

AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE YOUTH

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ABSTRACT: Life without Internet is unimaginable to the youth now-a-days as it has provided a virtual environment to them for sharing their thoughts in front of the world. Internet is the converged technology of various online applications of which social media are popular ones. They allow people to create own web pages, share contents and contact with online individuals. Social media have facilitated online communication among closed ones and also widened the path for distracting the youth from their works and moral responsibilities. The youth fall in the age bracket of 19-35 years. According to Census of India 2011, the population of the youth in India is 550 million. On the basis of the literature available on the socio-psychological impact of social media on the youth, the paper reveals that worthless chatting and diverting the concentration from study and work eventually affect the productivity which stand as barriers in developing potentialities among the youth.

KEYWORDS: Socio-psychological impact, new communication technology, social media, youth

I. INTRODUCTION

The exponential growth of new communication technologies has reduced the geographical distance among the “netizens”, i.e., citizens of Internet in the virtual world. Internet is one such new communication technology which provides huge potentialities for the social, emotional and cognitive development of the youth. A host of online applications on the Internet have come to light in recent years; among which social media are well received by the youth. The advent of social media has influenced the face-to-face interaction of individuals and provided chances for extending their social networks with other individuals. Not only the tech-savvy younger generation but also the older generation is approaching to social media for various purposes. Even the children are found to watch their favourite animation programmes of television on YouTube using smartphone. Social media permit the people to participate in the process of communication both as information receivers and message creators. They give a platform to the people to reach global audience at minimum cost. The social networking sites (SNSs) are widespread social media which enable people to create their own web pages, share contents and communicate with online individuals. SNSs allow users to regulate their social networks by providing visible lists of online connections (Mayfield 2008; Boyd & Ellison 2007). Thus, SNSs have overtaken personal e-mail (Nielsen 2009). Out of the Internet users in India, around 84% are using social media accounting to around 110 million social network users in India. They are the users of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and so on (eStatsIndia.com 2013). Socio-psychological impact of social media considers both social and psychological factors responsible for change in the behaviour, thoughts and feelings of the youth which are influenced by the actual or imagined presence of other people on social media. As such, social media are defined as forms of electronic communication, facilitating interaction and communication among the youth through Internet. According to the National Youth Policy, 2003 of India, youth constitute a section of population who fall in the age group of 13-35 years. This age bracket is further sub-divided into three age-groups: 13-18 (adolescents), 19-25 (early youth age group) and 26-35 (later youth age group) years.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the paper is to find out the negative impact of social media on the youth by emphasising on the socio-psychological aspect in India which obstructs the path of acquiring competencies among them.

III. METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on the review of the literature on the negative impact of social media. Secondary data were collected from empirical studies conducted in India.

SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE YOUTH

The contemporary Indian society is moving towards the process of digitalisation. Consequently, one cannot remain untouched by the driving force of social media. People find impetus in using these media due to advance communication facility, extending the friendship tie, hooking up with someone in relationship, effortless use and

keeping pace with the changing world. Moreover, one cannot deny the detrimental effects of online social media such as wasting of time, drawing away the attention of learners, bringing down learning habits, lessening offline communication with people, using abridged phrases for chatting and messaging, ill health, cyber crimes, obtaining personal information by anonymous people, etc (Patil 2014). The empirical studies reviewed in this section focus on the negative impact of social media on the youth influencing their ways of acting, thinking and feeling:

In the Indian context, a study was conducted on 120 youth (60, each, males and females) from higher educational institutions of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh to know the impact of SNSs on social issues and changing mindset. The study depicted that social issues on SNSs emerged among males were harassment and bullying (85%, each), followed by breakup of relationship (81.7%), unwanted video uploading (75%) and over-sharing (61.7%); whereas majority of females (85%) confronted with harassment, followed by bullying (83.3%), unwanted video uploading (75%) and breakup of relationship (68.3%) (Rana & Singh 2014: 48-55).

Online social networks grasped the concentration of students and detracted them to unacademic, immoral and undesirable actions such as futile chatting and wasting time on random searching by keeping aside their work. Teenagers often used SNSs for passing time and enjoyment. However, use of Internet for educational activities such as online tutorials and lectures, and downloading study materials was fair but using it only for social networking was of no use (Kuppuswamy & Shankar 2010: 67-79).

