represent their social networks online. People use Social Networking Sites for countless activities. Among the most common uses are, connecting with existing networks, making and developing friendships/contacts, creating an online presence for their users, viewing content/finding information, creating and customizing profiles and so on.

Boyd and Ellison (2007)[7] define Social Networking Sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or a 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".
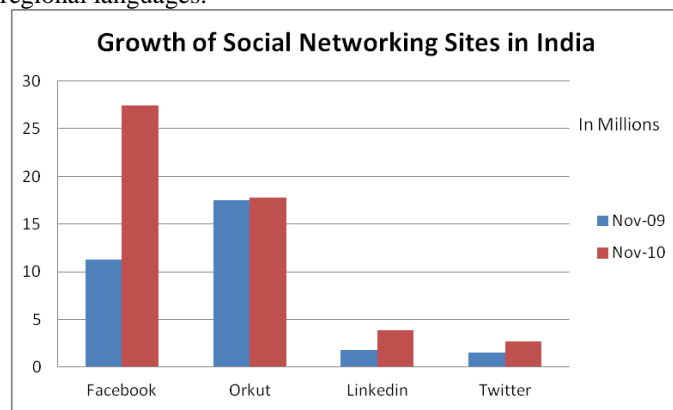
Wikipedia defines Social Network Sites as an online platform that focuses on building and reflecting social networks or social relations among people who share interests and activities. Social Networking Sites, E-mail, instant messaging, view-and photo-sharing sites and comment posting are all tolls that help people to communicate and socialize with each other[8].

A social network is a collection of individuals linked together by a set of relations[9] . Online social networking sites 'virtually' link individuals, who may or may not 'know' each other. They enable rapid exchange of knowledge, high levels of dialogue and collaborative communication through text, audio and video[10]. Individual actors have ties with other individual actors. In this sense, these individual actors interact/share their interests, ideas/information with others.

Usage pattern of social networking sites in India

Currently the usage of SNS is continuously growing prominence in India. Will Hodgman [11] says that "Social networking continued to grow strongly in India this past year, with several of the top global brands carving out a more prominent position", and he also says that "The social networking phenomenon continues to gain steam worldwide, and India represents one of the fastest growing markets at this moment". "While there is certainly room for several players in this social networking space in India, the sites that have the right blend of having both a strong brand and cultural relevance will be best positioned for future growth."[12] Today India ranks as the third largest market for the usage of social networking

[7] Danah M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, (2007), "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship", Journal of Computer-   Mediated Communication, 13 (1).

[8] Mooney, Carla. (2009). "Online Social Networking". Gale Cengage Learning

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[10] Siemens, G. (2006). *Knowing knowledge*: Lulu.com.

[11] comScore executive vice president

[12] (RESTON, VA, February 17, 2009 – comScore, Inc. (NASDAQ: SCOR))

worldwide, after the U.S., China.[13] There are certain modifications were being made to increase the popularity of SNS in India particularly by providing the service in few regional languages.

Growth of Social Networking Sites in India

Analysis and interpretation:

Table No. 1: General Profile of the Respondents

Region	Level of Student's Education	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
No. of College Students in Bangalore City	Pre-University Level	63	62	**125**
	Degree Level	62	63	**125**
No. of College Students in Mysore City	Pre-University Level	63	62	**125**
	Degree Level	62	63	**125**
	Total	250	250	**500**

The above table gives general information of the respondents. The total size of the sample is 500. 250 were selected from Bangalore city and another 250 were from Mysore city. These 500 college students were further divided into two more sections on the basis of their level of education and gender. Here an attempt is made to give the equal proportion to each selected sample.

Table No. 2: Frequency of the Usage of Social Networking Sites

How frequently do you use SNS (per week)?		College Students in Bangalore City		College Students in Mysore City		Total No. of Students	Total %
		Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
	Less than 1 hour	16	6.5	19	7.6	**35**	**7**
	1-3 hours	34	13.5	21	8.4	**55**	**11**
	4-7 hours	95	38	136	54.4	**231**	**46.2**
	8-12 hours	82	32.5	65	26	**147**	**29.4**
	More than 12 hours	23	9.5	09	3.6	**32**	**6.4**
	Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

The table No. 2 depicts the usage pattern of college students; the frequency of the usage of SNS. According to the above table 46% of college students spend 4-7 hours per week

[13] According to ComScore

[14] Source: comScore data and was originally published in the latest issue of Business Today.

for using SNS. Quite significant numbers of people (29%) are spending 8-12 hours per week to use SNS. The comparison of this data among the college students of Bangalore and Mysore cities is quite interesting. In Mysore city 54% of college students spend 4-7 hours on using SNS but in Bangalore city same amount of time is spend by only 38% of students.

