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Social Networking: Substantial Cause Effecting Youth Well-Being

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Abstract:

The paper discuss the important period of life i.e. Adolescence which is a period of storm and stress characterized by intergenerational conflicts mood swings and an enthusiasm for constructive as well as risky behaviour. Youth need to master many developmental tasks, failure of which sometimes detour them towards the virtual world of Social networking thereby separating them from the reality. It highlights the connectivity of youth to social networking providing them opportunities for Self-reflection, Self-realization, Social interaction and Affiliation that are crucial developmental tasks. However, it is becoming a substantial cause which affects youth well-being. The paper also includes the survey report of college students indicating their over indulgence towards social media thereby making their life style unhealthy.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional period, a time of change, a problem age, a time when the individual searches for identity, a dreaded age, a time of unrealism and the threshold of adulthood.

Development tasks during Adolescence Stage –

- Achieving new and more mature relations with age mates of both sexes.
- Achieving a masculine or feminine social roles.
- Accepting one's physique and using one's body effectively.
- Desiring, accepting and achieving socially responsible behavior.
- Achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults.
- Preparing for an economic career.
- Preparing for marriage and family life.

Although most teens master these tasks at the appropriate time, some are unable to do so, failure to which leads to unfavorable self-judgments, which in turn lead to unfavorable concept of self and this increases their feeling of inadequacy which effects their personal and social adjustments. In *Erik Erikson* developmental theory, in the case of adolescence there is conflict between identity and role confusion and failure to resolve this conflict can result in identity diffusion. In seeking to define their identity, youth attempt to assert their individuality, but also to join with others, to get social approval, to fulfill the motive of belongingness, to sustain their sense of self or self-esteem, youth more likely turn to social media. According to Merriam- Webster (2014) Social media is defined as 'form of electronic communication (as websites for social networking and micro blogging) through which users create online communications to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content'. Most young people every day uses of the social networking are characterized not by spectacular form of innovation and creativity, but by relatively mundane form of communication and information retrieval. According to APA (American Psychological Association) in the last 5 years, the number of pre-teenagers and teenagers that use these pages increased dramatically. According to one Neuropsychological research: The Self disclosure one would engage in on social media activates the intrinsic reward system of the brain in much the same way as powerful primary rewards such as food and sex (Tamir & Mitchell, 2012).

As social media is becoming increasingly prominent in young people lives, it is important to understand how this usage may affect them and before discussing its impact on youth well-being, I would like to report a survey conducted by me on young college students and it was observed that 90% of youth have installed social networking apps in their phone and 70% of which check their social sites frequently in a day. 60% of were agreed that social networking sites(SNS) is the first thing which comes to their mind after they wake up. Moreover 80% of them can be seen online till midnight. 40% of youth keep their cell phones near them while sleeping and, to overcome anxiousness 80% of youth keep their phone on vibration mode to check notifications. Furthermore, reports indicate that 60% of youth have compulsive feeling to change their profile pictures frequently and felt the need to be liked by others. To summarize the above survey report, about 65% of youth feel addicted to SNS which is a very critical issue and it needs utmost consideration.

Although Social Networking offers many opportunities for learning, entertainment, enrichment and personal growth. In addition, social media helps the youth updated with what is happening around the world, help the teenagers stay connected and interact with each other even if they are many miles apart. This strengthens their relationships even if they finished school and moved to different

locations. Apart from the benefits, there are a number of risks associated with social media use specifically negative effects on mental health.

2. Impact on Physical Health

Various researches have undertaken efforts to examine the neurological, physical changes in the minds of internet users. Some studies assert that these physical changes are harmful while others argue that asserted changes are beneficial. The BBC described the research published in the peer received science journal – specialized MRI brain scans showed changes in the white matter of the brain in those classed as being web addicts compared with non-addicts. There are also changes in *brain chemistry* –release of *Dopamine* a chemical that is central to the brain reward system. Research suggests that internet searching engages complicated brain activity which may improve brain functions. American writer Nicholas Carr asserts that internet use reduces the deep thinking that leads to the creativity. But Carr also states that the vast availability of information on World Wide Web overwhelms the brain and hurt long term memory or the availability of stimuli leads to a very large cognitive load which makes it difficult to remember. So the current explosion of digital technology not only is changing the way we live and communicate but is rapidly and profoundly *altering the brains*. Using a laptop cell phone or iPod late at night by the youth can seriously mess their sleep patterns and habits potentially leaving them with a sleep disorder, weaken eye sights as phone calls, internet over phone even idle phone has a lot of radiations around it; emits high level of blue light which suppresses *melatonin* the brain “*sleepy chemical*” production more vigorously than any other wavelength Holzman (2010). So from the study it is concluded that browsing Social media before bed is not just distracting from sleep it can quit literally stop you from being sleepy at all and moreover insomnia has been show to increase the risk of developing anxiety and depression (Cole & Dendukuri, 2003 ;) Riemann & Vodeihoizer 2003).

