



IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS) ON THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract

The usage of SNS for parents has become ubiquitous, either for entertainment or as a mode of communication. SNS has shown to have adverse effects on parent-child relationship, causing parental distraction, decreasing parental engagement with child/children and making a child more likely to be at risk for emotional injury. The present study tries to find out the impact of use of SNS on parenting methods and on the parent-child relationship. Questions were asked to 60 parents (both male and female) on their parenting patterns, their perspective on the use of SNS and its impact on their relationship with their children through a questionnaire. Likert scale is used for data analysis and is presented through graphs, tables and charts. Both Qualitative and Quantitative analyses of the study showed that frequent involvement on screen increases a gap between parents and children. Excessive use of SNS is leading to distracted parenting.

Keywords: Impact, Parent-child Relationship, Parenting, Social Networking Sites.

Introduction

The first and the principle environment of a child is provided by the family that influences a lot of factors affecting the development of a child (Fatimah, 2006). Family plays a major role in shaping the overall behavior of a child. The digital world is completely dominated by the new modes of communication that have reduced the face to face communication with family members and friends. Social networking sites or SNS is such a new form of communication having an impact on family relationships, on youth, children and most importantly on the parent-child relationship that forms the personality of an individual. Lingyun Luo's (2001) observes that the relationship between parent and child is an extremely essential factor of personality development and critical to the formation of the social skills of a child from infancy to adolescence.

Similar is the opinion of Leung and Lee (2005) who believes that over involvement with internet is diminishing the leisure time of family and individual keeping them “plugged in” resulting into less face-to-face interactions. This leads to less happiness and less empowerment by the individual that in turn affect relationships in their lives and also the quality of life with their children. The study conducted by Leung and Lee (2005) found that the use of the internet is negatively related to life’s quality. An increased usage of social networking sites leads to a world where an individual is always somewhere else and not in the present physical world. He/she is more connected to a world that is more appealing. The person is always distracted from social and physical presence (Wallis 2010, p. 11). The above studies indicate that usage of SNS in front of children results into distracted parenting and affects the child-parent relationship. Scott (2014) found that adults with children use social media more than adults without children. The increased incidences of behavioural issues such as tantrums, separation anxiety, and indiscipline are the consequence of inattention by the parents towards their children.

The addiction of SNS, especially Facebook is becoming another addiction disorder after addiction of drugs and alcohol. This internet addiction leads to sinking in a virtual life making an individual forget about the physical world. In a survey of a thousand people on the addiction of a social media across the USA it was found that 56% of the users check their facebook account at least once a day and 29% of them could stay only a few hours away from it. The study mentioned that people under the age of 25 lose sleep time only to supervise their friend’s posts (Das and Sahoo, 2011).

Pew Research Center (2015) stated that usage of social media was absent in the previous decades, therefore, impact on parenting or parent-child relationship is a new phenomenon. The foremost theory related to research study on social media and parental attachment with their children is known as attachment theory. The theory is coined by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. The opinion of Bowlby was that “giving time and attention to children means sacrificing interests and activities” (Bowlby, 2005, p. 2). The digital age parents are unaware of the level of attention children need to grow. This group of new parents is dependent on social media to communicate with family members. They feel they are sacrificing their time and social circle for their children. This gives rise to a conflict between the time needed to raise a child and the time younger parents give to their digital

world ultimately affecting the quality time between a child and the parents. Attachment is an important determinant in parent and child relationships and happiness. Bowlby explains that a child's attachment is "activated especially by pain, fatigue, and anything frightening, or also by the mother being or appearing to be inaccessible" (2005, p. 3). Children can notice when their parents have conflicting demands. They can analyse that their parents are unable to give attention to the child's pressing needs and their focus is distracting. Children who observe their parents such behavior modify their natural love and affection towards the parents and they in future restrict themselves for sharing their needs and expectations with the parents. This affects the natural relationship between the parent and the children.

Threat to the Parent-Child Relationship

In this century, cheap availability of smart phones and easy access to internet is more of a challenge for maintaining family relations. More often the screen habits of children and adolescents are studied but there is another factor that affects a child's behavior is parent's digital life. The unlimited use of mobile phones in general and SNS in particular is a threat not only to the physical health of both the parent and the child but is also a threat to the emotional bondage between the two.

