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Social Networking Sites and the Transformation of Interpersonal Relationships: An Empirical Study of Digital Communication and Social Interaction

¹Kavita Bhavsar and ²Dr. Anjali Pandey

¹Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Mahakaushal University Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Mahakaushal University Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India

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Corresponding Author: Kavita Bhavsar

Abstract

This study investigates the influence of social networking sites on interpersonal relationships. To understand the changing patterns of communication and social interaction, an exploratory-cum-descriptive research approach was adopted. Primary data of 200 respondents from Bikaner district including respondents from urban and rural areas. The data were gathered by using a structured questionnaire regarding social networking usage, communication, emotional connection, social interaction, and interpersonal relationships. The study results show that social networking sites help respondents in staying in touch with friends, in developing new social contacts and in communicating with people who have common interests. The study also reveals that spending too much time on social networking sites can cause distractions and reduce opportunities for face-to-face interaction. To summaries, social networking sites have both positive and negative effects on interpersonal relationships, depending on the way and reason of use.

Keywords: Social, Networking, technologies, interpersonal and relationships

Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technologies has significantly transformed how people communicate, connect and keep in touch with one another. Among various technological developments, social networking sites have come up as an important medium of interpersonal communication. Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, X, Snap chat, LinkedIn, etc. enable people to create personal profiles, share information, send messages, post pictures and videos and interact with other users around the world. The growing availability of smart phones, inexpensive internet services and digital technologies has also contributed to the proliferation of social networking sites in everyday life. The emergence of social networking sites has altered the traditional way of people interacting. Before, relationships were maintained mainly through face-to-face communication, telephone conversations, letters and

physical meetings.

Interpersonal relationships are the connections and interactions that individuals have with other people. These relationships could be with family members, friends and colleagues, classmates and members of wider social groups. The quality of interpersonal relationships depends on several factors such as communication, trust, emotional support, frequency of interaction, understanding and mutual participation. Social networking sites have brought new ways of communication that affect in every one of these dimensions. For example, the capacity to communicate frequently online may allow people to sustain relationships over long distances, whereas the capacity to share personal experiences and respond rapidly may encourage a feeling of continued social presence. 1 The impact of social networking sites on interpersonal relationships can be viewed from both a positive and a negative perspective. The

good thing about social networking sites is that they can help people to communicate, to build relationships, to give emotional and informational support and to connect again with people they knew in the past.

At the same time, overusing and/or using social networking sites inappropriately may affect the quality of interpersonal relationships. People may spend many hours communicating on-line but do less to interact with others face-to-face. Also, constant engagement on social media can be a distraction during personal conversations and social gatherings in addition, the difference between online and offline communication, privacy concerns, misunderstanding of digital messages, social comparison and dependence on online validation may affect users' interpersonal experiences. The impact of social networking sites cannot be understood only by the time spent online but also the purpose, nature and quality of online interaction are important. Another major factor is the changing nature of communication among the youth. Social networking sites are one of the active users of students and young adults and they are often used for personal and academic communication.

Literature Review

This sociological research study examines the many ways that social media influences interpersonal connections in the setting of contemporary culture. People now have new ways to interact with each other, communicate, and present themselves to the world thanks to the growth of social media platforms. By using both actual data and a thorough literature assessment, this research explores many facets of these phenomena. The study shows significant shifts in communication patterns as a result of the widespread use of text messaging, instant messaging, and video chats, which have become essential components of daily interactions. This article explores the emergence of virtual connections, including romantic relationships and online friendships, and provides information on their prevalence and governing mechanisms. This article explores conventional relationships in the context of social media, showing how digital platforms may both strengthen and weaken these kinds of connections. Chirag *et al.* (2024) ^[1].

The way individuals interact in the new digital society is evolving due to social media's quick growth and popularity. The aim of this research is to investigate how social media affects interpersonal relationships and to thoroughly examine the interaction between social media, short videos, network social platforms, and new media. Social media offers a variety of contact outlets, but it also has drawbacks, such anxiety and loneliness brought on by a lack of in-person interactions. Interpersonal relationships are impacted differently by various kinds of social media, including new media, network social platforms, and social media. Individuals' reliance on social media, their use patterns, and other variables all have an impact on how social media affects interpersonal relationships. The author examines how social media and interpersonal relationships are related in order to assess and provide recommendations that might lessen the negative impacts and improve the good ones. Shipan *et al.* (2023) ^[2].

