INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ON THE ADOLESCENCE

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Abstract

A generation ago, parents could monitor their children's' social activity much more easily. The social activity would include playing with friends, meeting on playgrounds or at a common friend's place. Today, social networking web sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Orkut, Myspace and the accessibility of the smart phones, computers and the internet has not only altered but probably enhanced the children's social activity. Social networking sites are here to stay and not only children but also the adults are being attracted to this phenomenon.

Your kids could be sitting right in front of you and probably interacting "silently" with their friends or with people you don't even know. All of a sudden your child has started spending too much time on these SNS rather than interacting, with friends as close as your neighbor. Hence the following research was an attempt to find out the influence of Social Networking Sites on adolescence. The study revealed SNS has major influence on interpersonal relations followed by education. SNS has influenced 45.60% on the interpersonal relations of the adolscence and 42.84% on their education. It has also influenced the health of the adolscence by 34.76%. Besides these, the behavior of adolscence is influenced by only 24%.

INTRODUCTION

"The most profound technologies are those that disappear.

They weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it".(Weiser, 1991).

Social networking is a phenomenon which has existed since society began. Human beings have always sought to live in social environments. The proliferation of social networking sites (SNS) and their pervasion in everyday practices is affecting how Western societies manage their social networks. To a significant extent, SNS have shifted social networking to the Internet. In less than five years, these sites have grown from a niche online activity into a phenomenon through which tens of millions of internet users are connected, both in their leisure time, and at work. A generation ago, parents could monitor their children's' social activity much more easily. The social activity would include playing with friends, meeting on playgrounds or at a common friend's place. Today, social networking web sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Orkut, Myspace and the accessibility of the smart phones, computers and the internet has not only altered but probably enhanced the children's social activity.

All of a sudden your child has started spending too much time on these SNS rather than interacting, with friends as close as your neighbor. The child
 feels like sharing every small thing that happens in life with online friends on the status. The child posts thoughts and waits for the comment and when the comment comes, either you smile if you like it or you frown if you don't. Strangers become more important to you and their comments leverage your value as a person. But apparently, you don't have the same degree of communication and contact with all online friends, as it is with your real friends in the real world.   SNS has both positive as well as negative influence on the adolscence.

There have been a number of researches done to find out whether these Social networking sites are taking the children away from the real world? How would the children learn to communicate their feelings face-to-face if they are always going to interact through the Social networking sites? What effect do these sites have on the young minds? How is it influencing their interpersonal skills? Studies have proved that facebook is the most popular social networking site. It may also lead to unhealthy interpersonal relationships and at the same time serve as a vent for all the thoughts for adolscence as they share a lot through these sites. Social networking is just a part of your generation that feels more comfortable with text messaging, chatting and online communication. Computers have become the necessity and hence it won't be possible to curb the use of SNS by the adolscence.

The adolescence has turned into a real social networking addicts getting too much involved with unknown people and being deprived from real life. Is the virtual world slowly replacing the real world?   Social networking websites cannot replace your real friendships. You don't really communicate with people online as you communicate with real people whom you can see, hear, feel and touch. Change is inevitable but to what extent you allow these changes to rule your life is to be decided by us.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

A study to analyze the influence of Social Networking Sites on Adolescence

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE TERMS:

Social networking sites

We define 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. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.

Adolescence: For the present study adolescence is defined as the children in the age group of 13 to 15 years old.

Influence: For the present study influence is defined as the effect of SNS on the interpersonal relations, health and education of the adolescence.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To study the influence of SNS on

- The interpersonal relations of the adolescence
- The health of the adolescence
- The education of the adolescence

SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is restricted to adolescence i.e. of age group 13 to 15 studying in English medium schools in greater Mumbai. The data is collected by paper pencil test only.

