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Impact of Social Networking on the Wellbeing of the Youth

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ABSTRACT

Social network has become a necessity in today's era. It is very difficult to separate oneself from its influence. We cannot deny the fact that the social networking has not only become a part of our life but also but lives seem to revolve around the social network. Hardly any men can resist themselves from checking their messages or viewing the status updates after two minutes or two. The process of social interaction is deteriorating day by day. Social networking is very broad source of information and communication butat the same time it can be misleading. At the end its our choice which path to be chosen. Despite having positive role, high use of social media has severe negative impact on the men in general and the youth in particular. Around 60% of the parents do not monitor their teen's engagement in social network accounts. They themselves are in dilemma about how much is the screen time. Most of the parents are unsure about how to provide appropriate guidance of proper use of social network to their kids. It is very interesting to know the impact of social network over the youth and this paper mainly focuses over it.

Keywords: *Social networking, social interaction, screen time, social networking sites (SNS), vamping, cyberbullying.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Imagining a world without social network is next to impossible today. Such is the influence of social network. Now a days, the spread of social networking is speedily increasing. The wide span of social networking creates the question that what is its impact over the youth, both physically as well as mentally. It is difficult to answer this question at one go but several surveys and analysis of the pros and cons make it possible to answer it.

Positive impact of social networking:

- Efficiency in sharing of ideas, information, knowledge
- It gives opportunity to make new friend and to reunite with the old friends as well
- The advertisements and promotion of any product in wide scale has become easy

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- It has provided a platform to showcase the hidden talents of a person
- Online communication or the virtual team work has become easy especially during the pandemic situation
- Provides wide opportunities to learn new innovative activities.

Dark side of social networking:

- No formal laws, rules and regulations governing the anti-social activities
- Hinders the social interaction amongst the people
- People as become more materialistic
- Spreads rumors more easily
- Creates problems on sharing personal information
- Facilitates the criminals to find the location of any person with the help of a single click
- Continual flow of data, sometimes, leads to mental breakdown
- Increases the duration of screen time than the time spent with friends
- Leads to social media addiction among the people that in turn reduces their concentration on work
- Results in depression of the people.

Now, the question arises that is the internet culture destroying us and taking over us specially the youth? Undoubtedly, the social network is developing very fast and its impact is undeniable, both the positive and negative. Notably, social network is very much popular among the youth. There are several children who are unable to control themselves from engaging into social networking. This in turn leads to the addiction among them. The social media addiction has not only its mental impact but also physical impact. Researches conducted during strict quarantine periods suggested that the social network had severe consequences on the mental health of the individuals especially the youths. As a result of strict quarantine norms, children were confined within the house that led to lower mental health. In case of students, the impact of changed educational environment, the online education on the progress of their studies, was worrisome.

(A) Methodology

The qualitative research for this paper has been based on secondary data which has been collected from journals, websites, online resources.

(B) Literature review

Vidyashri C. Halakerimath and Shivagangamma B. Danappagoudra had studied A STUDY

ON IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH in May 2017. They presented paper in "International Journal of Current Research". The study was conducted in and around Dharwad district of Karnataka. Random sampling method was used for the study. The total sample size was 50 including both boys and girls. The collected data were tabulated, analysed by using frequency, percentage, index and correlation. Most of the respondent were belongs to 18 to 20 years of age group. Majority (64.00%) of the respondents were male fallowed by 36.00 percent were female. Most (64.00%) of the respondents were studying graduation fallowed by diploma (36.00%). 90 percent of respondents use internet for doing assignment and searching class notes. Next most of 74 percent of respondents are used to download lot of music, videos and movies from the internet. Majority 70 percent of respondent love watching videos whenever connected to internet fallowed by 68 percent of respondents is addicted to online games. Large majority 60 percent of respondents opined that they use social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp to upload videos and photographs. These social networking sites are providing attractive opportunities to avail the facilities provided by them such as making friends, chatting, sharing photos videos. This changes the life style of the young generations. Excessive use of such social networking sites results in social and health problems. It has adversely affected the face-to-face communication with people, weakening ties with the relatives due to overspending of time on the screen. As an integral part of the youth communication and conversation activities, the social networking sites (SNS) facilitates exchange of ideas, opinions, text, audio, videos. Though, it seems that all these facilities benefit the youth, it leads to stress, techno depression, cyberbullying, online sexual predator. [2]Cyberbullying can occur if online users try to intimidate, exclude or humiliate others online through abusive texts or emails, hurtful messages, images or videos, or online gossip and chat. Teens should be cautious not to retaliate or respond, and to speak to a trusted adult right away and must aim to block the bully and report the behaviour to the social media platform.[3]

