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Social Networking Sites and Teens: Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – *The growth in Web 2.0 tools and their utility in different domains has led to the enormous growth of Social Networking Sites(SNS) and Social Media Apps.These social tools not only offer an effective platform for users to act as content distributors but also provides them access to trending information from across the globe. The paper attempts to review the available literature to ascertain how these sites impact the life of the modern-day teenagers.*

Methodology – *The current work is an extensive literature survey investigating the impact of social networking sites on adolescent users. Literature Search was carried using varied terms and phrases like "Social Networking Sites and Teens", "SNS and Teens", "Higher Education and SNS use", "Social Media", "Social Media and education", "Social Networking" etc. across a number of reputed online scholarly databases, search engines and websites.*

Findings – *The study reveals that there is a substantial impact of social Networking Sites on the teens in terms of use, interaction, education and hazards.*

Practical Implications – *The study provides better understanding of the impact of Social Networking Sites on Teens at global level in the light of the available literature. It further provides an overview of major issues concerning the negative impact of such tools on teens.*

KEYWORDS – *SOCIAL MEDIA; SOCIAL NETWORKING; TEENAGERS; DIGITAL MEDIA; SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES.*

INTRODUCTION

Internet has become a social mechanism and is inextricably woven into people's lives. In the modern age of information revolution, it is also referred as "new media". The new media technologies which are often mentioned to as Web 2.0 encompass a wide variety of web-related communication technologies, such as blogs, wikis, online social networking, virtual world and other social media forms. These

technologies have made such an impact on the lives of people that it is hard to believe that less than a decade ago such technologies hardly existed. Over the past decade, technology has become increasingly important in the lives of people particularly adolescents. It has been found that teenagers are excessively using these new electronic communication forms which include instant messaging, e-mail, and text messaging, as well as communication-oriented Internet sites such as blogs, SNS for sharing photos and video **(Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008)**. Social networking as such has emerged as a major way through which individuals interact on the internet. This is especially true for the adolescents and young adult population who have come of an era when online communication and internet interaction have risen to unprecedented levels **(Messina & Iwasaki, 2011).** The digital technologies are adopted more by young adolescents than adults and it has been found that majority of youth are using the Social Networking Sites(SNS) as a medium for social interaction, research, sharing ideas, photographs, artistic creation etc. **(Koc & Tamer, 2011).** With the emergence of SNS such as Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, etc., Social networking has become a global phenomenon. **Boyd and Ellison (2007)** define social network services as "web-based services which allow individuals to Construct a public or semipublic profile within a bounded system, communicate with other users; and View the pages and details provided by other users within the system". The practices that differentiate social networking sites communication from other types of computer-mediated communication are that the profiles of users, their friends and comments or testimonials profiles are publicly viewed. Users of the Social networking websites are required to establish a profile of themselves by filling up a form **(Ahmad, 2011). Boyd and Ellison (2007)** further defined Social network sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or 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". Social networking services allow a user to create a profile by inserting his/ her personal data. Users' data does not only include vital statistics but also include a lot of other information pertaining to user hobbies, passions, interests, professional background and so on. The main communication resources used to build social networks include Chat, Messaging, Email, Video and Voice calls, File sharing, Blogging, Discussion groups, etc.

METHODOLOGY

The current paper provides an extensive literature survey investigating the impact of social networking sites on adolescent users. Wide-ranging Search attempts using varied terms and phrases like "Social Networking Sites and Teens", "SNS and Teens", "Higher Education and SNS use", "Social Media", "Social Media and education", "Social Networking" etc. were used for retrieving the literature across a number of reputed online scholarly databases, search engines and websites. The literature retrieved is analyzed and organized properly to strengthen the arguments.

POPULARITY OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

The popularity of SNS is growing tremendously with more and more people adopting it as preferred means of communication to remain connected with their friends and family. **Whiting and Williams (2013)** identified ten uses and gratifications for using social media including social interaction, information seeking, pass time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility, expression of opinion, information sharing, and surveillance/knowledge about others. SNS users find it convenient to keep themselves involved with the latest and trending events throughout the world. According to the data collected of the top 15 popular social networking sites worldwide, Facebook is the most popular of all these sites and has jumped by 80 million active users from 1.86 billion in December to 2 billion in March 2017 as shown below in Table 1.