Method of the study

For the present study the research has used survey method.
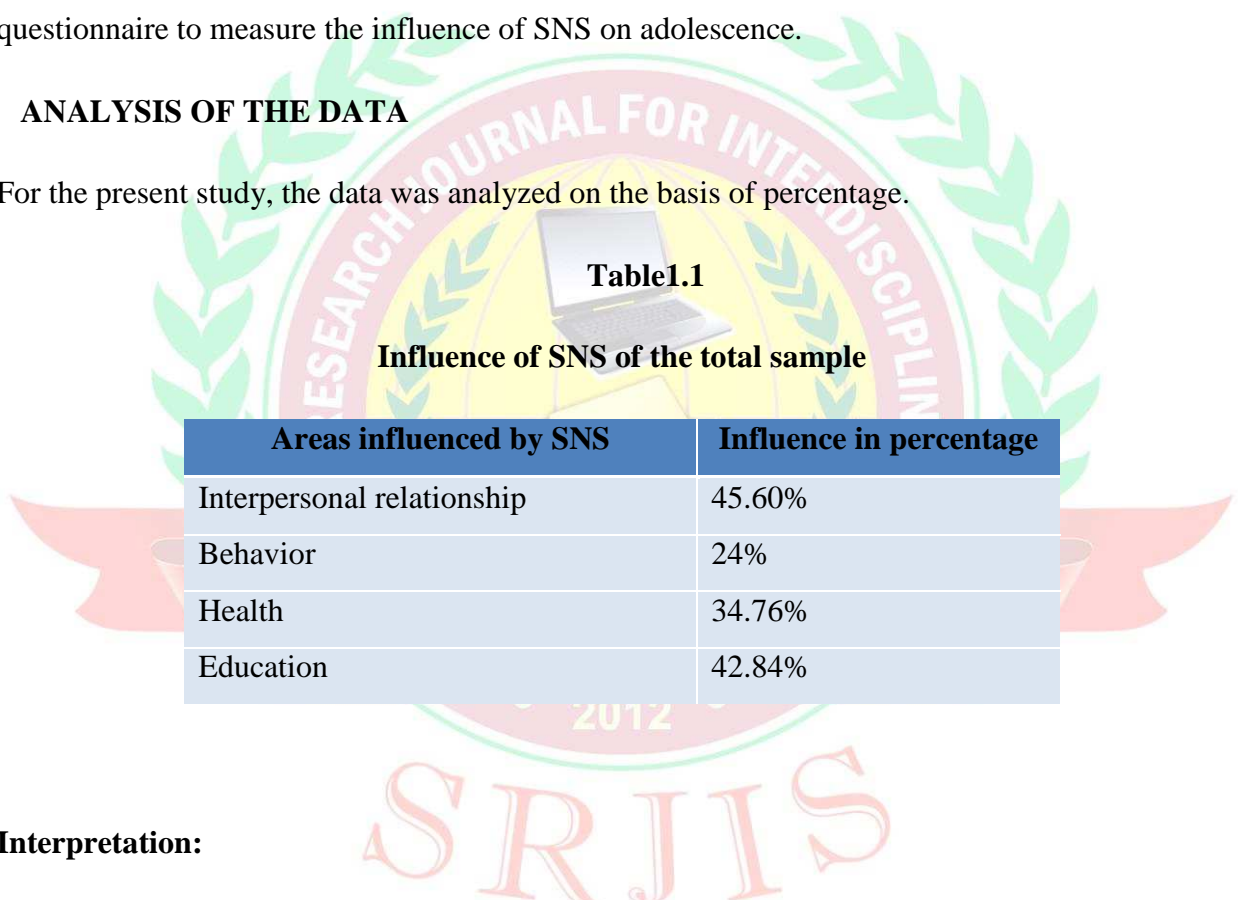
SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

For the present study, stratified random sampling technique was used.

TOOLS OF RESEARCH

For the present study, as there was no readymade tool available, the researcher had to prepare a questionnaire to measure the influence of SNS on adolescence.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