Parents and children no longer converse face to face rather text each other, even when they are within the same house or a short distance away. (Blake & Wrothen, 2012). This absence of face to face interaction and looking into eyes conversation aggrandize the distance between parents and children resulting into deviant attitude of children towards their parents. Golden (2015) has stated that "while parents generally report that they are only on their mobile devices for a few seconds at a time, video evidence shows that they can be absorbed for upwards of 3 minutes at a stretch". The concept and meaning of 'family time' has changed after the intervention of SNS into the familial environment. The introduction of internet/SNS into the household has the potential to change the quality of family's relationships (Mesch & Talmud, 2006).

Objectives

The major purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of using social networking sites and its impact on parent-child relationship.

1. To examine the impact of use of SNS on parenting methods.
2. To analyse parents awareness on the impact of use of SNS on their interaction with the child.

3. To analyse the influence of SNS on the quality time spent between parents and children.
4. To examine the time spend by parents on SNS and its relation with their parenting responsibility.

Material and Methods

Area of Study: The area of the present study is Dehradun. Dehradun is capital of Uttarakhand, the 27th state of India located in the northern Himalayas. The state has 1,01,16,752 population as per the Census 2011 consisting of 51,54,178(50.94%) males and 49,62,574(49.05%) females. The total population of Dehradun is 1,696,694. It is a newly emerging city known popularly for its school education and natural beauty.

Population of the study: The population of the present study was the males and females in Dehradun between 18 to 50 years of age. The target population was parents having child/ children. Parents not having children were excluded from the study since the study analyses the usage of SNS and its impact on parent-child relationship.

Sample of the study and Sampling Method: The sample of the study consists of 60 parents, both male and female having children. 39 males and 21 females who use SNS were the part of the sample. Working, non-working, literate, illiterate and other factors were neglected to consider the sample size. Parents using SNS and having kids were selected purposely for the study. Purposive random sampling method was selected for the study. Parents were selected purposively for the study.

Data collection: Primary and secondary data was selected for data collection. A questionnaire was prepared with structured and unstructured questions. Questionnaire included questions based on the socio-economic profile of the respondents, their screen habits and its impact on their relationship with their children. Descriptive research design method is used to study the impact on SNS on parent-child relationship. For secondary data government reports, magazines, newspaper articles, journals, research papers, books, surveys and studies were studied.

Data analysis: The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4- agree, 5- strongly agree). The questionnaire was divided into two parts; one consisting of the socio-economic profile and the other consisting of their perspective on their screen usage and its impact on parenting pattern. The score obtained

was used to prepare charts, tables and graphs to understand the result clearly. The data was analysed with descriptive analysis covering the internet usage, parenting pattern and parent-child relationship.

Result

The information provided by the respondents regarding the impact of usage of SNS on parent-child relationship is represented through charts, graphs and tables. The responses are divided into five categories with number of responses and the percentage of the same. Responses range from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

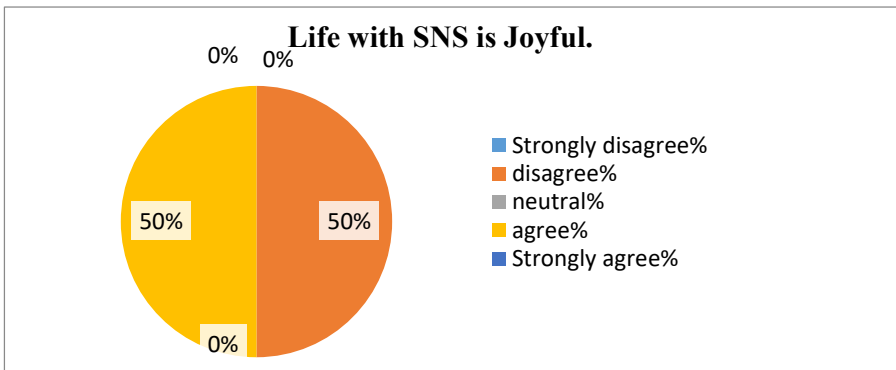


Figure 1

(Source: own computed data)

Figure 1 represents the opinion of respondents on the role of SNS in their lives. Fifty per cent of the respondents said that they find SNS as an important part of their life and it brings happiness to them. Fifty per cent of the respondent found to be opposing the statement by

