
A Detailed Review of Literature on "Social Networking" –A Global Perspective

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Abstract

Social networking sites and apps have become an integral part of human life now a day. A considerable amount of research has been done in this area under different branches of study and disciplines. The focus of researchers has been varying based on time period or geographical region or the discipline of study. In this paper, the focus is on two major aspects of research work done till now – objectives of using social networking and effects of social networking. This paper explores the similarities in research at different places across various disciplines of researchers of different countries. It presents research done by them in a condensed and synchronized manner in order to understand the nature of research work done so far with respect to social networking under different headings in various discipline. It also tries to bring out any gap that exists in the research that can further be explored. The analysis shows that there is a gap for research in this area since a comprehensive work covering young people of teen age is yet to be done especially with reference to the usage patterns and effects of using social networking on family.

Keywords - Social Networking, Objectives of Usage, Usage Patterns, Effects of Usage, Statistical Tools

Introduction

The use of social networking is now a part of our culture and daily life. It is not possible to imagine that a person does not know anything about it. The new generations are the most adaptive to any kind of technology and digital medium of communication. With the advent of fast paced internet services and modern devices to access these services, it has become very easy and comfortable to use social networking sites anywhere, anytime for anyone. The need for security also has increased for children and hence parents are no longer hesitant to provide cell phones to them. This has further made it easy for kids to access internet through cell phone. In this paper, the researcher has focused on review of literature related to social networking. These sites and apps are used for different objectives by various people and the impacts are also very diverse. Hence, researchers across the globe have tried to study these two dimensions in a variety of manners for people of different kinds. This research paper tries to bring their work on a common platform for better understanding purpose and to find out similarities and dissimilarities in the research work done so far in the field of social networking, especially with respect to objectives of usage and effects of usage of social networking and statistical tools utilized by researchers for this purpose. The research work was done between March 2015 and June 2015.

Usage and Benefits of Social Networking

In the research article targeted at studying teenagers' use of social networking sites for intimacy, privacy and self-expression, the use of in home personal interviews was done to collect responses from teenagers recruited by a market research agency (Livingstone, 2008). In detailed interviews of about one hour the major findings of the researcher showed that teenagers used varying strategies to represent themselves. They were constrained by norms and practices of their peer groups and ease of access of technological interface. They also expected private space online and used to classify friends in different categories. Some of the respondents also faced problems in maintaining online privacy.

In order to study teenagers' experiences with social network sites, June Ahn, conducted a research in which the

relationship between social networking use and bridging and bonding social capital was studied. The study examined the patterns of SNS use in an urban, teenage sample in the United States. It tested the hypothesis that use of SNSs is related to higher levels of social capital. The researcher conducted a web based survey using convenience sampling in urban high schools and then combined the data with public records. Using ordinary least squares regression models data was analyzed and findings were reported. The study suggests that the users of Facebook and Myspace report higher level of social capital but the experiences are differently related to bridging and bonding social capital. The time spent in SNSs is found to be related to bridging capital but depending on experiences, that relation may be positive or negative. (Ahn, 2011)

Collin *et al.*, 2011 studied the benefits of social networking keeping young people in context. Their work is based on descriptive research methodology and they have conducted a review of literature of work done in this area. The researchers have highlighted various challenges posed by social networking and the ease with which mobile phones and internet technology are available to young people. This paper also presents the studies indicating increasing numbers of young people using SNS in everyday life for different purposes, like communication, blogging, sharing content like videos and photos etc. The prime challenges found from the literature are regarding management of personal information and privacy, the risk of predation and cyber bullying, issues regarding copyright laws etc.

In the second part of their report, the researchers have reported the following benefits of usage of SNS: Media Literacy, Formal Educational Outcomes, Informal Education and Learning, Creativity, Individual Identity and Self-Expression, Strengthening Social Relationships, Belonging and Collective Identity, Building and Strengthening Communities, Civic and Political Participation, Self-Efficacy and Wellbeing (Collin *et al.*, 2011).

Güzin & Koçak, (2011) have conducted research for determining usage purposes of social networks with a focus on the possible differences between females and males for Facebook users. They carried out online survey of 870 facebook users using snowball sampling and also offered prizes and reward to respondent in order to increase effectiveness of survey. By applying t- test they have checked whether there are any significant differences in responses. Analyses of the results by factor analysis showed that usage purposes were mainly four, namely maintaining existing relationships (35%), making new relationships (13%), using for academic purposes (10%) and following specific agenda (9%). The researchers also found that there were significant differences between genders in all of the purposes mentioned. While the difference on making new contacts was in favor of males, the differences on the other three user purposes were in favor of females (Güzin & Koçak, 2011).

