

Title: Influence of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) on the Interpersonal Relationships of Youth: A Study Bangladesh Youth

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Abstract

The use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) has become a popular and integral part of everyday communication in the youth life of Bangladesh. The usage of SNSs has extensive influence on youth in numerous ways, particularly on their interpersonal relationships. The present study is placed in this context to examine the influence of SNSs on interpersonal relationships of youth of Bangladesh. Case study based on questionnaire interview method has been applied to find out the answer of the research questions. It has been found that usage of SNSs has effect on interpersonal relationships of youth, particularly with their members of family, friends and teachers. It has been also found that due to the availability of SNSs the communication between youth and their family members, between youth and their friends has increased. In this study youth SNSs usage patterns, their purpose of SNSs usage, the amount of the time they spend, their preferred SNSs, degree of their trustworthiness of online friends and much more interesting aspects have been dealt keeping the scientific research as base. It provides an outlook for investigating the technological implications on society in the domain of Communication.

Keywords: Social networking sites, interpersonal relationships, youth, students, communication

Introduction

The present age is featured as the era of information and communication revolution. The entire globe becomes a single electronic village as a result to the World Wide Web, which effectively contributed with the interaction between people of different cultures. In addition, it is noticeable that the community group that uses the social networking more than others is the youth. However, it seems striking that the extensive use of the social networks by these young people reduces their personal interaction with other members of the community. As part of global village and in the age of internet, people of Bangladesh, mostly young educated people are maintaining their inter-personal relationships through Social Networking Sites (SNSs) which are regarded as popular ways of CMC (Computer Mediated Communication). But there are hardly any research could be found where the dynamics of SNSs and developing countries youth like Bangladesh have been addressed though the society of developing countries is shifting from the traditional mode of interpersonal relationships pattern to computer mediated interpersonal relationships pattern with the delicate touch of SNSs (Ahn, 2011). The present research will shed some light about the influence of SNSs on the interpersonal relationships of students youth in the developing countries context.

Interpersonal relationships are determined by cultural norms, values and beliefs (Raeff, Greenfield and Quiroz, 2000). It can be defined as, An interpersonal relationship can develop between individuals working together in the same organization, people working in the same team, relationship between a man and a woman (Love, Marriage), relationship with immediate family members and relatives, relationship of a child with his parents, relationship between friends. Relationship can also develop in a group (Relationship of students with their teacher, relationship of a religious guru with his disciples and so on) (<http://www.managementstudyguide.com/interpersonal-relationship.htm>). Bangladesh is

hierarchical agrarian society where high power distance, collectivism and masculinity are influential factors of interpersonal relationship (Khan, 2010). Any kind of interpersonal relationships here is always guided by senior-junior relationships and status in the family and society. For example, most of the cases parents, husband, teacher, boss, religious leader, senior citizen act as a “master”. On the other hand, son or daughter, wife, subordinate, common people and young people always support them. Some observation based evidences (Khan, 2010; Haq, 2012) mentioned that social networking sites have been influencing the every aspect of lives after 2000s. Though this is a popular issue in Bangladesh, it is very difficult to find scientific evidences which can help the societal and state actors to take necessary steps for maximizing its benefits and downsizing the negative effects. In this backdrop of research, the present study will explore the dynamics of young people’s interpersonal relationships and SNSs in a developing country context like, Bangladesh.

Numerous studies outline the significant relationship between SNSs and its influence on youth interpersonal relation patterns. Some believe that motivations that determine how young people use online social networks are psychological and it is strongly related to the human needs of communication, socialization, being an active part of a group, or maintaining long-distance friendships (Baltaretu&Balaban, 2010). Moreover, the relationship between online media and offline social activities and interpersonal interaction are enjoying significant discussion at present (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman& Robinson, 2001). The findings of a study conducted in Malaysian context show that facebook usage among Swedish university students seems to be an important part of their everyday life but can present some challenges in their social relationships (Sofiahetal, 2011). Smaller social circles, less communication at home, and loneliness are some greater internet use results, which have been identified in some studies. (Kraut et al., 1998). Spending more time on the internet and particularly in SNSs can create an addiction to the internet. Internet addiction is a rampant problem affecting individuals throughout the world and is recognized as a relic stage of internet adoption within a society (Zhang & Amos, 2008). Aghazamani (2010) has conducted a study on the university students’ facebook usage patterns and found that most of the students use facebook for communicating with friends. The study indicates that traditional friendship pattern, communication pattern with friends are enjoying a gigantic change with the magic touch of SNSs.

