

A Survey on the Social Impacts of On-line Social Networking Sites

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Abstract: *In the contemporary information age, the social networking sites (SNS) have been proved to be very popular where a significant number of total global populations are habituated in using the social networking platforms for interaction and collaboration purpose. The on-line social networking platforms have evolved to be the on-line collaboration platform in social, professional and personal settings that helps people to be in touch for socializing or for professional interactivity purpose. The social networking interaction has become an integral part of human life and being used in diversified fields with dynamic reasons. As social networking platforms are becoming an integrated part of human life, the impact of those platforms subsequently has become part of interest on which significant level of research and studies have been carried out. This paper enlists the surveys, studies and research on the impact of social networking sites from a critical evaluation viewpoint.*

Keywords: *Social Networks, Social Networking Site, Digital Culture, On-line Collaboration, SNS.*

I. Introduction

In the contemporary information age, social networking platforms have been emerged to be an integral part of life. A significant number of total world populations who have access to online facilities and thus adapted to digital culture are accustomed to using social networking platforms [1 - 5, 7, 9, 13]. As a result, social networks and associated topics are becoming well known field of discussion in the society. It is the time when the total global population could be divided into two broad categories in terms of having access to the online social networks or not. The social networks are platforms for all the people where they could essentially form as a platform of interaction and collaboration for general purpose or for specific interest groups. Gathering on the social networking platform for people is associated with a number of objectives ranging from socialization and collaboration to research, education and exchange of expertise views [10, 18]. There have been very popular social networking sites where just anyone could join. This types of general purpose social networking platforms are being used by different people for different purposes. In this regard, the usefulness and the credibility of using such platforms are under scrutiny. Besides, the online safety for individuals is a major concern as people develop their on-line profile as well as their ongoing activities in the social networking sites [1, 8, 9, 14]. As stated earlier, the social networking platforms are being used for diversified reasons. People use the social networking platforms for social online gathering as well as part of leisure and amusement. The use of social networking tools have also been evolved for special interest groups to share expertise and opinions [17]. The social networking sites have emerged as an excellent tool to collaborate online. As such platforms have become an unavoidable part for people in their social and professional life, the impact of these social networks were part of interest for the researchers. Various aspects of the usefulness of SNSs in different applicable fields have been explored. At the same time, the adverse effect of these platforms have also been considered by the researchers.

The addictive nature of social networking sites and their impact on human life is one of the most crucial parts that demands exploration indeed. It is worth to explore the impact of the social networking sites to outline whether they are most credible in creative and constructive way or not.

II. Related Studies

Using social networking site have associated impact on the mindset and mental aspects of human being. The use of technology have different level of impact on different age groups. It is found that the adolescence aged people had a negative mental impact in the form of depression that resulted by using the social networking sites. The social networking sites are found to be the most popular online activity among the adolescence people. It is suggested that the use of social networking sites might result in depression for the people in their adolescence period [1]. The impact on the cognitive ability as a result of using the social networking sites (SNSs) have also been addressed in some research. It is quite a crucial matter to outline whether using the social networking sites (SNS) makes someone smarter by improving the cognitive perception or not. It was found that while the use of SNS does not essentially have a positive impact on the cognitive improvement, they did have some good aspects from different viewpoint, for example, stronger social relationship maintenance. But at the same time, it is sought to determine the feature that needs to be present in the SNSs. Besides, the type and nature of the SNS also work as influential factors for different impacts. For example, the contemporary and very