Table1. SNS with number of Visitors per Month

Social network	Monthly visitors
Facebook	2,00,00,00,000
Youtube	1,00,00,00,000
Instagram	70,00,00,000
Twitter	32,80,00,000
Reddit	25,00,00,000
Vine	20,00,00,000
Pinterest	16,00,00,000
Ask.Fm	15,00,00,000
Tumblr	11,50,00,000
Flickr	11,20,00,000
Google+	11,10,00,000
LinkedIn	10,60,00,000

Source: (https://www.dreamgrow.com/top-15-most-popular-social-networking-sites/amp/)

The growing popularity of mobile social networking has created a fierce competition between the leading social networking apps and the already existing main social networking sites. The data in Table 2 shows that WhatsApp and Messenger are in close race for the top spot but as both of these apps are owned by Facebook so the competition is not that grave as could have been between completely separate companies.

Table2: Social Networking Apps with Number of Visitors per Month

Social networking app	Monthly visitors
Messenger	1,20,00,00,000
WhatsApp	1,20,00,00,000
QQ Chat	89,90,00,000
WeChat	80,60,00,000
Instagram	70,00,00,000
QZone	65,20,00,000
Viber	24,90,00,000
LINE	21,80,00,000
Snapchat	20,00,00,000
YY	12,20,00,000

Source: (https://www.dreamgrow.com/top-15-most-popular-social-networking-sites/amp/)

TEENAGERS AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

SNS provide advanced features and opportunities to create, manage and share the content online, to develop new communication channels, connections and tracking new global trends. All these innovations have greatly influenced the life patterns of modern day teens. Many studies suggest that today teens are the most avid users of SNS and further reveal that between 55% and 82% of the teenagers and young adults use social networking sites on a regular basis **(Kuss & Griffiths, 2011).** According to a research done on American teenagers it is found that social media has become so pervasive in the lives of American teens that having a presence on SNS is almost synonymous with being online. Fully 95% of all teen ages 12-17 are now online and 80% of those online teens are users of social media site **(Lenhart, Madden, Smith, Purcell, Zickuhr & Rainiel, 2011).** Usage of Social networking sites has also been found to differ with regard to age group. For instance, a study comparing 50 teenagers aged 13 to 19 years and the same number of older MySpace users aged over 60 years revealed that teenager's friend's network was larger. Additionally, teenagers made more use of MySpace web 2.0 feature i.e. sharing videos and music and blogging relative to older people **(Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris, 2009). Rideout, (2012)** reveals that 9 out of 10 (90%) 13 years to 17 years old adolescents have used some form of social media in America. Three out of four which means 75% of the teenagers currently have a profile on a social networking site, and one in five (22%) has a Twitter account. According to the study Facebook completely dominates social networking use among teenagers. The study further reveals that 68% of all teenagers say Facebook is their main social networking site, while 6% use Twitter, 1% use Google Plus, and 1% use MySpace (25% don't have a social networking site). The study also divulges that for the huge majority of teens, social media and other digital communications media are a part of their daily life. The study further reveals that 68% of teens text every day, 51% visit social networking sites daily, and 11% of the

users send or receive tweets at least once every day. In fact, 34% of teenagers visit their main social networking site several times a day. One in four (23%) teens are "heavy" social media user. The use of social networking sites has gradually increased over the past several years across the world and the extensive accessibility of digital media has influenced the ways teens build and maintain social networks as well as how they consume and share information on these websites. According to surveys of US teens by the Pew Research Center, the proportion of teens with Internet access has increased from 87% in 2004 to 95% in 2012, and the proportion of teens engaging in some form of social media usage has increased from 55% in 2006 to 83% in 2012 **(Seo, Houston, Knight, Kennedy & Inglish, 2014).** Some of the studies have found that the mobile phone has become the favored communication hub for the majority of teens. The study **(Rideout, 2012)** reveals that 67% of the teens own a mobile device capable of connecting to the Internet, such as a smartphone, iPod Touch, iPad, or similar device. According to the study among those teens who have a profile on social networking site, half (52%) have checked their sites from a mobile device, and 43% do their social networking using a mobile device most or half of the time. The study further reveals that enormous majority of teenagers have their own cell phone (82%) including 41% who say they have a "smart" phone. As per the survey of September 2012 by Pew Internet, 78% of teenagers have a cell phone and almost half (47%) of them own a smartphone. The survey reveals that eight out of ten teenagers have a desktop or laptop available to them. Among 20% of teens who do not own a computer, 67% have access to a computer that they can use at home. This means that 93% of teens have a computer or access to one **(Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013).**

