



## Facebook usage and interpersonal relationships with friends

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received: 15 October 2012;

Received in revised form:

20 November 2012;

Accepted: 7 December 2012;

#### Keywords

Facebook,  
Friends,  
Interpersonal relationships,  
Social networking sites.

### ABSTRACT

Facebook use are much in vogue these days. Taking into concern the exponential growth in membership on this social networking site, this study was therefore planned. The purpose of this research was to find out the relationship between facebook usage and its influence on peer relationships. A random sample for the same was collected from the tricity area i.e. Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali. A group of 60 subjects in the age group of 19-21years were administered a questionnaire on facebook usage. Correlation and descriptive analysis ( mean, S.D and t-ratio) were applied. Results revealed non significant relationship between SNS usage and interpersonal relationships with friends.

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### Introduction

Social networking sites have seen a dramatic surge in popularity these days. These sites (i.e My Space, Facebook, Orkut, etc) are an appendage of the new wave of the Internet, or what is referred to as the Web 2.0. As social beings, people use different forms of technology to meet the objective of maintaining relationships (Nardi, 2004; Franzen, 2000; Hampton and Wellman, 2000; Katz and Aspden, 1997). In the present scenario Social Networking Sites (SNS) greatly contribute towards meeting such objective. Social Networking Sites (SNS) have become an overnight phenomena and are attracting millions of young people (Bausch and Han, 2006) and many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily practices. Social networking sites act as a personal directory for the users. Users can create their own profiles to list their favourite music, movies, and television, as well as upload their own pictures, video and music. Thus provide a virtual persona to the users. These sites act as the online communities of people who share interest or/ activities and provide variety of ways to interact with others. They gave entirely new meanings to interpersonal interaction. It is the interplay between internet and real life communication and its subsequent effect on interpersonal relationships. One of the popular social networking websites is facebook. Facebook have bundled many of the internet communication standards such as e-mail, forums, and instant messaging into one resource.

Facebook was created in February 2004 by Zuckerberg, Moskovitz and Hughes. Like most social network sites, Facebook provides a web page into which each user can enter personal information, including gender, birthday, hometown, political and religious views, e-mail and physical addresses, relationship status, activities, interests, favourite music and movies, educational background, occupational status and a main personal picture. After creating their profile, users are interested to search their friends, family members, colleagues, strangers and others with whom they have a relationship, either by sending a friend request to those who are already on facebook or by requesting their contacts to join facebook. Once someone is accepted as a "friend," not only the two users' personal profile

but also their entire social networks are disclosed to each other. This allows each user to traverse networks by clicking through "friends" profiles, so that one's social network snowballs rapidly across people and institutions (Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, and Tong, 2008). This capability is the backbone of facebook and other SNS which attracts millions of users around the globe. Two types of messaging services are available on facebook profiles i.e. private message and a public message. A private message is like any other webmail service which is only viewed by the owner of the profile and a public message called "The Wall," where "friends" leave comments to the owner of the profile that can be viewed by other users. Usually, "The Wall" contains short messages in the form of "Whats in your mind" that reflect emotional status, common activities between "friends," or to call attention to any events.

Existing research shows that facebook had a strong association of maintaining or solidifying existing offline relationships (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, 2007). It was found that young people are motivated to join these sites to keep strong ties with friends, to strengthen ties with new acquaintances, and, to a lesser degree, to meet new people online (Acquisti and Gross, 2006). In another study, Sheldon (2008) concluded that females are more interested in using SNS like facebook to maintain existing relationships than males. Besides, males tended to use facebook as a dating tool to find romantic acquaintances and establish relationships.

In today's world almost every age group is crazy about facebook. Be it children, adults or even old ones and across the gender a large number are hooked on to facebook. During one of the surveys on teenagers, one teenager remarked "if u r not on facebook, you don't exit". This statement aroused the curiosity of author to conduct a research in this domain. Because of the growing demand of facebook to communicate with friends, there arises a need for this study. In earlier times, definition of friend was with whom you want to spend time, share values, share emotions and it was more of face to face interaction. In today's time, when people may not have time to meet personally or visit others, a question arises is facebook usage affecting interpersonal relationships? Do males and females differ in

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usage and also does this relation vary with gender? Since, adolescent and young adults are the most frequent users of the facebook (Boyd and Jenkins, 2006) so the study was planned with the following hypotheses.

**H1:** It is expected that facebook usage will be related to interpersonal relationships with friends.

**H2:** It is expected that this relationship will vary in males and females.

### Method

#### Sample

Initially preliminary information was gathered from hundred participants. Out of this, a sample of sixty participants with equal number of males and females, in the age range of 19 to 21 years, who were using facebook every day for atleast one hour were taken. The sample primarily consisted of individuals belonging to the tricity area i.e. Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali who were randomly selected for the collection of data.