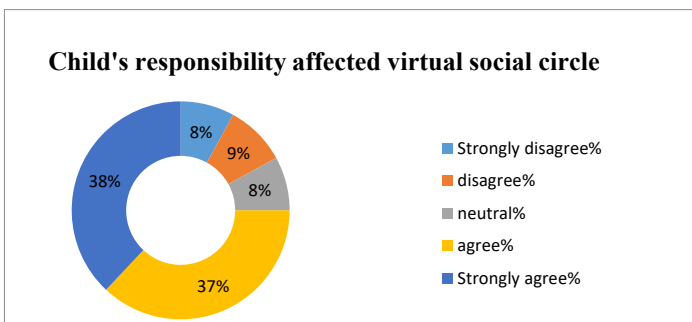
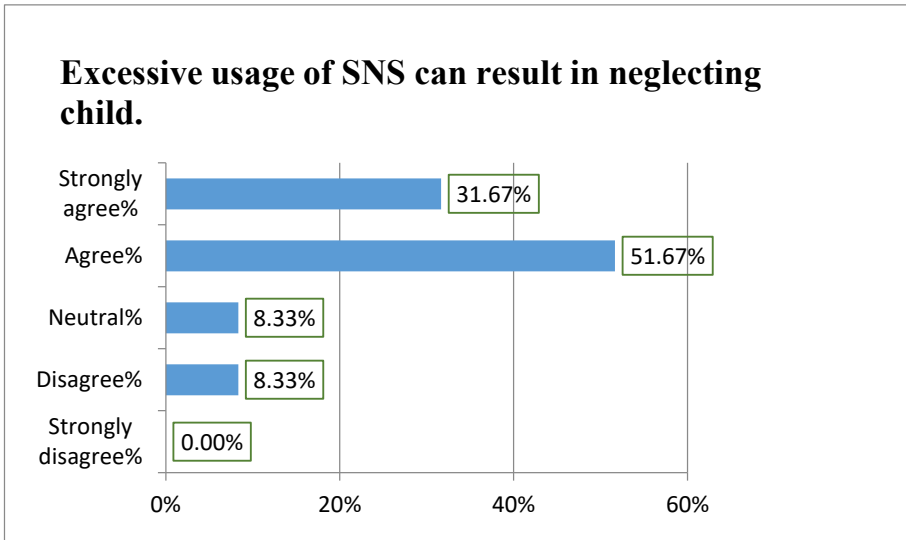


Figure 2

(Source: own computed data)

disagreeing with it. They were of the opinion that SNS is not useful for them and they do not think it bring happiness to their lives. None of the respondents strongly disagreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 2 indicates the impact on the digital circle of parents after having children. The responses shows that most of the parents that is thirty eight per cent strongly agreed that the responsibility of having a child has immensely affected their virtual social circle they had before having kids, followed by thirty seven percent parents who agreed that child’s responsibility reduced their connection with digital media. Nine per cent parents disagreed and mentioned that they feel no connection in child’s responsibility and their virtual social circle. Eight percent respondents strongly disagreed with it and similar percent of parents were found to be neutral with the relation between child’s responsibility and their digital circle.



Graph 1

(Source: own computed data)

Graph 1 shows that using SNS for hours may result in neglecting the kids. Most of the respondents (fifty two per cent) agreed that excessive usage can lead to neglecting child/children, thirty two per cent parents strongly agreed that the child feels neglected when parents are excessively involved with SNS. Where similar percent of parents were found to be neutral and disagreed that using SNS leads to neglecting children, none of the parents strongly disagreed with it. It can be found

that parents agree that their excessive involvement with SNS can result in a feeling of hidden sadness among the kids.

Table 1: Cross Tabulation: Excessive use of internet/SNS leads to distracted parenting and time spend on SNS/internet in hours

			Time spend on SNS/internet in hours				Total
			1 to 3 3 to 5	5 to 7	Frequently		
Excessive use of internet/SNS leads to distracted parenting	Strongly Disagree	Count	0	0	0	0	0
		%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Disagree	Count	1	1	2	1	5
		%	20%	20%	40%	20%	100.0%
	Neutral	Count	2	1	1	1	5
		%	40%	20%	20%	20%	100.0%
	Agree	Count	5	6	5	8	24
		%	20.83%	25%	20.83%	33.3%	100.0%
	Strongly Agree	Count	7	8	6	5	26
		%	26.9%	30.7%	23.07%	19.23%	100.0%
Total	Count	15	16	14	15	60	
%	25%	26.6%	23.3%	25%	100.0%		

(Source: own computed data)

Table 1 depicts the number of hours spend on SNS by the parents and their response on the impact of excessive usage of SNS. When asked whether excessive usage of SNS leads to distracted parenting, none of the parents strongly disagreed with it. Out of fifteen parents who spend one to three hours on SNS, one respondent disagreed, two were neutral, five respondents agreed, seven strongly agreed. Out of sixteen respondents who use SNS for three to five hours, one disagreed, one was neutral, six agreed and eight strongly agreed. There were fourteen respondents who use SNS for five to seven hours daily. Among this two disagreed, one was neutral, five agreed and six strongly agreed. Fifteen respondents said that they frequently use SNS in a day. Though they frequently use SNS but still feel that excessive usage can result in distracted parenting. Eight out of fifteen agreed, five strongly agreed.

