



SOCIAL MEDIA: TRANSCENDING BARRIERS AND CREATING DISTANCES - A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The advent of Internet has virtually realized Marshal McLuhan's concept of 'Global Village'. Cyber media has conquered geographical boundaries and brought together people of divergent ethnical, social, linguistic and cultural groups at one's desk top nay lap top. Social Media sites have transcended all man-made and natural barriers in making the strangers of yesterday as fast friends. The facility of chat (Voice Chat & Video Calling) has removed the mist surrounding the looks, voice and identity of these 'strangers'. One feels feeling of brotherhood in the air. At the first glance the euphoria looks fascinating. It seems the concepts of difference and distance are fast diminishing. But this thought is only a mirage. The reality is that the so-called social media has brought great individualism. Manners of greeting, meeting, cheating and beating have changed. There is tremendous amount of formality involved in relations having their roots in social media. Feelings, emotions and sentiments elude such relations. Interaction among family members is fast declining. Actually the feeling less man has become hollow and he tries his level best to cover this hollowness in the garb of modernity. Intra personal communication is becoming extinct and psychic cases are on the surge.

KEYWORDS: *Social Media, Chat, Smart Phones, Hollowness, Self-glorification, Human Dilemma, Heavy users.*

INTRODUCTION

Modern smart phones may provide everything in our fist but they have ruined whatever little was in the hearts. Intimacy has become a thing of the past. Fidelity is assigned as an attribute of sycophants. Relations have shrunk. Physical interaction is fast declining. Relations have become mechanical, superficial and need oriented. Dejection, despair and despondency reside in hollow minds. Even the contact with one self is fast declines. Man has become a stranger even for himself. One has accounts and numerous friends on a number of social sites but satisfaction is nowhere to be found. This failure of attaining satisfaction has given rise to self-glorification which at times only adds to dissatisfaction. The question arises how much

unsocial is this social media which has created fissures even amongst family members. There is no denying the fact that social media has triumphed all what once seemed invincible but it has certainly deprived one of long lasting relations. The endurance has become an ornament of fore gone days.

This research paper aims at laying bare the reality of relations created through social media. It centers on finding the replies to numerous questions about the sanctity and validity of such relations. It provides tangible replies to human dilemma through logistics. Habit of self-glorification through social media is also discussed at length. This study is based on the opinion of heavy users of social media sites in urban Haryana. It demystifies doubts surrounding thinking heads whether social media has descended geographical distances and created internal distances.

Research Methodology

This study is conducted on the academicians of University teachers and the university PG students. Lottery method is employed under Random Sampling method is employed to select the teachers of Ch. Devi Lal University, Sirsa and GJU Hisar. Lottery method and Sequential list are again used to select the students belonging to the students of Humanities and Science streams. All the respondents are below 30 years of age. As many as 50 academicians and 50 PG level students are selected for the survey based on 18- point questionnaire.

Hypotheses

The study is based on null hypothesis that no marked difference exists in the usage of Social Media by Academicians as well as University Students. Random Sampling Method is employed in this comparative study along with Questionnaire technique for getting data from students and university teachers from divergent fields represent the academicians. Youngsters are heavy users of Social Media. Facebook and WhatsApp seem to be their favorite Social Media Apps. Young generation gives more importance to Virtual relations rather than the real ones.

Objectives of Study

The objectives of the study concentrate on knowing the Social Media using habits, intensity and purpose of using social media and above all to study whether there is any difference in the mode, purpose, duration and level of Social Media Using habits of Academicians and University Students.

Data Analysis

Data collected with the help of an 18-point Questionnaire is analyzed as under after due processing, coding, classification and tabulation.

1. Most preferred time for using Social Media

	Morning	Noon	Evening	Night	Whenever Free	Total
Students	08	01	02	35	04	50
Employees	06	00	06	38	00	50
Percent	14	01	08	73	04	100

Table –I

When the respondents are asked about the part of the day they prefer using social media, whopping 73% respondents say that they feel comfortable using Social Networking Sites at night as the chances of getting disturbed are minimum at that times. 14% respondents like morning time to use social media sites. The opinion of 73% respondents using social media sites at night emphasizes the fact why they like better getting up late in the morning. Noon is the least favored time for interaction on Social Networking Sites. No significant difference is found in the timing of Social Media using habits of Students and employees.