For the present study, the data was analyzed on the basis of percentage.
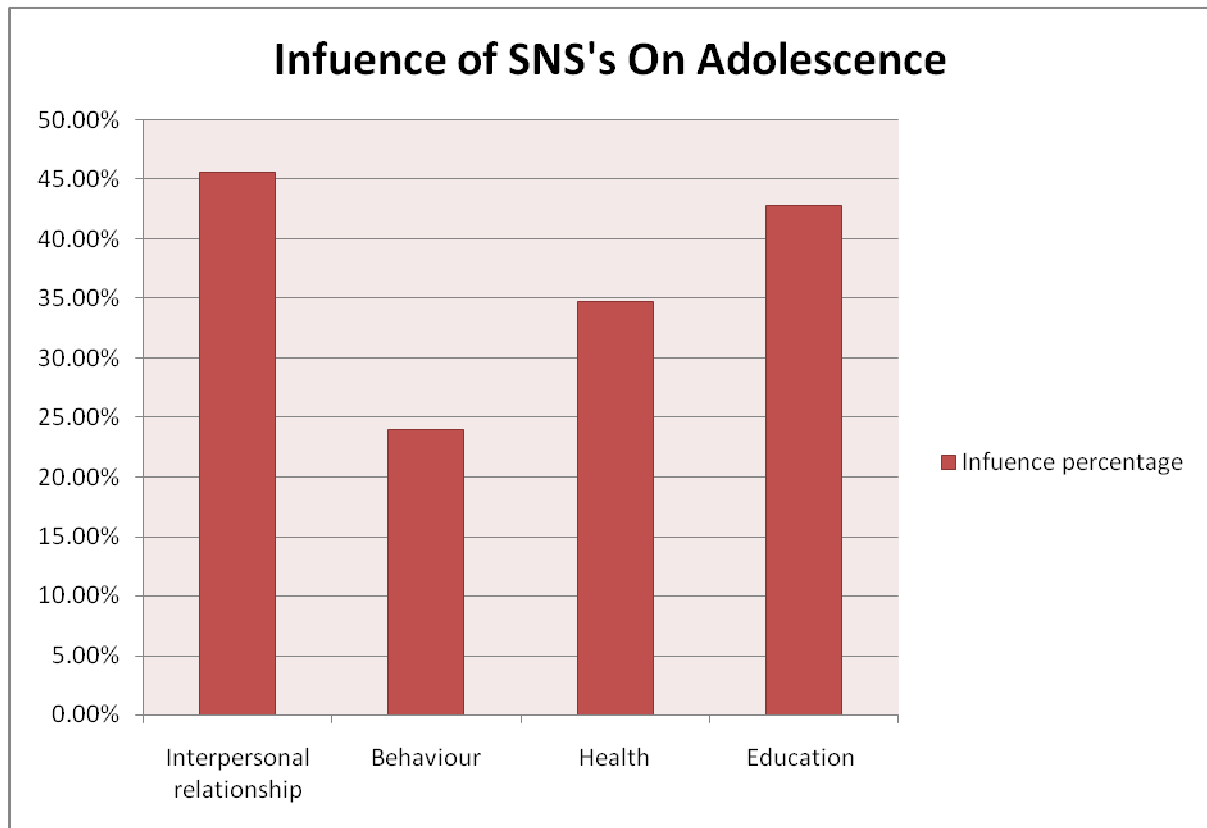
Table1.1

Influence of SNS of the total sample

Areas influenced by SNS	Influence in percentage
Interpersonal relationship	45.60%
Behavior	24%
Health	34.76%
Education	42.84%

Interpretation:

The above table shows that SNS has major influence on interpersonal relations followed by education. SNS has influenced 45.60% on the interpersonal relations of the adolscence and 42.84% on their education. It has also influenced the health of the adolscence by 34.76%. Besides these, the behavior of adolscence is influenced by only 24%.

Figure 1.1

A Bar Diagram of influence of SNS on various areas

Infuence of SNS's On Adolescence

Table1.2

Time Spent by Adolescence on SNS every day

Time spent by adolescence daily	Percentage of adolescence
0 - 1 hrs	72%
2 - 3 hrs	16%
3 - 5 hrs	3.08%
5 - 8 hrs	2.30%

Interpretations:

The above table indicates that the majority of the adolescence i.e. 70% spends not more than one hour on SNS daily.18% of the adolescence spends 2-3 hours from their daily schedule, whereas only 3.08% spends 3-5 hrs. Merely 2.30% of the adolescence spend maximum time of 5-8 hrs on SNS.

Table 1.3

**Influence of SNS on the Health of Adolescence**

Health problems	Percentage of adolescence experienced it
Awareness	73.84%
eye strain	38.46%
back pain	21.53%
stiffness in the neck	29.23%
inflexibility of fingers	10.76%

Interpretations:

73.84% of the adolescence were aware of the health problems associated with the use of SNS. Of which, 38.46% of them had eye strain and 21.53% had experienced back pain. 29.23% and 10.76% of the adolscence had experienced stiffness in the neck and inflexibility of fingers respectively.