popular two SNSs are Face book and YouTube that are used for different purposes and thus have different impact on the cognitive aspects on human being [2, 11]. Some researchs suggested that the use of social networking had detrimental effect on the adolescence group which had been the reason for IAD (Internet Addiction Disorder). The concept of IAD is not introduced by the social networking sites but it has gradually become the topmost reason for IAD by defeating on-line gaming in a very short period of time [3]. The imposed corporate risks as a consequence of presence in social network are an important part to be concerned with. Though the use of social network are seen to pose threats at personal level, later it has emerged that the corporate culture could also be threatened by the social networking platforms. The presence on social networking platform potentiality helps a business but at the same time, brand damage could also be happened with this practice which would put very adverse effect on any business. The negative impact could also extend by the uncontrolled use of the social networking site by the employees who have a clear profile indication on their connection with the organization they work for. The vulnerability features of the social networking sites might also be a contributor where organizational sabotage as well as social engineering could take place to risk the image of an organization [4]. The beneficial part of using SNSs have also been listed where the argument clearly show that an organization could essentially extend its brand recognition by enriching its profile on SNSs [16]. One of the most alarming part arise from the use of social networking sites is its negative impact in the education sector. It is found that the use of social networking site and its integration within the educational and academic contexts and settings have resulted in the deterioration of the productivity as well as the overall efficiency. In a survey, the relationship between the SNS and the GPA of the students was found to be negative [5, 13]. At the same time, some argument established the strength that was provided by social networking in academia in the form of strong on-line collaboration [20]. In a study it was found that being ICT savvy did not essentially mean to be a strong activist within the social networking platform. When it comes to the social networking platform, people intended to build connections more in a personal way even with a basic goal of online collaboration [7]. On the contrary, there are evidences where renowned Universities have found the SNSs to be of particularly assisting in research and collaboration activities [17]. There have been some key quality factors on which the perception of the social networking depends to its users. Entertainment, community drivenness, efficiency, user friendliness, privacy and navigability are seen to be the quality factors on which the perception of any social networking site depend [6, 10, 12]. It is also controversial whether online social networks pose threat to the children by having potentiality to do any harm. Various studies yielded a number of results in this regard which can be summarized in the way that kids with online activity and specifically with social networking practice are prone to greater online risk and abuse than those who do not. The overall impression of these studies have established the social networking sites to be a definite avoidable one for the children and teens [8, 15]. In social networking websites, people create and share personal information that exceeds far above the line of official resume level information. The evolving profile of a person on a social networking site might interestingly hold the total information of a person including activities and preferences. The privacy of this information is quite a matter of concern as the information sharing on the social networking sites could potentially make the sensitive personal information available to unwanted third parties. It is a matter of concern especially with the people who were not IT literate to sufficient level on privacy and other digital culture awareness aspects [9, 14]. Knowledge and information sharing are some of the key driving forces in the advancement of the knowledge base and knowledge management of human being, which dramatically facilitated the advancement of the society to some extent and it also has some impact on the quality of peoples' life. But at the same time, at least some of the social networking sites are found to be extremely addictive where the observation of spending up to nine hours a days with the social networking sites existed [19]. If used properly, the social networking platforms could be evolved to be beneficial as it is found that the social networking sites offer potential benefits despite of having a number of drawbacks [18].

III. Analysis Of The Studies

The research and studies that is evaluated within the context of this paper, have indications on the pros and cons of the SNSs. While some of the research argued on the potential benefits of the social networking platform and its application within social, educational and academic context; most of the studies sought for the initiative to tackle the inherent disadvantages of such social networking platforms. The negative impact on the teenage and the children of the SNSs suggested that further study on how to control the issue including any further parenting needs is a crucial aspect to include in the relevant research. Also, the negative and sensitive impact in the form of deterioration of the cognitive ability resulted from extensive use of social networking would put the necessity of awareness on using such sites into perspective. The credibility of such necessity is further strengthen on the finding of the social networking sites being a major reason for IAD (Internet Addiction Disorder) among the teenage population. While the corporate culture could be blessed by these networking platforms, the devastating impact on the corporate image as a consequence of using the SNSs were also evident.

The academic research sector could be benefited by SNS in terms of online collaboration, but again, the

adverse effect on the students points finger to the effectiveness of the SNS within social context. On top of all these, the information privacy remains as an all time concern that demands a robust framework and security model for the SNSs. The addictive nature of SNS indicates one of the worst phenomenons of the social networking. Due to this aspect, the SNSs could be considered as the intangible counter part of the real life drugs. The analyzed studies and research lead to the fact that the social networking sites might be associated with some advantages, but the adverse effects of the social networking sites are something not to be overlooked at any cost.

IV. Conclusion

Despite of having tremendous dynamic and creative aspects, the social networking sites (SNSs) exhibit the impact in human life in a way to established its negative potentiality to emerge as a digital drug for people. A digital drug can be thought of as the digital equivalent of real life drugs. It would not be possible to exclude the online social networking concept from the society as of its having potentiality to help and further the knowledge base; the desired practice of the social networking site is rather expected to be within a robust secured framework with initiatives on growing proper awareness among the people to make effective use of such social collaboration tools and platforms.

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