2. Hours spent for interaction on Social Networking Sites

	3-4 Hours	5-6 Hours	7-8 Hours	More than 8 Hours	Total
Students	10	09	19	12	50
Employees	17	21	09	03	50
Percent	27	30	28	15	100

Table –II

As shown in the above table the student respondents are heavy users of Social Networking Sites and they spend 7-8 hours daily on them. A majority of 30% respondents spend 5-6 hours on Social Networking Sites, while 27% fritter 3-4 hours and 28% squander 7-8 hours on Social Media Sites. There are 15% of those who spend even more than 8 hours per day on such sites. While majority of student-respondents (31/50) falls in the category of more than 7 hours, young employees spend 3-6 hours per day on Social Networking Sites. Quite evidently, PG students are found to be heavy users of Social Media. Young employs spend lesser time as they have to be in office for most of their quality time.

3. Rationale for liking Social Media Sites

	Immediacy	Trustworthiness	Platform for expressing inert feelings	Reach	Total
Students	32	01	04	13	50
Employees	13	02	10	25	50
Percent	45	03	14	38	100

Table -III

When asked about the logic regarding the craze for Social Media Sites, the respondents ascribe Immediacy (45%) and Reach (38%) as the major reasons. Interacting with people living at far-off places any time one likes is made possible through social media sites which offer multiple means of interacting. 14% respondents, mostly employees, regard these sites as a platform for expressing inert feelings. Respondents don't consider Social Media as trustworthy as only 03% respondents think it to be trustworthy. Fake Social Media accounts and fake relations may be ascribed as reasons for less trustworthiness of these Social Media Sites.

4. Gadget for accessing Social Media

	Laptop	PC	Cell Phone	Tablet
Students	39	14	50	06
Employees	18	34	50	08
Percent	57	48	100	14

(Multi Response)

Table -IV

All the young respondents carry smart android mobile phones which they use for having access to internet and the facility of interaction on Social Media Sites. Cent per cent respondents use their Smart Phone for interacting through Social Media Sites. While 57% respondents (mainly students) use Laptops, 48% (mostly employees) use their personal computers for having access to internet. It shows the youth does not depend on any one gadget only but carry or have access to many gadgets through which they remain in touch with the World on internet

5. Preferred Interaction:

	Family Members	Strangers	Friends	Anyone online	Total
Students	02	24	18	06	50
Employees	17	06	14	13	50
Percent	19	30	32	29	100

Table -V

Interaction with family members on Social Networking Sites is least preferred by respondents. The youth prefers interacting with Friends (32%), strangers (30%) and anyone on line (29%). While the student-respondents prefer strangers and friends for interaction, the young employee respondents prefer virtually any one and friends who are found on line for chatting or interaction. It means people use Social Media to get acquainted with unfamiliar people and they do not shy away having from interaction with sheer strangers. Interaction with family members is not on their priority list.

6. Extent of Strangers turning Fast Friends through Social Media

	Greatly	Seldom	To Some Extent	Depends	Total
Students	12	07	09	22	50
Employees	03	09	11	27	50
Percent	15	16	20	49	100

Table -VI

The respondents are of the opinion that the strangers may become fast friends through Social Media. Only 16% respondents say that it seldom happens while the others emphatically opine that strangers become fast friends' sooner than later. 49% respondents say that it depends on the persons engaged in the relations whether they become fast friends or not. In this context employee-respondents are more skeptical about such relations. Student respondents dwell more on Social Media oriented relations.

7. Opinion about Sanctity of relations formed through Social Media

	Fake	Time pass	Cordial	Euphoric	Total
Students	09	30	09	02	50
Employees	07	29	06	08	50
Percent	16	59	15	10	100

Table -VII

The skepticism about social media relations gets ventilated when respondents are asked about the sanctity of such relations. A whooping majority of 59% respondents say that people from such relations for time-pass purposes only. While 15% term these relations as cordial, 16% regard them as fake and still 10% as euphoric. No significant difference of opinion is noticed among young students and young employees in this context.