It has been found in a survey research that heavy users of MySpace felt less socially involved with the community around them than light users (Nyland, Marvez, and Beck, 2007). Furthermore, a substantial proportion of respondents were using this social network for entertainment, as opposed to maintaining or strengthening offline relationships. This line of research echoes one of the most pervasive criticisms against SNS that its lead to users’ isolation (Hodgkinson, 2008). On the one hand, there are studies that support a “rich get richer” perspective, where those that are psychologically better-off (e.g., have high self-esteem and life satisfaction, have more offline contacts, are more popular, etc.) gain more from using internet services (e.g., Tian, 2003). On the other hand, there is research that supports a “poor get richer” perspective, where those that are less well-off gain more from the internet than those who are better-off (Stern & Dillman, 2006).

Nie (2001) argued that internet use detracted individuals from face-to-face interactions, which might diminish their traditional interpersonal relationships. However, later research has found that online communication has a positive role on individuals’ participation in community life, fostering norms of trust and reciprocity (Best & Dautrich, 2003; Kavanaugh, Reese, Carroll, & Rosson, 2005; Kobayashi, Ikeda, & Miyata, 2006; Räsänen&Kouvo, 2007). Moorman et.al (2010) conducted a study on the role of social networking sites (SNSs) on interpersonal relationships of university students. It has been found from the study that interpersonal relationship quality is stronger in low facebook

users. It means that there could some negative impact of SNSs on students' interpersonal relationship. But the reason is not identified in the above mentioned study as the study depends on only quantitative data though it deserves qualitative data to find out the reasons of negative impact. Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) conducted a study to examine the relationship between facebook uses and students social capital. The study was conducted among the students of MichiganStateUniversity and found that there is a strong association between facebook use and social capital. The study suggests that SNSs might provide greater benefits for users who experiencing low self-worth and low life satisfaction. Interesting results has been found in Nyland (2007) study that face-to face communication is the tool that fulfills more media gratification than the social networking sites.

Most of the SNSs users of Bangladesh are youth (Habib, 2010). Though a good number of studies have been conducted about SNSs uses and youth but very few studies have been focused on new dimension of changing nature of interpersonal relationships of youth through SNSs. The present study is an attempt to explore this knowledge gap. Another concern is that, most of the studies have been conducted in the western society perspective though it is very essential to unearth the situation of developing countries like Bangladesh. From this context, the present research is an attempt to explore the dynamics of young people's interpersonal relationships and SNSs in developing countries.

Statement of the Problem

Near three million people of Bangladesh are now participating SNSs regularly where most of the users are students and the number is increasing each day (www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/bangladesh). The rise of social computing opens a new dimension of benefits and harms stemming from differential usage (Tufekci, 2008). These sites have the potential to bridge gap in social capital (Putnam, 2000), transform the role of weak ties (Granovetter, 1993) and put the boundaries between public and private. At the same time, some scholars also argued that SNSs like facebook has threatened with moral panic (Velezuela et al, 2008). Nie (2001) argued that internet use detracted individuals from face-to-face interactions, which might diminish their social capital. Younger users often use social networking in the micro-management of their social lives, as an arena for social exploration and to develop networking skills (Ito et al. 2008; Livingstone 2009).

In recent years, much of the communication that occurred face-to-face has moved to computer-mediated communication. Computer-mediated communication has had and continues to have an effect on all people around the globe especially young people who mostly use SNSs to communicate, and its effects on interpersonal communication have many benefits as well as many drawbacks (Waigumo, 2013). Several scholars have contended that internet communication is an impoverished and sterile form of social exchange compared to traditional face-to-face interactions, and will therefore produce negative outcomes (loneliness and depression) for its users as well as weaken neighborhood and community ties. Media reporting of the effects of internet use over the years has consistently emphasized this negative view (McKenna & Bargh, 2000) to the point that, as a result, a substantial minority of (mainly older) adults refuses to use the internet at all (Hafner, 2003). Other scholars feel that, CMC lacks tone, postures, gestures, or facial expressions, and this causes the richness of communication to be depleted, due to the lack of these non-verbal cues that help clarify a verbal message, computer-mediated communication loses richness and in essence the message that comes across is seen as leaner. These lean messages become harder to interpret with confidence. Things such as irony or humour can easily be taken the wrong way and because of this, these messages are extremely ambiguous (Bower, 1998).