#### Tool

Interpersonal relationship with friends scale (Asilo, Manlapig, Rementill, 2010) was used. Besides, a rating scale was designed to assess the amount of time spent on facebook ranging from less than 30 min to above six hours in a day by males and females.

#### Procedure

Survey is used to determine if the respondents are using facebook everyday for atleast one hour. After collecting the information about those who use facebook atleast one hour everyday, rating scale alongwith interpersonal relationship scale was administered to the participants individually. Since, facebook have friend's request option to be added in the list of another person, addition of an individual in ones list is considered one's friend.

#### Results

Correlation, Mean ,S.D and t-ratio was applied to the data. Results (Table 1) revealed non significant relationship (0.016) between facebook usage and interpersonal relationships with friends. Besides, no significant gender difference emerged on interpersonal relationships with friends ( Table 2).

**Table 1: Correlation between facebook usage and Interpersonal relationships with friends:**

		T	SC
		IME	ORE
<b>TIME</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.01
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.90
	N	6	60
<b>Friends</b>	Pearson Correlation	016	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.905	
	N	6	60

**Table 2: Mean S.D and t-value of males and females on interpersonal relationships with friends.**

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	't'-ratio
<b>Score</b>	Males	30	42.00	5.343	.976	1.103
	Females	30	40.70	3.621	.661	

#### Discussion

The aim of the study was to explore the relation of usage of facebook and interpersonal relationships with friends, and to study the gender differences on interpersonal relationships. For this, survey was conducted to select the required sample and

with the help of questionnaire along with scale facebook usage by males and females was assessed.

Results of the investigation indicated that there is no significant relationship between usage of facebook and interpersonal relationships with friends, thus not supporting the hypothesis. These are in contrast to the findings of results of Nie (2000) and Ellision, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) . Results suggested there is not much difference in interpersonal relationships whether a person is interacting online using facebook or interacting face to face with their friends. User's relationship with their friends may remain the same. In other words, it can be said that interacting with your friends on facebook may not be a replacement or substitute to face to face communication but it also does not hinder your interpersonal relationships as it may simply supplementing their communication with their friends. This view is supported by social network theory which proposes that internet communication supplements traditional social behavior, without necessarily increasing or decreasing it (Wellman and others, 2001). Results also get support from user and gratification theory which suggested that if two media serve similar needs then they can act as functional alternatives (Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas,1974). Thus, if individuals find face-to-face communication and online communication useful to reach similar goals, then they will use the two media similarly. Moreover, it is also found that online self disclosure is a means to develop and maintains relationships and the studies by Parks and Roberts,1998 ; Shaw, 2004 indicated that there is no difference between face to face and online self- disclosure and thus supported our hypothesis that there is no difference in maintaining relationship face to face or online. Sproull and Kiesler (1991) has confirmed the present finding by recognizing that there is fine balance between claiming beneficent or deleterious impact of technology like facebook in managing personal relationships.

Similar results have been obtained across the gender differences thus not supporting our hypothesis and thus in contrast with the findings of Parks and Floyd (1996) who found that females tend to be more involved in online interpersonal relationships than men and of Sheldon (2008) who suggested that females are more interested in using SNS like facebook to maintain existing relationships than males. The prime reason behind such finding seems to be that in today's world the young generation have similar gender roles unlike in traditional society where females have more of expressive role while males have instrumental role. The lack of significant differences among males and females can also be attributed to the reason that the motive for using facebook here is same i.e maintaining and communicating with ones friends and thus both group use facebook fairly equal. Another reason may be attributed to shedding of such stereotypes that men possess greater technological competence, know how, skills and interest (Lohan, 1997). Thus both males and females are now equally competent enough to pursue their interests. Moreover, facebook usage is relatively cheap so it is easy and reasonable for both the genders to use it to interact with their friends. The result of present study is also get supported by a study indicated that participant gender or sex did not affect the relationship quality in interpersonal relationship and thus media use like facebook use did not predict relational closeness or satisfaction in interpersonal relationships.

The study had its limitation in small sample size and using only one form of social networking sites. Moreover, there are number of variables contributing to interpersonal relationships which could have been studied along with the usage of social networking sites. Despite all, one cannot deny the fact that users

being creative in nature can shape online contexts in ways that may not be able to predict the real and accurate impact of online communication on interpersonal relationships.

Future implication of the study is wide. With the increased indulgence of individuals in the usage of SNS, it has major influence over every aspect of life. Moreover, now a days it is an attraction among older people also. So the relationship can be studied with varied samples. Thus, this study is step towards bigger study to predict the usage of social networking sites on various psychological and social aspects.

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