8. Criteria for making friends on Social Networking Sites

	Age	Gender	Social Status	Beauty	Total
Students	19	18	02	11	50
Employees	16	19	09	06	50
Percent	35	37	11	17	100

Table -VIII

When asked about their criteria for making friends on Social Networking Sites, 37% respondents say they prefer opposite gender while 35% respondents stated that they keep the age-factor in mind. While social status is taken more into account by employees, the students are fascinated by beauty. Age and gender are the two factors which the young generation keeps in mind while forming and cementing relations on social media. Students are more interested in developing relations with tender aged people of opposite gender. Student-respondents care little about the social status of the person they have been interacting with. Age, gender and beauty are top their priority list.

9. Frequency of Telephonic interaction with Social Media friends

	Never	Often	Occasionally	Seldom	Total
Students	17	02	14	17	50

Employees	08	06	19	17	50
Percent	25	08	33	34	100

Table -IX

People do exchange phone numbers with friends formed through social media. When the respondents were asked as to how often do they have telephonic interaction with such friends, 59% respondents admit that they either seldom or never have any such interaction with friends made through social media. 33% respondents have occasional telephonic interaction while 08% often get or make telephone calls to their friends formed through Social Media. Again, the difference of opinion amongst young employees and students is negligible.

10. Authenticity of information provided on Social Networking Sites

	To Great Extent	Not at All	To Some Extent	Depends	Total
Students	08	15	09	18	50
Employees	03	12	19	16	50
Percent	11	27	28	34	100

Table -X

Accounts on Social Media sites are often castigated as fake and bursting with flawed personal information. During the study when the respondents were asked about the authenticity of information provided on Social Networking Sites only 11% respondents find it accurate to a great extent while 28% say it is true to some extent. Still 34% respondents state that it depends on the person who provides the information which means it may or may not be true. As many as 27% respondents opined that the personal information provided by people at their Social Media accounts is usually fake.

11. Types of Photographs shared on Social Networking Sites

	Personal	Funny	Celebrities	Pornographic	Total
Students	29	08	06	07	50
Employees	32	09	09	00	50
Percent	61	17	15	07	100

Table -XI

Social Media sites users share abundance of photographs with their friends. Almost all the popular Social Media sites allow photo and video sharing facility to the consumers. 61% respondents say that they share their own photographs which underlines why the social media is blamed for inculcating the habit of "Self Glorification". While 17% respondents share funny pictures, 15% respondents take pleasure in sharing the photographs of celebrities. There are 07% student-respondents who admit that they do share pornographic pics with their Social Media friends.

12. Extent to which Social Media replaced Real Life friends

	Not at All	Largely	Some what	Can't Say	Total
Students	12	03	28	07	50
Employees	00	04	41	05	50
Percent	12	07	69	12	100

Table -XII

The respondents disagree that Social Media friends have replaced their real life friends. But 69% respondents saying that Social Media has affected their cordiality with real life friends to some extent is good enough an indicator that real life relations are sliding from the minds of Social Networking Sites users. A chunk of 12% indecisive respondents may support the same notion in the days to come. As shown in the table the respondents do feel a change in

friendship patterns. Especially the student-respondents admit that Social Media friends have started taking the place of their real life friends.

13. Frequency of sharing one's inert feelings on Social Media Sites

	Never	Often	Always	Depends	Total
Students	01	42	03	04	50
Employees	08	09	06	27	50
Percent	09	51	09	31	100

Table -XIII

As shown in the above table 51% respondents (mostly students) say that they often share their inner most feelings on Social Networking Sites, 31% (mostly employees) say it depends on the nature of feelings to be shared. 09% respondents never share their feelings on Social Media sites while another 9% respondents always share their inner most feelings. It is paradoxical that in response to the previous question most of the students said that they don't like sharing their inert feelings. This shows fickle mindedness of youth. It is evident from the above table that young respondents prefer sharing their sentiments with their friends on Social Media. It goes on to underline the significance they attach to their Social Media friends.