In contrast, others feel that, CMC has increased interpersonal communication rich by making it easier. Since face-to-face communication is not always feasible, using the internet helps connect those who are regularly able to communicate physically. Computer-mediated communication has also increased the levels of self-disclosure, with many people saying things through the internet that they wouldn't normally say in person (Adler, et al. 2010), especially among youth. Others believe that the internet affords a new and different avenues of social interaction that enable groups and relationships to form that otherwise would not be able to, thereby increasing and enhancing social connectivity.

Youth is a stage that is associated with a strong need for friendships and peer-group affiliations along with the need for person-to-person communication. The changing dynamics of communication within the youth population especially those in their youth, have important implications on their social relationships and communication in real life. SNSs act as a mediator between real and virtual communication, leading directly to the individual's virtual interpersonal relationship (Ataur, 2010). Worldwide, youth lives have become so busy and full of activities that their time to interact with friends is becoming more limited (Ataur, 2010). They adapt these new technologies to continue improving and sustaining their relationships. SNSs in fact helped the youth to be more connected to their social groups and maintain relations as they also expand their network of friends. By staying connected to their social groups, they are defining their self-identity (maintaining individual friendships) and their social-identity (belonging to peer groups) (Ataur, 2010).

It has also been argued that SNSs addiction affected family bondage in western societies as well as developing societies (Frogger, 2008). Family relationship is a significant type of interpersonal relationship that maintained by almost every human being (Ataur, 2014). But there are very few studies have been conducted in this backdrop of research in developing countries perspective. Thus it is very important to find out how people are using social media in maintaining family relationships more importantly interpersonal relationships in developing countries perspective as SNSs are relatively new phenomenon in developing countries context. The present study will focused some light in this research gap.

With the rapid diffusion of SNSs scholars and decision makers are also concerned about the influence of SNSs on youth interpersonal relationship but much of the researches have been conducted on western society perspective rather a very few researches have been conducted on developing country perspective (Ahn, 2011) though society and relationships in the developing countries are facing a monumental shifting in recent decades through the delicate touch of social media (Livingstone, 2002). Long working hours, tremendous working pressure, peoples business and transport related problems (immense traffic on the roads, price hick of transport) make face-to-face interaction tough with friends and relatives on a daily basis. Using facebook people communicate with their relatives and friends every day. Many people think that it increased interaction among the friends, colleges and relatives (Rahman, 2010).

Bangladesh is a developing country where more than fifty percent of its total population is young (Bangladesh Statistical Bureau, 2013). To achieve the millennium development goal it has been argued from many government and non-government actors that Bangladesh should capitalize its young force. Bangladesh is a mediated society where family bondage is very important for the existing social values. As SNSs are not very older things in Bangladeshi culture, it is indispensable to see the youth interpersonal relationships through SNSs as youth are the top most users of SNSs in Bangladesh (Habib, 2010).

Objectives of the Research

The main objective of the study is to find out the influence of SNSs on youth interpersonal relationships of Bangladesh. In relation to the main objective the proposed study has some specific objectives. These are,

1. To unearth the interpersonal relationships patterns of student's in Bangladesh through SNSs.
2. To dig out the changes of interpersonal relationships patterns through SNSs among youth of Bangladesh.

Methodology

Survey method based on questionnaire interview has been applied to find out the answer of the research questions. This study is basically a qualitative research which has been supplemented by quantitative data. Questionnaire has been used to collect the relevant information related to the issues of the study. A set of self administrative questionnaire has been distributed to the selected respondents during the class time. The respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaires and it was collected by the researcher. According to Berger (2000), survey design is widely used because of its inexpensive cost, ability to obtain current information, and ability to obtain a great deal of information at one time.

In this study, students of public universities of Bangladesh have been considered as youth. According to the latest report of Bangladesh Statistical Bureau, youth is defined as the persons having the age limit between 18 years and 24 years (Bangladesh Statistical Bureau, 2013). The average age range of a university student in Bangladesh is also 18-24 (UGC, 2013). So it is expected that university students could be represent Bangladesh youth properly.