Social media has a significant effect on interpersonal interactions and has affected many aspects of contemporary

life. Because both husband and wife must work to support their family and satisfy the demands of a fulfilling lifestyle, many nowadays suffer from a severe shortage of free time. Since time is becoming the most valuable resource, individuals are looking for ways to save it due to their hectic lifestyles. Social engagement is necessary for people to meet their social requirements, and as digital and mobile technologies proliferate, social media has emerged as a preferred communication channel. Human face-to-face engagement, whether for personal conversation or product marketing and promotion, has decreased as a result of digitalization. Because of the social scenario that the mobile phone has created, individuals are becoming used to avoiding face-to-face conversation by using their phones instead. Kalpathy *et al.* (2017) ^[3].

As communication and information technology have advanced, social media has emerged as one of the most important communication tools accessible to academics, researchers, scientists, and policymakers, as well as to the general public for the goal of fostering interpersonal relationships. Social media usage has altered partners' conduct and self-control in interpersonal relationships. Research nowadays has concentrated on how individuals might utilize social media to its fullest potential in order to maintain positive and healthy interpersonal relationships. In the meanwhile, this research was carried out to evaluate the connection between interpersonal relationships and social media (Facebook and Instagram) and to determine the suitable ways in which social media might alter partners' conduct and discipline in interpersonal relationships. Students and staff at Anadolu University were given questionnaires as part of the quantitative research approach. Using the SPSS software, 128 valid surveys of individuals in interpersonal interactions were employed, and the results were evaluated in frequency distribution tables with straightforward percentages and graphs. Muzafalu *et al.* (2018) ^[4].

Social networking sites are undoubtedly becoming into a dependable and popular communication tool. Teenage students are increasingly using social networking sites (SNSs), and their use has a significant impact on them in many ways, most notably on their interpersonal interactions. In this context, the current research aims to investigate how social networking sites (SNS) impact teenagers' interpersonal interactions and to determine the reasons for, advantages of, and risks of SNS usage among college students. Students from Khalilur Rahman Degree College, Shahed Hemayet Uddin Girl's High School, and Wajed Memorial Secondary School in Mollahat Upazila filled out a questionnaire about their use of social networking sites (SNSs) in order to gather primary data for this study. It was discovered that teens' use of SNSs affects their interpersonal relationships, especially with their family and friends. It was also discovered how much time people spend on social networking sites on average and what changes have taken place in their in-person relationships. Md. Shahin *et al.* (2019) ^[5].

Research Methodology

The social setup is a result of these new interaction patterns that are affecting interpersonal relationships. The exploratory cum descriptive research approach will be

employed to comprehend the wide-ranging effects of social media on interaction patterns and interpersonal relationships. 200 respondents will be selected for data collection using easy and purposeful selection from the Bikaner district, representing both male and female respondents from rural and urban areas, and from 19 various age groups.

An individual's whole social life revolves on their relationships and interactions, with the web of ties evolving from close, in-person partnerships to virtual ones in today's network society. The fundamental building block of social organization is social relationships. It implies that our ability to govern the social environment increases with our understanding of its nature. Because society is human-made,

it is subject to human change and transformation. Since all forms of social connection are drastically altering, it is crucial to research how social media is influencing how we interact and build relationships.

Data Analysis

Emotional connection of the respondent to Facebook

The researchers set out to discover how deeply respondents felt a connection to Facebook. According to the data in table 1, 65.6% of users say Facebook is a daily part of their lives, 76.0% say they feel disconnected when they don't check in, and 79.4% say they feel like they belong in the Facebook community.

Table 1: Emotional connection of the respondent to Facebook

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total %
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Facebook is part of my everyday activity	84	41.9	47	23.7	35	17.7	14	7	19	9.7	100
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while	93	46.4	39	19.6	29	14.5	19	9.5	20	10.1	100
I feel I am part of Facebook community	94	46.9	59	29.5	17	8.7	7	3.3	16	8.2	100

Social networking sites and how they have helped the respondents

Based on the data in table 2, the following percentages of students have found social media to be useful: 94.8% have found it easier to stay in touch with friends they don't see very often; 62.2% have found it easier to get to know other

students at school; 82.4% have found it easier to connect with people who share their interests; 95.7% have found it easier to meet new friends; and 86.4% have found it easier to socialize with people they otherwise would not have felt comfortable communicating with.