In the context of North-East India, using field survey, a study on mental problems arising out of the application of social media was conducted on 56 teenagers from the age group of 13-19 years in Tinsukia district of Assam. It revealed that teenagers belonging to the age bracket of 13-15 years were addicted to Facebook and the rest from the age group of 16-19 years preferred WhatsApp due to privacy concern. The socio-psychological problems associated with social media included cyber bullying, depression, anxiety, isolation and suicidal tendency, online harassment, obesity, psychological disorder; namely, FOMO meaning fear of being offline due to the lack of Internet connection, sexting and related health problems (Gogoi 2016: 1735-1740).

A study on the impact of social media on educational efforts was carried out on 40 students of different colleges of Guwahati, Assam selected using judgement sampling technique. It depicted that Facebook was the favourite SNS among the students (90%), followed by Twitter (10%); the main purpose of using social media included making new friends (55%), followed by sharing ideas and learning from experiences of online individuals (50%), and enjoying recreational activities (5%); reduction in study hours due to chatting with online friends through social media among 40% students, cyber bullying and privacy concern on social media resulting in detrimental effects on the mental setup among 30% students, growing cyber crime by hackers among 20% students and lack of initiative in disseminating relevant academic information among 10% students were predicaments in using social media as learning tools (Deka 2015: 90-94).

A sample survey was conducted on 200 residents of Guwahati consisting of students, teachers, engineers, marketing professionals and businessmen to find out implications of social media in the society and their usefulness as means of communication. The study revealed that though social media were widely applied as influential means of communication across different sections of the society in Guwahati, problems such as online harassment, cyber stalking in which electronic means of communication like e-mail, instant messaging and messages posted on a website or discussion group are used to harass people, family estrangement and low productivity among the employees emerged as barriers in the development of capabilities among the youth (Baruah 2012: 1-10).

Using descriptive research design, a study on 60 undergraduate students selected randomly from government and private colleges of Karimganj town aimed to identify the distracting nature of social media in education. It showed that Facebook was commonly used social media among the students; majority of them (68%) used mobile phone for accessing to these media, followed by laptop (18.18%); 40% were regular users of social media; 43.18% used them for keeping in touch with friends; 77.27% maintained privacy in updating information on social media platform; 31.81% of the students were unable to maintain social relations with offline friends; 43.18% preferred to use SNSs during night hours, from 10pm to 1am, followed by 11am - 4pm (18.18%); and use of social media worsened their writing skill due to grammatical mistakes resulting in addiction towards attractive features of social media as they were engaged in late night chatting and surfing which affected their physical and mental health (Roy & Chakraborty 2015: 141-147).

Briefly, social networking sites have drawn away the attention of the youth, basically the students, from the study to inappropriate measures like passing time on social media by skipping study and work. Consequently,

these lead to lower educational outcomes and decreasing productivity among the students. The youth have become self-centred and think about show-off on social media.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the reviewed literature bring out the following points:

1. Facebook is the regular social networking site used by the youth. They cannot think of living without it. Facebook has undoubtedly won the mind of the young people of the society because of a host of features like making personal portfolio, providing information, promoting business, and image and video hosting besides networking. Unlike Facebook, WhatsApp maintains more privacy among its users within the contact list of the mobile phone only and there is no advertisement on the display screen. Thus, excessive use of Facebook, WhatsApp and other social media has made the youth addictive in nature.
2. Cyber bullying is a form of harassment in which mobile phone, instant messaging, e-mail and chat rooms on social networking sites are used to harass the people. Researches show that it can cause unhappiness to social media users leading to social disconnect.
3. Moreover, taking selfie and posting it on social networking sites have become a trend among the youth now-a-days. There are instances of death among the youth while taking selfies. For example, Debanjan Roy, a college student, met death while posing for a selfie in front of a running train on a railway track in Chandrakona Road of West Midnapur district of West Bengal on 14 January, 2017.
4. FOBO is another psychological disorder emerging among the youth which is clinically known as “nomophobia”, i.e., no mobile phobia. It is the advanced concept of FOMO, i.e., fear of missing out. In this case, the individual feels anxiety when he/she is out of mobile phone or Internet and unable to communicate with other people.
5. The youth, now-a-days, use decomposed words on social media which has affected their command over language. The incorrect words and grammatical errors have resulted into poor writing skill among them. Ultimately, the negative impact of social media has stood as a hindrance to skill and personality development of the youth.

V. CONCLUSION

To sum up, it rests on the perception of the youth to take social media positively or negatively. Social media can enhance self-affirmation among the youth by making them aware about their own value and preserve their social connections with friends, family members and acquaintances. Moreover, the founders of different social media should take initiative to design them for disseminating information relevant in education along with recreational activities. If the youth can realise the pessimistic side and socio-psychological problems of social media and use them for developing their self-identity, then, the way towards their skill development is not far away from them.

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