Tham & Ahmed, (2011) studied the usage and implications of social networking sites with a focus on college students. The objectives of their research were to check whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the use of SNS and college students' academic performance & to check whether there are any statistically significant relationships between the use of SNS and various facets of students' personal development. A survey was conducted by group administered questionnaires containing 11 closed ended and 2 open ended questions. The non-random sample was of the size of 445 students of different age groups from Saint Cloud State University campus in Minnesota. SNS usage rate was studied as an independent variable and was measured by recording time spent by users at different periods. Academic performance was studied as the first dependent variable and was recorded by the past semester CGPA or GPA obtained by the respondents. Personal development was studied as the second dependent variable. The analysis included representation of data as frequency and percentage with respect to gender and age group for demographic analysis. Chi-square analysis and spearman's correlation were used for analysis purpose at different stages.

The analysis of their study revealed that there was a significant difference in the SNS usage rate with respect to gender. Further it was found that there were significant differences in the amount of time spent for academic purposes outside classroom by males and females. It was also found that as the age of the respondent increased, the time spent on SNS decreased. The perception of respondents about impact on academic performance due to SNS usage also showed significant difference with reference to age groups made as above. The results showed that there was no significant difference in the results of respondents using SNS for lower or higher durations. In terms of SNS usage and demographics, significant correlations were found between age and gender and the influence of SNS on

users' personal development. Results also revealed that there was a significant relationship between users' class rank and the influence of SNS. Data analyses also showed that there was a significant correlation between students' field of study and influence of SNS. Positive correlations were found in SNS usage rate and students' networking with friends, family members, and professionals, while negative correlations were observed between SNS usage rate and students' search for volunteer opportunities, and awareness of others' improved search for a date. Students' perceptions of the influence of SNS were found to be consistent with the actual effects as revealed by the findings discussed in review of literature by the researchers (Tham & Ahmed, 2011).

Effects of Using Social Networking

Dr. Biswajit Das and Jyoti Shankar Sahoo carried out research for doing a critical analysis of the impact of social networking sites on personal and social life. They carried out the research in form of review of literature from various published materials and news papers and described various negative effects of SNS. The research paper presented some major negative effects of SNS as – Concerns for Personal Privacy, Impact of Stranger Friends, Problems of Profile Hacking, Biological side effects, and decline in work productivity, Addiction Disorder, helping cyber criminals and damage to relationships (Das & Sahoo, 2012).

Miah *et. al.*, (2012) explored effect of social networking on adolescent education in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, tried to find out the specific networking sites being used and the subjects being studied while on social networking sites. They also checked effect of using SNS on academic progress. A non random sample of 569 students from two junior high schools and two high schools was taken. Data were collected by the questionnaires administered by the researcher with the help of school staff.

From the findings of their work, Facebook was reported as the highest used SNS while twitter and Google followed on second and third position. Majority of the students reported using SNS for talking to friends and for meeting new friends. Only 11% said that they used SNS for education purpose. 42% respondents said that they used SNS all seven days of week and majority of respondents used SNS for 4 hours or less (70.3%). Most common objectives of SNS use were found to be – updating status, posting picture, writing on a friend's wall and browsing – these all were reported almost equally. 85% respondents said that they were aware of security and privacy related matters and 78% said that they were not of the opinion that they were spending too much time on SNS. 51% respondent said that they did not use SNS for school work. English and Math subjects were studied the most while being on social networking site. 67% respondents said that there was no effect of using such sites while 16% believed that such sites were helpful to them. Only 12% said that they were hurt by using SNS. 86% respondents said that there was not a problem ever with school related matters due to SNS usage and 83% reported that they had never been victimized of cyber-bulling or hacking (Miah *et. al.*, 2012).

Mohamed El Khouli presented in his research paper based on a pilot study in Abu Dhabi, the most important negative aspects of using social networking affecting the family stability. The objectives of this study were (i) to determine the relative differences in the degree of perception about negatives of using social networking among respondents according to the gender, educational level and the length of the period of use. (ii) to identify the most important aspects of the main disadvantages and negatives of using social networking sites affecting the users of these sites. A survey of 127 families was conducted through personal interview using a structured questionnaire. Demographic classification – Gender, Education Level and Time spent on SNS have been presented in numbers and percentage. Classification for usage of different SNS on the internet is also shown in percentage. F – test (ANOVA) and K – Wallis test have been used. Factor analysis and Correlation analysis have been used to derive main components of negative impacts of SNS usage. The findings showed that the percentage of respondents using SNS more than 3 hours on a daily basis was 35%. It has also revealed that the most popular sites were youtube and facebook. 'Communicate with unknown persons without control', 'Abuse of these sites by some teens', and 'Causing isolation of children from the real world' were reported to be the most important negative effects of SNS usage. Difference in level of education was found to have a significant effect on respondents' ability to recognize negative effects (Khouli, 2013).