Table 2: Social networking sites and how it helped the respondent

	Yes		No		Not Sure		Total %
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Helped keep in touch with friends you can't see regularly	190	94.8	5	2.6	5	2.6	100.0
Helped get to know other students at school better	124	62.2	43	21.6	32	16.2	100.0
Helped connect with people whom you share common interest	165	82.4	12	5.9	24	11.8	100.0
Helped you meet new friends	191	95.7	6	3.2	2	1.1	100.0
Helped you socialize with people you would not have been able to communicate with	173	86.4	14	7.1	13	6.5	100.0

The results shown above provide credence to the idea that people are able to meet new people online, as it gives them more options for meeting like-minded individuals with whom to form relationships or pursue shared interests. An uptick in bonding and bridging social capital could emerge from these novel relationships.

Impact of social networking sites on interpersonal relationships of the respondents

While 52.6% of people said it was easier to stay in contact with friends online than in person, 43.5% said it was true or extremely true that social media sites make it harder to spend time with loved ones in person. A solid majority of 38.4% said they regularly find themselves in hot water with their parents over social media when they're together. While asked whether they ever become angry at their friends while they're online at the same time, 42.4% gave the affirmative. Adler *et al.* (2010) [6] found that computer-mediated communication has increased the levels of self-disclosure, with many people saying things online that they wouldn't normally say in person, particularly among teenagers.

60.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they found it easier to express themselves on social media than when talking face to face. Forty-three percent of people said they felt closer to their social media friends than their non-social media friends, and forty-one percent said they appreciated talking about current events with their friends on social media.

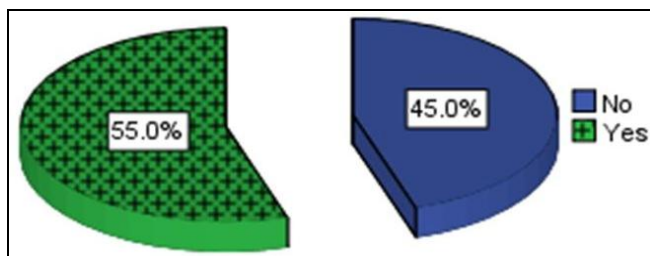
Most of the respondents (51.4%) were in complete agreement. While 68.2% of individuals said they wouldn't share any details about their private lives on social media, 41.3% said they agree or strongly agree that checking their feeds takes their focus away from the people they're with. While 63.8% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that they occasionally miss the days before social media, 46.3% of respondents either did not agree or strongly disagree that social media use had reduced the amount of time people could spend with friends in person. The claim that social media sites make people less available for in-person interactions was rejected or strongly rejected by 47.0% of the sample.

Table 3: Extent of agreement or disagreement with statements about social networking sites and interpersonal relationships of the respondents

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total %
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
I find it easier to keep in touch with friends online than offline	13	6.3	9	4.7	21	10.5	52	25.8	105	52.6	100.0
Social networking sites take away my face-to-face socializing time with friends and family	49	24.5	23	11.4	41	20.7	49	24.5	38	19.0	100.0
I find it easier to express myself on social media than while talking face to face	55	27.4	12	5.9	13	6.5	40	19.9	81	40.3	100.0
I am willing to voice anything about my personal life on social networking sites	136	68.2	15	7.3	26	12.8	8	3.9	16	7.8	100.0
Using my social networking site often distracts me when I should be paying attention to the people that I am with	38	19.1	31	15.6	43	21.4	43	21.4	40	19.9	100.0
Social networking site takes my personal time for socialization	55	27.4	39	19.6	44	22.0	31	15.5	31	15.5	100.0

If social media has affected the respondent's relationship with friends

The results are shown in Figure 1, which reveals that the respondents were asked if they felt social media had any impact on their friendships. Of those who took the survey, 55.0% felt that social media had an impact on their friendships. Forty-five percent of those surveyed said that social media had no impact on their friendships. In addition, we wanted to know how the social media platforms impacted their personal connections.