Table 2 indicates the age of the respondents and their opinion on the impact of SNS on the behavior of the children. None of the parents were found in the age group of eighteen to twenty four. Parents were above twenty four years of age. Out of eleven parents in the age group of twenty four to twenty eight, there were nine respondents who agreed that parent’s excessive usage of SNS leads to behavioural problems

Table 2: Cross Tabulation: Parent's addiction to these sites causes behavioural problem in children and age of the respondents

		18 to 24 24 to 28	Age of the respondents				Total	
			28 to 32	32 to 36	Above 36			
Parent's addiction to these sites causes behavioural problem in children	Strongly Disagree	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0
		%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Disagree	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0
		%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Neutral	Count	0	1	1	1	2	5
		%	0.0%	20%	20%	20%	40%	100.0%
	Agree	Count	0	9	11	9	12	41
		%	0.0%	21.9%	26.8%	21.9%	29.2%	100.0%
	Strongly Agree	Count	0	1	2	4	7	14
		%	0.0%	7.14	14.2%	28.5%	50%	100.0%
Total	Count	0	11	14	14	21	60	
%	0.0%	18.33	23.33	23.33	35	100.0%		

(Source: own computed data)

among the kids. They mentioned that they feel the children gets irritated when they see their parents on phone. The kids start ignoring the parents also. One parent strongly agreed and one respondent was neutral on the statement. Fourteen parents were in the age group of twenty eight to thirty two. Out of fourteen respondents eleven agreed to the statement, one was neutral and two strongly agreed to it. Similar numbers of respondents were in the age group of thirty two to thirty six, out of these fourteen respondents, nine agreed, four strongly agreed and one was neutral with the statement. Most of the respondents were above thirty six years of age. Twenty one respondents were found to be above thirty six years of age. Out of these twenty one respondents, twelve agreed to the statement, seven disagreed and two were found to be neutral with the statement.

Table 3 indicates the sex of the respondents in the study. There were thirty nine male respondents and twenty one female respondents. Out of thirty nine males, two had neutral opinion regarding the statement whereas there were no female neutral on the statement. Twenty three males agreed with it and fourteen males strongly agreed with the statement. The number of females was twenty one and out of these twenty one females, twelve agreed and nine strongly agreed. There

Table 3. Cross Tabulation: Sex of the respondents and using phone/internet in front of kids restricts interaction between parents and children.

	Male Female	<u>Sex of the respondents</u>			Total	
Using phone/internet in front of kids restricts interaction with each other.	Strongly Disagree	Count	0	0	0	
		%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
	Disagree	Count	0	0	0	
		%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
	Neutral	Count	2	0	2	
		%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
	Agree	Count	23	12	35	
		%	65.7%	34.28%	100.0%	
	Strongly Agree	Count	14	9	23	
		%	60.86%	39.13%	100.0%	
	Total		Count	39	21	60
	%		65%	35%	100.0%	

(Source: own computed data)

were no male or female found to be disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Conclusion

The present study is conducted to examine the impact of using SNS on the parent-child relationship. For this purpose of the study different types of social networking sites’ users and the pattern of relationship they have with their children were examined. Their opinions regarding the use of SNS were analysed by asking related questions. Parent- child relationship is measured through the respondent’s spending amount of time on SNS and their opinion on the excessive use of internet leading to distracted parenting. A major finding of the study indicates that parents who use their phone frequently agreed that excessive use of SNS leads to distracted parenting. A large number of parents mentioned that their responsibility towards their children affect their virtual social circle. There was an equal opinion on the importance of SNS on the life of the parents. Younger parents were less in number to agree that children get behavioural problems because of parent’s screen habits but parents of adolescents agreed that parent’s addiction

to these sites causes behavioural problem among the children. Parents found to be agreeing that their interaction with their kids have declined due to the intervention of SNS in their lives. Despite agreeing with the behavioural issues of the kids, their ignorant attitude, and neglecting some responsibilities accidentally, parents were found to be active on SNS. There were a good number of respondents who agreed to distraction that arises between the parent-child relationships but they frequently use SNS/internet in front of the kids.

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