The University of Rajshahi has been selected based on purposive sampling as the location of the research. The University of Rajshahi is the second largest university of Bangladesh (UGC, 2015). There are almost twenty six thousand students studying here in different disciplines. Since students from different cultures, religions, ethnic group and race coming here to study from different regions of Bangladesh, a multi-cultural environment exists in the University of Rajshahi which can represent all public University of Bangladesh. Moreover as the University of Rajshahi is the second largest university of Bangladesh and the working place of the researcher, it was easier to conduct the research. Furthermore, this university could represent all the public universities of Bangladesh as well as represent the young generation (UGC, 2012). 250 students from undergraduate and postgraduate studies have been selected as respondents by purposive sampling. Equal participation from both undergraduate and postgraduate studies as well as male and female students has been ensured. Those students who are using any kind of SNSs have been selected as respondents. Responses were voluntary.

The pre-test of questionnaire was carried out to determine the clarity of instruction, readability, face validity and reliability of the research instrument. Ten percent of the total respondents will be interviewed. The respondents will not be included in the actual study. The data was analyzed by using computer software *Statistical Package for Social Science* (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, median, range, and standard deviation were used to determine demographic characteristics of the respondents,

patterns of interpersonal relationships through SNSs and their influence on interpersonal relationships.

Results and Discussion

The data presented in the table-1 gives general information of the respondents. The total size of the sample is 250. These 250 students have been divided into two more sections on the basis of their level of education and gender. Here an attempt has been made to give the equal proportion to each selected sample. The table no. 2 depicts the SNSs usage pattern of university students; the frequency of the usage of SNSs. According to the table-2, 38% of college students spend 4-7 hours per week for using SNS. Quite significant numbers of students (32.5%) are spending 8- 12 hours per week to use SNSs.

Today in Bangladesh, facebook is the favourite social networking site. In a survey conducted in September 2014, the Pew Research Centre finds that facebook remains by far the most popular social media site in Bangladesh (<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/social-media-update-2014>). Recent statistics shows that almost 8% people are using social media in Bangladesh which seems very low at present but new user of facebook is being added in every 12 seconds in Bangladesh which is more than the birth rate of the country (<http://www.risingbd.com/english/rate-of-facebook-users-more-than-birth-in-bangladesh/25535>). According to the present study total 74.8% of the students in Rajshahi University are using facebook. Second preferred SNS is Twitter (16.8%) followed by LinkedIn (2%).

Table-1: General profiles of the respondent

Level of Study		Gender	
Undergraduate	125	Male	125
Post-graduate	125	Female	125
Total	250	Total	250

Table-2: Frequency of the Usage of Social Networking Sites

How frequently do you use SNSs per week?	Time	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
	Less than 1 hour	16	6.5
	1-3 hours	34	13.5
	4-7 hours	95	38
	8-12 hours	82	32.5
	More than 12 hours	23	9.5
	Total	250	100

Table.3: Preference over the Use of SNSs

Which SNSs do you prefer to use?	Social Networking Sites (SNSs)	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
	Facebook	187	74.8
	Twitter	42	16.8
	LinkedIn	05	2
	Myspace	00	00
	Others	26	6.4
	Total	250	100

University students use SNS for many different purposes. It is too difficult to point out one particular purpose of usage. However, the following table-4 shows total 50.08% of students uses SNS for ‘keeping in touch with friends’. Second highest purpose is ‘keeping in touch with family’ (22.4%). The following table-5 represents views of the university students on changing nature of interpersonal relationships with their respective members of family. During the field work students were asked ‘has the usage of SNS altered the nature of your interpersonal relationships with your family members’, for that total 86.4% of students have agreed and total 13.6% have denied any changes in their interpersonal relationship with their family members. We can observe here, the use of SNSs has caused for lots of changes in interpersonal relationship with the family. Hence there is a major influence of SNS on the changing university student’s interpersonal relationships with their members of family.

Evidently the usage of SNS brought significant changes in student’s inter-personal relationship as well as in communication with their members of family. The availability of SNS connectivity increased the communication level between students and their respective members of family, which is shown in the following table-6. Total 88.4% of university students agreed that they communicate with their family members more due to the availability of SNS. Only 11.6% of university students have responded negatively.