Table 3: Preference over the usage of SNS

Which SNS do you prefer to use?		College Students in Bangalore City		College Students in Mysore City		Total No. of Students	Total %
		Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
	Facebook	187	74.8	105	42	292	58
	Orkut	42	16.8	93	37.2	135	27
	Twitter	05	2	12	4.8	17	3.4
	Myspace	00	00	01	0.4	1	0.2
	Others	26	6.4	39	15.6	65	13
	Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

Today in India, particularly among the college students Facebook is the favourite social networking website. According to the present study total 58% of the college students in Bangalore Mysore cities are using Facebook. Interestingly, 74.% of students in Bangalore using only Facebook contrary to 42% in Mysore. Hence there is a significant difference in the preference of using particular SNS among college students of Mysore and Bangalore cities. Second preferred SNS is Orkut (27%). In Bangalore only 16% of students use Orkut but in Mysore its usage is 37%.

Table 4: College Students' Purpose of Using Social Networking Sites

What is/are purpose of using Social Networking Sites?		College Students in Bangalore City		College Students in Mysore City		Total No. of Students	Total %
		Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
	Keeping in touch with family	56	22.4	90	36	146	29.2
	Keeping in touch with friends	127	50.8	137	55.2	265	53
	To meet new people	13	5.2	07	2.8	20	04
	Just for fun and entertainment	08	3.2	00	00	08	1.6
	To be 'in' because it's popular nowadays	30	12	10	4	40	08
	Others	16	6.4	05	2	21	4.2
	Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

College students use SNS for many different purposes. It is too difficult to point out one particular purpose of usage. However, as the above table shows total 53% of both Mysore and Bangalore college students use SNS for 'keeping in touch with friends'. Second highest purpose is 'keeping in touch with family' (29%). There is no much difference between the usage pattern, particularly on the purpose of using SNS among college students of Bangalore (50%) and Mysore (55%) cities.

Table 5: Changing Interpersonal Relationships with the Members of Family

Has the usage of SNS altered the nature of your interpersonal relationships with your members of family?		College Students in Bangalore City		College Students in Mysore City		Total No. of Students	Total %
		Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
	Agree	216	86.4	187	74.8	403	80.6
	Disagree	34	13.6	63	25.2	97	19.4
	Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

The above table represents views of the college students on changing nature of interpersonal relationships with their respective members of family. During the field work students were asked 'has the usage of SNS altered the nature of your interpersonal relationships with your family members', for that total 80% of students have agreed and total 19% have denied any changes in their interpersonal relationship with their family members. We can observe here, the intervene of SNS (new technology) has caused for lots of changes in interpersonal relationship with the family. Hence there is a major influence of SNS on the changing college student's interpersonal relationships with their members of family.

Table 6: The Increasing Level of Communication with the Family due to the Usage of SNS

Do you communicate on SNS more with your family because you have SNS connectivity?		College Students in Bangalore City		College Students in Mysore City		Total No. of Students	Total %
		Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
	Yes	221	88.4	239	95.6	460	92
	No	29	11.6	11	4.4	40	08
	Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

Evidently the usage of SNS brought significant changes in student's inter-personal relationship as well as in communication with their members of family. The availability of SNS connectivity increased the communication level between students and their respective members of family, which is shown in the above table. Total 92% of college students in both Mysore and Bangalore cities have agreed that they communicate with their family members more due to the availability of SNS. In this regard there is no much difference between college students of Bangalore and Mysore. Only 8% of college students have responded negatively.

Table 7: Changes in the relationship with the family after using SNS

Has there been any changes in your relationship with your family members after started using SNS?		College Students in Bangalore City		College Students in Mysore City		Total No. of Students	Total %
		Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
	Yes	214	85.6	194	77.6	408	81.6
	No	36	14.4	56	22.4	92	18.4
	Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

The above table is quite related to the previous issue we are dealing with. Total 81% of college students of both cities have agreed that there have been changes in their relationship with their family members after started using SNS.