It has concluded after survey that the youth those who are involved too much in SNS suffers from insomnia, lack of physical activities. The teenagers are found to be scrolling on the social media feed all throughout the night, which is known as vamping. Constantly being involved in the social media in one corner of the house brings a tendency of lethargy among the youth and they miss out the benefits of the physical activities on the psychology as well as the body. As a result of which, today, there is an increase in the rate of children affected by diseases as

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[2]https://theconversation.com/how-parents-and-teens-can-reduce-the-impact-of-social-media-on-youth-well-being-87619

[3]https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339706988_The_Impact_of_Social_Media_on_Youth_Mental_Health_Challenges_and_Opportunities

compared to previous days. A study revealed that the social media has a troubling psychological effect on the youth. For the teens, the approval of their peers appears to be more essential. Friendship has a great influence over the adolescences. However, they fail to distinguish between real and fake friends. Social media connects with people who never share relations in real life. The teens get lured by the fake accounts and end up getting trapped.

It has been proved by the surveys that the young people who are much more addicted to social media, live far away from reality. Owing to the use of single phone all day, they remain confined within the four walls of the house. They alienate themselves from meeting and talking to the friends or even parents. They stay tune to social networking sites updates their news on social media. Consequentially, they even loose interests in their studies. Their brains fail to work ineffectively and feel sleepy. Moreover, the young see others in social media, they try to imitate others. When they fail to cope up with their talents or find others better than themselves, they get depressed. They feel ashamed of themselves and wonder why they cannot be such talented, beautiful as others. Therefore, they feel under pressure, stress and depressed. Sleep deprivation over long period of time increase the likelihood of substance abuse, risk taking behaviour. Researchers theorize that the increasing rate of depression and anxiety among the youth can be a direct consequence of the technology in general and social media in particular. These mental problems are very much hazardous to the young people because it makes them loose their minds and eventually insist them to choose death.

Next to physical health problems and economic damage, the pandemic COVID 19 and the associated lockdown measures caused mental health problems, especially the adolescents. They highly rely on the social media to keep in contact with their peers. With the prolonged periods of social isolation, the more detrimental was the effect on the mental health. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media has rapidly become a crucial communication tool for information generation, dissemination, and consumption. At the same time, social media had a crucial role in disseminating health information and misinformation. Based on the mood management theory, a study was carried out to examine if social media is beneficial for adolescents to cope with the feelings of anxiety and loneliness. It was concluded that children those who suffer from loneliness, tend to be more inclined to use social media to cope with lacking social contract. However, this was not significantly related to their happiness, rather it leads to increased level of anxiety. The adolescents have been observed to self-regulate emotions using social media

II. FINDINGS

Several studies have been made to observe the state of mind of the young people while they use the social networking sites, its purpose and its impact.

According to a survey by Common Sense Media:

- 35 percent of teenagers on social media worry about being tagging in unattractive photos

- 27 percent are stressed out about how they look when they post pictures

- 22 percent feel bad about themselves when nobody comments on or "likes" their photos.

Teenagers spend most of their time on social media admiring the curated and filtered photographs of their peers and celebrities. While trying to imitate the recent trends, they often feel inferior, leading to lower self-esteem and negative body image. Hence, social comparison is associated with depressive symptoms specially among teenage girls. Facebook use has been linked to a higher risk of eating disorder.

For nearly all the teens across the globe, social media is a fact of life but researchers suggest that it is obnoxious in their lives. The National Institute of Mental Health reports that the lifetime prevalence of any mental disorder among adolescents is 49.5% and 22.2% of the adolescents suffer from severe mental impairment in their lifetimes. The young adult group in the age group of 18 to 25, have high incidence of mental illness: 25.8%. The three most popular platforms among the teens are YouTube (used by 85% of teens), Instagram (used by 72%), SnapChat (69%). According to the Global Web Index, people aged 16 to 24 spent on an average of three hours on social networking sites (SNS). According to a psychiatric journal, adolescents who spend more than 3 hours a day on SNS, may be at a heightened risk of health problems, especially internalizing problems. Social media can and does have positive impact on the youth, whether by teaching or the social skills or strengthening relationships. However, persistent use of the same can have severe negative effect. The activity of the youth on the social media largely mirrors their lives in the physical world: they navigate the streams of the social networks, establishing new relationships, strengthening the old ones. Whether online or in real life, teens will encounter bad behaviour, which would in turn act as a life lesson. However, this lesson is not properly conveyed to the young people in a positive way and thereby they end up in a wrong way. A survey found that 63% of teens consider the online harassment as a major problem in their lives.