Table-4: College Students’ Purpose of Using Social Networking Sites

What is the most important purpose of social networking sites?	Nature of purposes	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
	Keeping in touch with family	56	22.4
	Keeping in touch with friends	127	50.8
	To meet new people	13	5.2
	Just for fun and entertainment	08	3.2
	To be ‘in’ just it is popular now-a-days	30	12
	Others	16	6.4
	Total	250	100

Table-5: Changing Interpersonal Relationships with the Member of Family

Has the usage of SNSs alter the nature of your interpersonal relationships with your family members?	Types of decision	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
	Yes	216	86.4
	No	34	13.6
	Total	250	100

Table-6: The increasing level of Communication with the family due to the usage of SNSs

Do you communicate with your family because you have SNSs connectivity available?	Types of decision	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
	Yes	221	88.4
	No	29	11.6
	Total	250	100

The following table-7 is quite related to the previous issue we are dealing with. Total 85.6% of students have agreed that there have been changes in their relationship with their family members after started using SNS.

In Bangladesh the usage of SNSs among university students is apparently increasing trend. It is very important to know what parents think about their children's usage of SNS. Hence, in the process of collecting data, students were asked 'what is your parent's opinion of you using SNSs'; for that 68.8% of the total students expressed that their parents are quite 'positive' with their children's usage of SNS. And 31.2% of respondents expressed that their parents are 'negative' on their children's usage of SNS (detail in table-8).

Table-9 shows the changes in interpersonal relationships of college students and their friends. The question 'has the usage of SNS altered the nature of your relationships with your friends', for that 82% of total students have agreed and only 18% have disagreed with the above statement.

Table-7: Changes in the relationship with the family after using SNS

Has there been any change in your relationships with your family members after started using SNSs?	Types of decision	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
	Yes	214	85.6
	No	36	14.4
	Total	250	100

Table-8: Parent's opinion on the use of SNSs by their Children

What is your parent's opinion of your using SNSs?	Types of decision	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
	Positive	172	68.8
	Negative	78	31.2
	Total	250	100

Table-9: Changing Interpersonal Relationships with the friends

Has the use of SNSs altered the nature of interpersonal relationships with your friends?	Types of decision	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
	yes	205	82
	no	45	18
	Total	250	100

Table-10: The level of communication with the teacher using SNSs

Do you communicate with your teacher's using SNSs?	Types of Response	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
	Yes	68	27.2
	No	182	72.8
	Total	250	100

Currently the college going students do use SNS for interacting with the teachers. This new phenomenon is going up but not too fast. As the above table shows that only 27.2% of total university students use SNS for communicating with the teachers and (72.8%) majority of them do not use SNS for communicating with their teachers.

To know how much these students trust people who become friends through online. They were asked 'What according to you is the degree of trustworthiness of the people you meet only on SNS?' (52.4%) Majority of the total students pointed that the people they meet on online are moderate trustworthy. Second highest was ranked to slightly trustworthy (32.8%). Hence the degree of their trustworthiness towards the people they meet in online quite low (detail in table no-11).

Table-12 shows that how the preference for SNS to face-to-face relationship is increasing steadily. Total 75.6% of the students preferred to use SNS than face-to-face interaction due to several reasons. Even though the students preferred to have SNS interaction than face-to-face interaction, but they haven't agreed that usage of SNS can be an alternative to face-to-face interaction. 72.8% of total students disagreed with the question asked, 'Do you think the usage of SNS can be an alternative to face-to-face interaction?'

Table-11: The degree of trustworthiness of the people on SNSs

What according to you is the degree of trustworthiness of the people you meet only on SNSs	Degree of trustworthiness	Number of students	Percentage (100%)
	Very trustworthy	19	7.6
	Moderate trustworthy	131	52.4
	Slightly trustworthy	82	32.8
	Not trustworthy	18	7.2
	Total	250	100

Table-12: The increasing preference for SNSs to face to face relationships

Do you prefer SNSs to face to face relationships?	Types of decision	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
	yes	189	75.6
	no	61	24.4
	Total	250	100

Table-13: Usage of SNSs is not an alternative of face to face interaction

Do you think the usage of SNSs can be an alternative to face to face interaction	Types of decision	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
	yes	68	27.2
	Negative	182	72.8
	Total	250	100

Conclusion

Through the above analysis it is found that the usage of SNSs influences interpersonal relationships of youth of Bangladesh. In the present study SNSs influence on youth interpersonal relationships have been examined only with their members of family, their friends and their teachers. The usage of SNS brought lots of changes in interpersonal relationships between these students and members of family and it also helped youth to have more communication with their family members. It is also true with the interpersonal relationships of their friends. The present study confirms the implications of social networking sites on the interpersonal relationships of youth.

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