14. Most commonly used Social Media Sites

(Multi Response)

	WhatsApp	Facebook	Snap Chat	Instagram	Twitter	Skype
Students	50	49	22	46	04	18
Employees	46	50	17	37	03	29
Percent	98	99	39	83	07	47

Table -XIV

In a plethora of Social Media sites available on internet only a few get resounding public response. Facebook (99%) is heads and shoulders above others. The survey has found it the most favored and popular site among respondents. WhatsApp is closely followed by 98% and Instagram is third at 83% followed by Snap Chat at 39%. While Snap Chat is making inroads, Yahoo Messenger and Orkut have fast phased out from the minds of respondents and they have given way to Facebook and WhatsApp. Skype is used by 47% respondents.

15. WhatsApp has made a dent in Facebook using habits

	To Great Extent	To Some Extent	Not Much	Can't Say	Total
Students	43	04	03	00	50
Employees	48	02	00	00	50
T Percent	91	06	03	00	100

Table -XV

The respondents are of the considered opinion that the advent of WhatsApp has made a significant dent in the Facebook using consumers. They have cut short the time they used to spend on Facebook and started preferring WhatsApp. It is a clear indicator that WhatsApp is going to give Facebook a tough challenge in the days to come. Whopping 91% respondents say that WhatsApp has taken the place of Facebook in their lives. Some of them even admit of having multiple WhatsApp accounts.

16. Logic for heavily engaging on Social Media Sites

	Time Pass	Part of Life	For Expressing Deep-set feelings	Nothing Special	Total
Students	27	09	11	03	50
Employees	29	03	14	04	50
Percent	56	12	25	07	100

Table -XVI

The euphoria created by Social Media gets exposed when the respondents are asked about the rationale of spending too much time on Social Networking Sites. A majority of 56% respondents say that they use Social Media for killing their spare time. But there are 25% respondents who say that they need Social Media for giving vent to their deep set feelings. Still 12% say that Social Networking Sites have become a part and parcel of their lives. Hence at least 37% respondents are there who say that they are serious about their usage of social media sites.

17. Type of change in relations with family members after heavy usage of Social Media

	Increased Interaction	Largely Decreased	Decreased to Some extent	No Effect at all	Total
Students	00	16	28	06	50
Employees	00	21	26	03	50
Percent	00	37	54	09	100

Table -XVII

Draining of 5-7 hours from one's life daily is bound to make an impact on the near and dear ones. 54% respondents admit that their interaction and intimacy with family members has decreased to some extent which means that Social Media has affected the family patterns albeit to some extent. 37% respondents say that their interaction with family members has largely decreased. It is crystal clear that while one is coming nearer to the people from unknown regions, he is getting detached from his own family members.

18. Extent to which Social Media mitigates sorrows & multiplies joys

	To Great Extent	To Some Extent	Not at All	Depends	Total
Students	20	17	04	09	50
Employees	08	28	01	13	50
Percent	28	45	05	22	100

Table -XVIII

Relations formed through Social Media may be termed as euphoric and short lived but it has certainly made inroads in the personal life and life style patterns of respondents. The definition of relations if being redrafted and traditional relations undergo acid test at the hands of Social Media. 28% respondents (mostly students) say that social media helps mitigate sorrows and multiply joys. 45% respondents (mainly employees) state that Social Media helps in this context to some extent only. 22% respondents say that it depends on the social media site and the feeling expressed whether they get mitigated or multiplied.

CONCLUSION

The study done on young employees and university students reveal that Social Media has become a part and parcel of their daily life. It has in fact become an integral part of their daily routine. They cannot even think about a life without Facebook or WhatsApp. They do admit that relations formed through Social Media Sites cannot be relied upon but still the prefer sharing their deep-set emotions on these sites. They opine that sharing of emotions help mitigating their sorrows and multiply their joys. They prefer sharing their selfies or other pictures with their friends though pornographic pictures are also exchanged. Respondents have admitted that Social Media have dented the interaction with their real life friends. They also admit that their interaction with friends or family members have decreased a lot since they have started spending more valuable time on social media. Most of the respondents are heavy users as they spend more than 6 hours on Social Media Networking sites. They regard immediacy and reach for the usage of social media sites. It is evident from the study that the

traditional relations have lost their relevance and sheen while new relations with people living at far off places have taken their place.

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