**Fig 1:** If social media has affected the respondent's relationship with friends

How social media has affected the respondent's relationship with friends

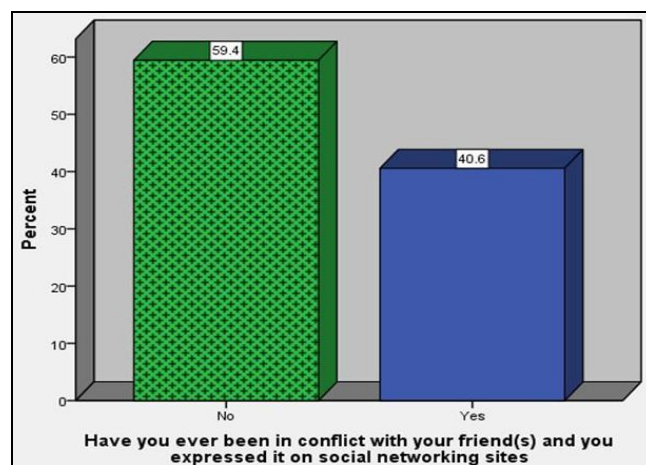
Eighty percent of those who checked the box in the previous section (figure 1) felt that social media had helped them get closer to their friends. In a survey, 8.6% of people said that arguments with friends were sparked by social media. Almost 2.9 percent of users said that social media offered too many distractions, making it impossible to concentrate on just one or two acquaintances. A small percentage of respondents (4.3%) reported that their friends often used social media when they were together, and a similar percentage (4.3%) claimed that they seldom saw their real-life friends because they were too busy conversing online.

Table 4: How social media has affected the respondent's relationship with friends

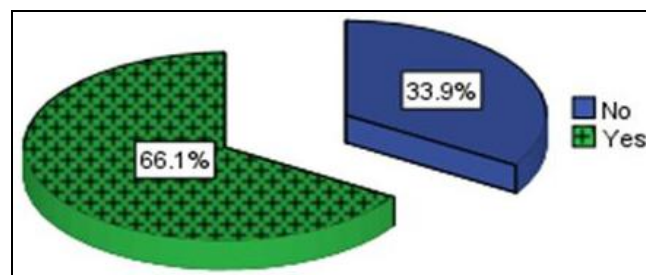
How social media has affected relationship with friends	Frequency	Percent
It has improved	160	80.0
Disagreements now and then	17	8.6
There is too much distraction on social media.	0	7.2
There no time for face-to-face interaction with friends because am always chatting with my online friends	14	4.2
Total	200	100.0

If the respondents have ever been in conflict with friend(s) and they expressed it on social networking sites.

The purpose of this research was to determine whether or not participants had ever used social media to air grievances with a friend or friends. As seen in figure 2, 59.4% of respondents declined, while 40.6% expressed their approval. Those who nodded were then asked if they had ever discussed it with their buddy or friends. The results are shown in Figure 2.

**Fig 2:** If the respondents has ever been in conflict with friend(s) and they expressed it on social networking sites

If the respondents ever talked about the conflict According to Figure 3, 66.1% of the participants said that they discussed the disagreement with their friend(s), whereas 33.9% stated that they never did so.

**Fig 3:** If the respondents ever talked about the conflict as in above

If the respondent had friends on social media who they did not know in the real world Figure 4 demonstrates that almost all respondents (96.7% to be exact) admitted to

having online acquaintances they didn't really know in real life. Just 3.3% of those polled said they didn't know anybody online who they didn't also know in real life. Respondents' interactions with people of the opposing sex were the most common. The focus group talks provided the data for this.