Many studies highlight a number of positive and negative consequences of SNS usage among teens and provides an insight into various findings that provide food to thought for understanding the huge impact of SNS on young minds. **Jain, Gupta and Anand (2012**) writes about how in today's fast-moving world social media is providing a platform to talk and debate about many burning issues around the world which everybody need to think upon and act. According to the study one such burning issue that has been ignored at present is the impact of social networking sites on the changing mind-set of the youth and the SNSs are ascertaining themselves a bonus in bringing thoughts of people on many social issues. In another study "The Effect of Social Network Sites on Adolescents Social and Academic Development: Current Theories and Controversies", **Ahn (2011)** highlights prominent benefits of SNS for teens including socially and communicably enhanced learning opportunities, as well as the ability to access nascent information. Some of the risks stated by Ahn include being exposed to cyber-bullying, sexting, and Facebook depression. A study based on relationship between Facebook usage and academic performance by **(Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010)** shows that Facebook users had lower grades and spent less time studying than the students who did not use SNS. Of the 26% reporting an impact of their usage on their lives, 74% claimed that it has a negative impact including procrastination, distraction and poor time management. **Kuss and Griffiths, (2011)** found that those people who are addicted to using SNS experience

similar symptoms to those who suffer addictions to substances or other behaviours**. Marsh, Downs and Cranor, (2017)** in their study conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 experts in the fields of teen behavior, online privacy, security, cybercrime, and monitoring software. The study reveals that the teenagers love to share passwords and access to their social networking accounts with one another, especially in case of teenage girls. The responses revealed many threats including opportunity costs to schoolwork and sleep, loss of privacy, and long-term embarrassment as a result of digital records. The two prominent risks include communicating with strangers online and cyberbullying.

MAJOR ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

CYBER BULLYING

A greater concern posed by SNS to teenagers is the danger of becoming the victim of cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is among one of the negative sides of SNS use. It includes online bullying, harassment and humiliation. False, illicit, demeaning and vulgar comments and information about teenagers can be pasted online by mischievous persons and hence making them to suffer. According to a study by **Lenhart, (2009)** one in three online teens has experienced online harassment and girls are more likely to be victims. The study finds that one third (32%) of all teenagers who are using the internet say that they have been easy targets of a range of annoying and potentially threatening online activities such as receiving threatening messages, having their private emails or text messages forwarded to others without their consent, or having an embarrassing picture posted without permission or having rumors about them spread online. With more than 90% of adolescents using mobile phones, smartphones, laptops, and tablets for daily communication with peers, social victimization via cyberbullying is becoming an increasingly common and serious problem among adolescents. Unfortunately, adolescents generally do not inform about such issues to their parents and teachers and therefore often do not avail themselves of advice or emotional support that may prove helpful to them when victimized **(Lenhart, 2015)**. According to **Brahme, Shivaji and Mundhe (2014)** the survey done by Ipsos-a global market research company, reveals that 45% of Indian parents believe a child in their community was being cyber bullied, while a majority (53%) parents are aware of the issue. It further reveals that the most widely reported means for cyber bullying was social networking sites like Facebook. The study reveals that the frequency of Cyberbullying in India was higher than that of western nations, including the US (15%), Britain (11%) and France (5%).Another study by **(Wadian, Jones, Sonnentag & Barnett ,2016)** while analyzing the experiences of teenagers with cyberbullying reveals that the percentage of adolescents who told that they were being cyberbullied was greater than the percentage of adolescents who reported cyberbullying to another person. In addition, the adolescents reported that they were more frequently cyberbullied by same-sex peers than by opposite-sex peers. Although according to the study the adolescents' chosen response to a cyberbully was corresponding with the response they believed their parents would recommend

(i.e., ignore the cyberbully), the adolescents anticipated that they and their parents would disagree on the individuals from whom the adolescents should seek advice if they were cyberbullied. Specifically, whereas the adolescents anticipated that their parents would want to be the primary advice-providers, the adolescents indicated that they would be more likely to seek advice from their friends than their parents or teachers if they were a victim of cyberbullying. **Fan, Yu and Bowler (2016)** propounds a prototype for social media application designed for teenage users in order to prevent and mitigate mean and cruel online behavior. According to them the purpose of the app is to create a nurturing environment where teenagers use a variety of features designed to help raise self-awareness of their own online behavior, seek support and learn to control and correct aggressive behavior. The framework thus consists of seven design principles, each accompanied by a range of suggestions for the design of affordances on social media sites to counter cyberbullying.