For studying the usage of social networking sites among the college students in India, S. Manunatha conducted a

survey of 500 students from urban areas in various colleges and universities in India. Respondents were from 18 to 26 years range of age. Data were collected by circulating questionnaires, personal interview, direct observation and participatory observation. The results showed that 20% of the respondents did not use SNS. From the users of SNS, about 23% spent time between 2 to 5 hours per week for SNS and about 31% spent time between 5 to 10 hours per week. About 69% respondents used SNS for maintaining existing friends or finding new friends and 16% respondents reported other reasons than those listed on the scale prepared by the researcher. Above 95% respondents were of the positive opinion that social networking sites act as platform for reconnecting with lost friends, maintaining existing networks/relationships and sharing knowledge, ideas and opinions. At the same time, they also considered that such sites had to be handled with discretion respecting others privacy. The study found that basis for choosing friends online cover mainly personal likeliness and trust online strangers for making friendship – 42%. Mere 26% online friends are based on education and business stream and 22% of responses showed that they maintained existing contacts among family and friends people already well-acquainted in real life. The researcher has also drawn conclusions regarding different types of counterparts and levels of intimacy with online friends. The findings showed that 48 % users communicated with family members and 70% users always communicated with friends using SNS. Main purposes of using SNS were reported as: for media sharing, for messaging, for chatting, for browsing profile pages and for file sharing. (39%, 38%, 67%, 30% and 37% respectively) (Manjunatha, 2013).

Kandiero, Perpetua, & Jagero studied the impact of access to social media on employee productivity and organizational performance at Econet Wireless in Zimbabwe. They translated the research problem in to the following research questions: (i) 'What are the social networks used by employees at Econet Zimbabwe?' (ii) 'What are the purposes for which employees use social networks?' (iii) 'What is the organization's formal policy regarding employee use of external social networks?' (iv) 'How has the organization's reputation been affected as a result of employees' use of social networking sites?'. Responses were collected from 140 employees with the permission of the management of the company. Stratified random sampling was done based on type of employment – contract employee or permanent employee. Both qualitative and quantitative research designs were used by the researcher for data collection. Triangulation method was used for data validation through cross verification. The study utilized the questionnaire developed by Newsman (2005) to measure employee productivity. Descriptive statistics like mean and averages were used to analyze data and present findings. The respondents revealed that they had used social networking sites at least once to communicate with their peers. Facebook and Whatsapp were found to be the most popular sites among respondents (120) followed by Youtube (98) and LinkedIn (72). 87% of respondents said that they used social networking sites more than once in a day. 44% of the respondents reported that they visited these sites from office while 40% said that they used their cell phones for this purpose. 48% of the respondents used social networking tools to chat with friends and 30% used these tools for socializing with friends. 64% respondents believed that social networks can help a company for brand building, while 32% believed that they can be useful for fostering collaboration. Only 4% believed that social networks can be useful for assessing potential employees at the time of recruitment (Kandiero, Perpetua, & Jagero, 2014)

Discussion

From the review of literature of these selected papers, it is apparent that the research scholars in different parts of the world are taking keen interest in exploring the area of SNS usage and its effects. They also focus on different age groups as well as use different types of analysis methods. But, there are certainly some similarities in all of the research. To some extent, they all turn out to be qualitative in nature. They all try to quantify the outcomes of usage patterns in percentage or frequencies in most of the cases where as they are driven to present the outcomes of effects in qualitative terms more often than not. The researchers also focus in majority of the cases on the demographic variables like gender, age and social status etc., leading us to believe that there is certainly some relationship between SNS usage and these variables; as well as effects of SNS usage and demographic variables.

Conclusion

The researchers have targeted students of different age groups, working people and households to study similar research objectives like usage purpose and effects of using social networking. The time period of the research is also

quite narrow and the methods of analysis are also found to be similar. But, there exists a need to focus on a wider range of students group with the purpose of checking usage patterns and effect on their families. The research reviews in this article and apart from this article have not yet focused on this aspect and a comprehensive work still requires attention of researchers, especially for teen age group.

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