In India the usage of SNS among college students is apparently increasing trend. It is very important to know what parents think about their children's usage of SNS. Hence, in the process of collecting data, students were asked 'what is your parent's opinion of you using SNS', for that 55% of the total

students expressed that their parents are quite 'OK' with their children's usage of SNS. But when we look at the responses solely in Mysore city, its only 42% of students said 'OK' and majority (58%) of the parents of Mysore city college students are 'not ok' on their children's usage of SNS.

Table 8: Parent's Opinion on the Usage of SNS by Their Children

What is your parent's opinion of you using SNS?		College Students in Bangalore City		College Students in Mysore City		Total No. of Students	Total %
		Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
	Ok	172	68.8	105	42	277	55.4
	Not Ok	78	31.2	145	58	223	44.6
	Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

Table 9: Changing Interpersonal Relationships with the Friends

Has the usage of SNS altered the nature of your interpersonal relationships with your friends?		College Students in Bangalore City		College Students in Mysore City		Total No. of Students	Total %
		Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
	Agree	205	82	182	72.8	387	77.4
	Disagree	45	18	68	27.2	113	22.6
	Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

The above table shows the changes in interpersonal relationships of college students and their friends. The question 'has the usage of SNS altered the nature of your relationships with your friends', for that 77% of total college students of both cities have agreed and only 22% have disagreed with the above statement.

Table 10: The Level of Communication with the Teachers using SNS

Do you communicate with your teachers using SNS?		College Students in Bangalore City		College Students in Mysore City		Total No. of Students	Total %
		Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
	Yes	68	27.2	46	18.4	114	22.8
	No	182	72.8	204	81.6	386	77.2
	Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

Currently the college going students do use SNS for interacting with the teachers. This new phenomenon is going up but not too fast. As the above table shows that only 22% of total college students both in Mysore and Bangalore cities use SNS for communicating with the teachers and (77%) majority of them do not use SNS for communicating with their teachers.

Table 11: The Degree of Trustworthiness of the People on SNS

What according to you is the degree of trustworthiness of the people you meet only on SNS?		College Students in Bangalore City		College Students in Mysore City		Total No. of Students	Total %
		Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
	Very trustworthy	19	7.6	06	2.4	25	5
	Moderately trustworthy	131	52.4	17	6.8	148	29.6
	Slightly trustworthy	82	32.8	171	68.4	253	50.6
	Not at all trustworthy	18	7.2	56	22.4	74	14.8
	Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

To know how much these college students trust people who become friends through online. They were asked 'What

according to you is the degree of trustworthiness of the people you meet only on SNS?'. (50%) majority of the total college students pointed that the people they meet on online are slightly trustworthy. Second highest was ranked to moderately trustworthy (29%). Hence the degree of their trustworthiness towards the people they meet in online quite low.

Table 12: The Increasing Preference for SNS to Face to Face Relationship

Do you prefer SNS to face to face relationship?		College Students in Bangalore City		College Students in Mysore City		Total No. of Students	Total %
		Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
	Yes	189	75.6	163	65.2	352	70.4
	No	61	24.4	87	34.8	148	29.6
	Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

The above table shows that how the preference for SNS to face-to-face relationship is increasing steadily. Total 70% of the college students both in Mysore and Bangalore cities preferred to use SNS than face-to-face interaction due to several reasons.

Table 13: Usage of SNS is not an Alternative to Face-to-Face Interaction

Do you think the usage of SNS can be an alternative to face-to-face interaction?		College Students in Bangalore City		College Students in Mysore City		Total No. of Students	Total %
		Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%		
	Yes	68	27.2	57	22.8	125	25
	No	182	72.8	193	77.2	375	75
	Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

Even though the college students preferred to have SNS interaction than face-to-face interaction, but they haven't agreed that usage of SNS can be an alternative to face-to-face interaction. 75% of total college students disagreed with the question asked, 'Do you think the usage of SNS can be an alternative to face-to-face interaction?'

Conclusion

Through the above analysis it is found that the usage of SNS influences interpersonal relationships of college students. It was considered college students' interpersonal relationships only with their members of family, their friends and their teachers. The usage of SNS brought lots of changes in interpersonal relationships between these students and members of family and it also helped students to have more communication with their family members. It is also true with their friends. The majority (58%) of the students use Facebook and only 27 % of students use Orkut, which shows that the Orkut is gradually declining since 2008. 53% of college students in this study use SNS for 'keeping in touch with friends'. The majority of the parents of these students are 'ok' with their children using SNS. The present study provides a major base for analyzing the technological implications on society in the domain of sociology. The present research based study confirms the implications of social networking sites on the interpersonal relationships of college students.

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