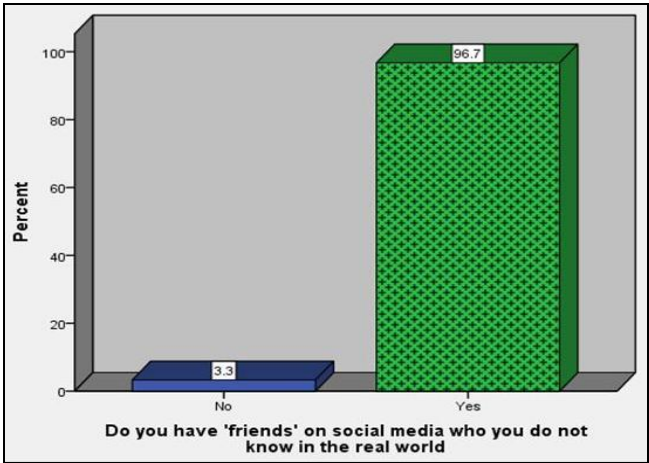


Fig 4: If the respondent had friends on social media who they did not know in the real world

Frequency of interaction with friends on social media who the respondents do not know in the real world of those who took the survey, 19.9% said it was very often, 30.7% said it was often, 19.3% said it was somewhat often, 13.6% said it was rather seldom, and 16.5% said it was rarely.

Table 5: Shows how often people who aren't really friends with the responder engage with them on social media.

Frequency	Frequency	Percent
Quite often	40	19.9
Often	61	30.7
Somewhat often	37	19.3
Somewhat rarely	27	13.6
Rarely	33	16.5
Total	200	100.0

Impact of social media on social life in terms of the negative or positive effects it has on the respondents as a student. As a student, 93.5% of respondents claimed that social media had improved their social life, while 6.5% said the opposite.

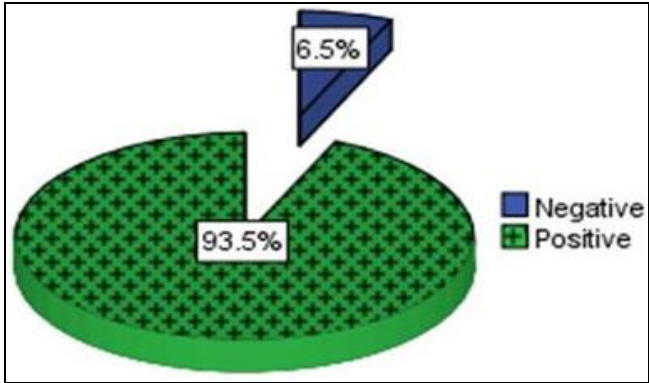


Fig 5: Impact of social media on social life in terms of the negative or positive effects it has on the respondents as a student

Impact of social media on education in terms of the negative or positive effects it has on the respondents as a student. Of the students surveyed, 60.1% felt that social media had a beneficial effect on their schoolwork, while 39.9% felt the opposite.

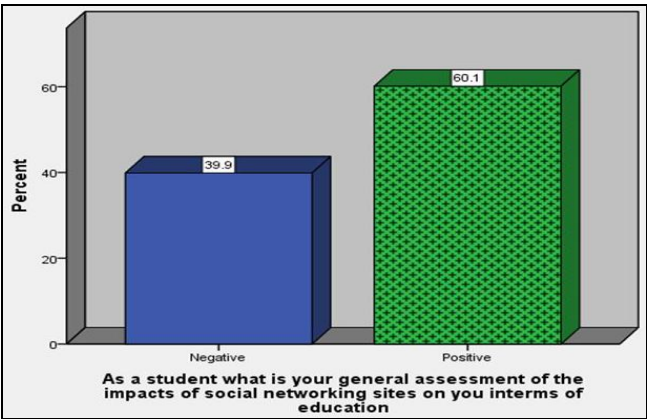


Fig 6: Impact of social media on education in terms of the negative or positive effects it has on the respondents as a student

Conclusion

The study concludes that social networking sites has been an important part of interpersonal communication and social interaction. The results show that these platforms serve as a means for users to keep in touch with friends, to communicate with persons who are far away, to meet new people, and to build relationships based on common interests. A large number of respondents also reported that social networking sites had enhanced their relationships with friends. However, the findings also emphasize some challenges of using social networking. Online interaction can lead to a decrease in face-to-face socialization, create distractions, and influence the time people spend with their friends and family. Therefore, social networking sites can be useful in interpersonal relationships if used properly, but excessive use may prevent direct social interaction. The study emphasizes the necessity of balancing online communication with face-to-face interaction for healthy interpersonal relationships.

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