With the increase in the awareness, young people try to moderate their addiction towards the social media so that it does not take over their lives. However, it is found that they end up checking their account once in every three hours to avoid feeling anxious. This phenomenon is known as "fear of missing out" or FOMO. Another mental health disorder related to the social media is the "Facebook depression". This happens when the teens spending too much time on social media exhibit the classic symptoms of depression as a result of "the intensity of the online world." All these phenomena retard the mental growth of the young people.

III. DISCUSSION

Many potential risks of the social media's impact in the young people's mental health are overlooked by the parents and teachers and the young people themselves. Obsessive use of social media by the teens can lead to attention deficit or hyperactivity disorder, impulsive disorder, disruption of proper mental function, paranoia or loneliness. Efforts to prevent the negative effects of the young people's use of social media should begin with educating the youth and the adolescents about the dangers that these services provide. Guidelines for safe, healthy use of social media by the young people should be included in the strategies. Perhaps, one of the most effective ways for the teens and adolescents to reduce the negative impact of the social media is to set limits on the time spent on the social networking sites. Researchers found that the young people who restricted themselves within the time limit spent on the social media, were more positive and had better self-images. They rarely suffer from depression and loneliness. Another issue which the young people should be cautious about is how the use of social media makes them feel. The young people generally compare themselves with the people that they meet online and try to compare themselves with others. This can be detrimental to healthy self-image. It has been found that young women feel worse about their appearance as compared to the person whom they consider to be much more attractive. The social comparison factors are major issues among the youth but they should be aware that the social media makes people and things look better and more attractive than what they are in real life.

The young people are in a tendency to fall in the trap of negativity that continually reinforces itself. To combat feelings of inadequacy and insecurity caused by the social media activities, the youth should be taught what ought to be seen on the SNS. Often the content does not reflect the reality, rather, it creates a biased perspective regarding the happenings in the real world. Teens can learn valuable lesson about their self-worth as a result of emotions they feel while using social media but conversely, it causes the youth to measure the self-worth by what others think and leads to creating false persona to be acceptable by others. The parents should also

be aware of what their kids are surfing in the social media. Parents should instruct their kids on how to apply privacy protection in each platform and warn their children against the exploitation by the predators. The best way for the parents to enforce rules on their children is to involve in the physical world activities with their kids. They should take the opportunity to spend more face-to-face time with their children. As with any technology, there is a right and a wrong way to bring social media to the classrooms. Certain social media programs, that contribute to the improvement in student's grades, engagement, should be incorporated in schools. On the other hand, the children would become aware of cyberbullying and other risks involved in the social media platform. It is the duty of the teachers and the parents to ensure that the children are taught safe online practices to prevent them from becoming victims or putting themselves at risk of abuse.

IV. CONCLUSION

No good thing comes without its consequences. However, it depends upon the user, which one to choose. As effective as social media is, there is a high chance of misusing it. This is what the youth have indulged themselves into. The young people are found wasting hours on the social networking site, acquiring zero productive knowledge. The SNS, earlier, used to have age limitation but now, it has all gone. As a result of which the young people are falling prey to cybercrimes. This immensely affects the mental and the emotional health of the youth. Lack of privacy on the SNS has become one of the threatening issues in contemporary world. Mostly, the youth are unaware of the policies and end up uploading personal information. The commercial sites get access to that information and tend to misuse it. Now, the question arises that, despite being aware of the threats of social sites, why are we turning a blind eye to it. This is not an issue to be taken for granted. A serious note has to be taken in this regard. Although, the use of social network brings with itself, many benefits, addiction to it is not good. We have seen the impact of it on the people, especially the youth. It has an awful influence on the studies of the teens, alienate them from real world, have adverse effects on health. In order to lessen or rather to avoid addiction to the social working, the young people should be encouraged to spend more time in participating in sports, cocurricular activities and studies.

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