SLEEP DISTURBANCES

Teens who are using computers or computer mediated communications are often related to sleeping disturbances. Many studies have found that intensive computer use was directly associated with less or irregular sleeping habits. **Woods and Scott, (2016)** in their study examined how social media use is related to sleep quality, self-esteem, anxiety and depression in 467 Scottish adolescents. The researchers measured overall social media use, nighttime-specific social media use, emotional investment in social media, sleep quality, self-esteem and levels of anxiety and depression. Adolescents who used social media more both overall and at night and those who were more emotionally invested in social media experienced poorer sleep quality, lower self-esteem and higher levels of anxiety and depression. Nighttime social media use leads to poorer sleep quality which cases anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. These findings contribute to the growing body of evidence that social media use is related to various aspects of wellbeing in adolescents. **Levenson, Shensa, Sidani, Colditz and Primack (2016)** in another study highlight the increasing use of SNS and its association with sleep disturbance. The authors assessed nationally representative sample of 1788 U.S. young adults aged between 19 and 32 years. Social Media volume and frequency were calculated by self-reported minutes per day spent on Social Media (volume) and visits per week (frequency) using items adapted from the Pew Internet Research Questionnaire. The researchers also assessed the sleep disturbance using the brief Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) sleep disturbance measure. The results showed that in models that adjusted for all socio demographic covariates, participants with higher SM use volume and frequency had significantly greater odds of having sleep disturbance. When equated with those in the lowermost quartile of Social Media use per day, those in the uppermost quartile had an AOR of 1.95 (95% CI = 1.37–2.79) for sleep disturbance. Similarly, compared with those in the lowest quartile of SM use frequency per week, those in the highest quartile had an AOR of 2.92 (95% CI = 1.97–4.32) for sleep disturbance. The study further reveals that strong association

between SM use and sleep disturbance has important clinical implications for the health and well-being of young adults.

ACADEMIC DISTURBANCES

There are many researches that highlight that there is no effect of SNS use on the studies of the teenagers. While some studies argue that students often use SNS to discuss their academic issues and also interact with their teachers or tutors. Others suggest that the SNS use by students is having adverse effect on their studies. **Sheopuri and Sheopuri, (2015)** in their study focusing on student's academic performance and their behavior highlight that students are distracted by using the SNS, the rampant use of such sites has an adverse impact on their educational performance. Though various students have started using social networks for educational purposes, yet the use of these networks has to be disciplined as it can lead to distraction from education. The study found that some students perceived SNS as a distraction and were hesitant to share their feelings. However, a high percentage of respondents found it as a cheap avenue to search for information, and join groups or networks. If parents properly monitor their children activities on internet then it will be very helpful for their learning purposes. The study suggest that these sites should be used for educational purpose also as they can help the students attending the virtual classrooms. **Rosen, (2011)** reveals that teens and even college going students who are on the Facebook have much lower grades. While **Ogundijo, (2014)** in another study focuses on the use of social networking among secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria with implication for academic performance. The study reveals that time spent on SNS did not ominously affect the academic performance of students, and that participation in class by students was not a significant predictor of their average academic performance. Findings also show that the number of friends that students had on SNS had a positive significant influence on the time spent on SNS, and also that the number of posts that students put on social networking sites was not a significant predictor of participation in class. The study further reveals that demographic features did not considerably influence the academic performance of students who used SNS, and, use of social networking significantly influences the academic performance of secondary school students. Similarly, the study by **(Kalra & Manani, 2013)** concludes that despite of spending time on internet or on using SNS, students are efficient enough for their studies and that they do not face any deficiency in meeting their studies requirements. **Camilia, Ibrahim and Dalhatu (2013)** in their study concludes that there is no effect of the students use of SNS on their studies, however the researchers suggested that there is a need for creating balance between the use of SNS and studies.

CONCLUSION

Social media has assumed an unparalleled role for engaging the masses in an extensive interwoven technologically enabled social network. The popularity of Social

Networking is now a broadly debated topic worldwide, especially the role of SNS in everyday life. **Kushin and Yamamoto (2010)** reveal that modern social system recognizes the utility of social media for communication and users are becoming more familiar and comfortable with using social media. Teenage is considered to be the crucial stage in the personal development of youth, therefore any practice that have the potential to influence them needs to be monitored. Their everyday attitudes and behaviors are changing fast with the rapid dependency on SNS. This scenario can well be depicted in the study of **Michikyan and Suarez-Orozco, (2016),** wherein they lay emphasis on delineating a more nuanced picture of adolescents and young adults, and their digital world in the light of ongoing developmental research on youth social media use. The argument is further strengthened by **Ng (2016)** highlighting that the awareness and social media literacy are important for professionals as well as parents of both genders. Therefore, families should be encouraged to have open conversations with their adolescents about their online activities. The modern-day teens are more frequently active on SNS and the main reasons for using these sites include managing their impression on others, keeping up with friends, making new friends, displaying their creativity etc. The positive aspects of using SNS for teens primarily include ability to provide them a platform to establish connections for educational and professional development by enabling novel opportunity to interact and learn. Besides SNS provides them a place to share their interest in art, music, games, etc. The further research can be focused on carrying use and user-based surveys for revealing varied aspects related to SNS and its impact on user interaction patterns, social behavior, academic performance and overall personality development.

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