Figure 1.2

A Bar Diagram of influence of SNS on the Health of adolescence
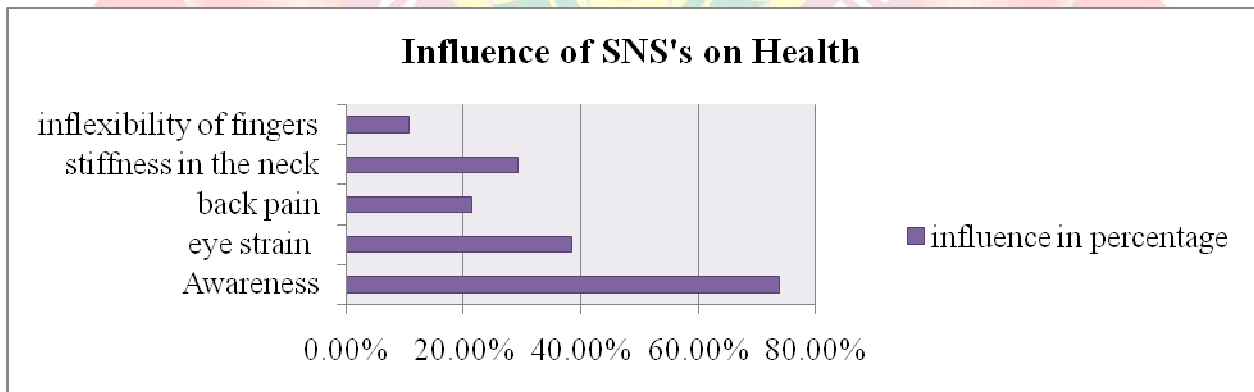
Discussion and conclusions

Computer Access

While it may not be practical or effective to insist that children do all of their work on a computer in a common area, one can insist that they use their devices in the open (not behind closed bedroom doors) and under guidance.

Privacy and account settings

Before a child sets up an account on a social network, parents should have a conversation with him about privacy and his digital footprint. Explain that once something is online it never goes away. Strongly suggest that they only "friend" people that they know personally, rather than friends of friends or people who initiate friend requests. Stress that they should not post personal information such as their address or bank account numbers. Insist that they "friend" you AND give you their password, so that you can have complete access to their account. Most importantly, monitor their web presence regularly.

Cyber-bullying and Predators

There have been countless stories in the news of children being tormented and even driven to suicide by cyber-bullying. As a parent they have the responsibility to ensure their child is neither the victim nor the perpetrator of such attacks. Talk with children about cyberbullying. Advise them not to post insults, foul language or anything in their posts, including videos, that they wouldn't want anyone to read or see. Let them know that they could be prosecuted for doing these things.

Monitoring Childs online activity:

It is essential to regularly monitor child's online activity. Check the children's social media sites and review their texts on a weekly basis. Randomly change the day so that children don't delete or bury information in an attempt to outsmart. The website, www.getnetwise.org has a tool that will help parents find the best monitoring programs based on the information that they'd like to filter and the applicable operating system.

Use Facebook Pages and Groups features to communicate:

Teachers and parents can use Facebook pages and groups for open, transparent and secure interaction between students and them. Teachers can share relevant links, like newspaper articles,

online videos, or RSS feeds from the class blog or school website. Teachers can encourage use of Facebook Groups by the students to work on collaborative projects with each other. Online groups can be used by the teachers to post a study question, give and assess assignments, solve doubts of the learners, etc. It can be used as an opportunity to extend learning outside the walls of the traditional classroom and to complement teaching in the classroom.

Apart from this, parents and teachers can create awareness about the ill effects of prolong use of SNS on the health of individuals. They can encourage the social skills of introvert adolscence and promote good citizenship in the digital world.

So, it's not that Facebook isn't suitable for a child. In many cases, you can catch up with old friends, find valuable information, promote your work and your business, support important causes and meet people who can be real friends in the process. What is wrong with Facebook is the ritualistic involvement that turns into addiction and belligerently deprives you from your real life by triggering you to log on several times a day.

The social networks force users to lose the face-to-face interaction that people should have

Like it or not, we're in a brave new world of technology which can be difficult to keep up with. However, the responsibilities of parents and teachers are the same in the virtual world as in the real world, to guide and protect our children and help them make responsible choices.

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