Sedentary behaviours encouraged by Social media like sitting or lying down during leisure time specifically to check the sites offset face to face interactions and physical activity has been linked to physical health risks. Increased risks of *type II diabetes* (Huetal, 2003) *obesity* (camerson et al., 2003), *cardiovascular disease* (kronenberg et al., 2000), *high blood pressure* (Jakes et al., 2003), and *metabolic syndrome* (ford et al; 2003) /. Moreover, sedentary behaviour has an increased risk of developing a depressive or anxiety disorder.

3. Impact on Psychological Health

Benefits and risks of teenagers in the usage of Social media have a significant impact in their Psychological and Social development. Ingram et.al (1999) reported that well- being was a function of satisfaction with Social support but not with the number of support network members. There is a connection between social relationships and good mental health. Studies demonstrate that Social support can ward off hopelessness (Johnson et al; 2001), quells loneliness (Schneider et al., 1991), discourage avoidant coping (Weaver et al; 2005) and reinforce positive state of mind (Gonzalez at al 2004). The emotional support provided by social ties enhances psychological well-being which, in turn, may reduce the risk of unhealthy behaviours and poor physical health (Kiecolt- Glaser et al; 2002; Thoits, 2004; uchino, 2004). Social media affects the social relationship of young adults and therefore their mental health as well by influencing howpeople view, maintain and interact with their Social network. Increased exposure to media may result in psychological disorders like *stress, depression, anxiety, ADHD, eating disorders, OCD, narcissist behaviour, hypochondria, Schizoids affective, addiction, Body dysmorphia, Voyeurism*. It creates a sense of anarchy and mental disturbance among young generation. A new medical term has been created out of this constant connectivity: *Phantom Vibration Syndrome* defined as perceived vibration from a cell phone that is not vibrating has been reported to occur with large number of people who are obsessed with checking their Social media messages and it can bring so much anxiety to them and becomes more addictive than drugs and have a severe psychological impact in the long run as it can take years to break through the Social network addiction. (Drowin et al; 2012, Rothberget al; 2010

According to Report by O Brien David Small wood, an *addiction expert* from the British Medical Journal says ‘Social networking sites are fueling insecurity and creating an unhealthy obsession with building large friend lists among certain vulnerable groups’. In addiction it may also foster an unhealthy competitive spirit about popularity. Another study from the daily mail says that being addicted to social networking sites can be harmful to health because excessive technology use can lead to feelings of isolation of a person due to much time spent with technology as opposed to making real connections with human friends. Moreover, there is a lack of body signals besides other non-verbal cues including tone in case of Social networking sites. Thus they cannot be considered as an adequate replacement for any face-to-face communication. Not only this, Students who are spending a great deal of time on these sites are not able to communicate in person in an effective manner. Another phenomenon related to Social media is *FOMO (fear of missing out)* which means a psychological dependence to being online could result in anxiety when one feels disconnected thereby leading to a fear of missing out. As a consequence, FOMO is perceived to have negative influence on youth psychological health and well-being, because it could contribute to people negative and depressed feeling which researchers called ‘*Facebook Depression*’ which means that depressed feelings develops in teens when they are see how great other people lives are on face book compared to them. The act of Social comparison also poses a threat to young adult Social media user. Use of Social media has been linked to increased Social comparison and diminished self-esteem and image. Zuo (2014) also found that making Social comparison was associated with lower self-esteem and more negative health outcomes. To improve their self-image and self-esteem youth engage themselves in taking selfies and posting them on Social networking sites. Recently APA confirmed that taking selfies frequently known as ‘*selfitis*’ a mental disorder characterized by obsessive compulsive desire to take photo of one’s self and post them on Social media as a way to make up for lack of self-esteem. Posting numerous selfies is also related to higher narcissism which is correlated with high self-esteem. According to DSM IV-IR (APA, 2000) *Narcissist personality disorder* involves a pre-occupation with self and how one is

perceived by others. They pursue gratification from vanity and the admiration of their own physical and intellectual attributes. Research reports that having positive reaction on one's Social networking site profile is correlated with higher esteem which is significantly correlated with satisfaction with life.

Another negative outcome of Social media is *cyber bullying* and online harassment. It is act of bullying by electronic posting of mean or threatening messages about the person often done anonymously. Cyber bullying can occur to any young person online and can cause profound psychological outcomes such as *depression, anxiety severe isolation* and tragically *suicide*. (Pathin J. & Hinduja S 2006). Developing a fear of being victimized by violence called '*Mean world syndrome*' is also the result of Social media. Today, one of the main threats to young people on Social media sites is that of their *digital foot print* and future reputations. (Okeeff et al ,2011). Adolescents who lack an awareness of privacy issues often post inappropriate messages, pictures, video without understanding that 'what goes online stays'. (Palfrey et al .2010). So If young people and their caregivers are aware of the potential deleterious effects of Social media use, they can create healthy Social media habits to guard against these potential effects.

4. Conclusion

No doubt, Social Networking sites are of great help in the youth everyday life which depends on how a person utilizes it. However, it has many negative effects as well. Although SNS itself does not cause feeling of well-being and ill-being rather the positive or negative reactions that youth experience within the sites effect their physical and mental health.

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