



Online Social Networks and Their Influence

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.2022.3.6.53>

ABSTRACT:

Individual identities can be shaped not only offline but also online, according to studies. However, students' online identities in higher education institutions are complicated. Academics are interested in using social media to improve their professional identity and reputation, according to empirical research. The current research looked at the impact of online social capital and social networking on graduate students' professional identity formation. The research hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling. A total of 298 graduate students from one of Iran's top public universities and three private higher education institutions were included in the study. The findings revealed that using online social capital as a mediator, online social networks in higher education environments can influence the creation of students' professional identities.

The purpose of this study is to see how social networking affects college students. The research incorporates a variety of approaches to reach this goal, including descriptive/interpretive literature reviews and earlier studies conducted by academics and industrial institutions. It also makes use of polls conducted among university students. In order to investigate the impact of social networking on college students, a questionnaire was issued to 179 students from various universities and higher education institutes around the Sultanate of Oman.

INTRODUCTION:

The growth in the usage of social networking by college students is one of the most contentious issues now being debated. Students' everyday habits have become ingrained with the use of social networking sites. They spend a lot of time on various social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Academia, and MySpace.

These rapid developments in the usage of social networking via cellphones, on the other hand, are having a significant impact on college students. Some of them are positive, such as the development of key communication skills and the increased socialisation of students online. Furthermore, social networking broadens students' understanding and encourages them to participate in the creation and dissemination of information. Nonetheless, social media has been shown to have detrimental consequences, such as reducing school scores

Social networking can be defined in a variety of ways. One of the advantages of social media for teenagers and children is that it aids in socialisation and communication, particularly when it comes to shy behaviours. Users may stay in touch with friends and family, meet new people, and exchange experiences, images, and ideas, all of which are vital to children both online and offline. According to a Pew Research Center study, 58 percent of kids who use social media have had an online experience that made them feel closer to someone.

Teenagers and adolescents can also use social media to improve their creativity by developing and sharing artistic and musical undertakings, growing their ideas, establishing their individual identities, and learning respect, tolerance, and increasing conversation about global issues. Those who use social networks obviously gain from them on a social level.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Social networking can be defined in a variety of ways. It is defined as "the relationship that exists between a network of people" by Wang, Chen, and Liang (2011). Online social networks, according to Barkhuus and Tashiro (2010), allow people to converse and share their interests with others over long distances.

"In comparison to "social networking sites are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and "social networking sites are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other," "social media represents a revolutionary new trend that should be of interest to companies operating in the online space - or"Social networking sites are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and so on"; "social networking sites are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and so on";, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mailsthat is, social media is used to disseminate information to a large number of people, ensuring that everyone has access to it. Social networking sites, on the other hand, deliver information to a group of people who have similar interests. Overall, the term'social media' encompasses a broader range of activities than'social networking sites.'

Smartphones nowadays include a number of functions that are comparable to those found in a typical computer. In addition, they may engage kids in significantly more dynamic ways than a laptop or tablet computer (Hingorani & Woodard, 2012). According to a research by Cochrane and Bateman (2010), there are over four billion mobile phone users worldwide, but only roughly 800 million computer users. In contrast, another study indicated that 68 percent of students prefer to check their social networking accounts on a laptop, while 20 percent prefer to use their smartphones, and only 12 percent prefer to use a desktop computer. According to Stollak et al., nine out of ten college students using smartphones use the device to access the internet, increasing their ability to get apps.

Students have many obstacles when utilising social networking sites, such as deciding whether or not to trust the information they obtain and how to choose among the various sources of information supplied by these sites. "The readiness of a party to be vulnerable to the activities of another party based on the anticipation that the other will execute a particular activity significant to the user, independent of their ability to monitor or control that other party," Dwyer and colleagues write. People frequently establish a social network based on the degree of ties and trust between members, according to Llicardi et al. and Dwyer et al. As a result, trust is a critical component of successful online interactions.

Dwyer et al. create a theoretical model with three independent variables: internet privacy concerns, social networking site trust, and social networking site trust in other members. They link these independent variables to two outcomes: sharing knowledge and forming new relationships. It is widely believed that when college students find an online service that values their privacy, they will trust it and feel at ease interacting with other users. Students will share their information with others in these settings, which will foster the building of new relationships. Trusting a certain source of information will, on average, make 'choice' issues easier. As a result, students will look for a reputable website to use.

Receiving too much information can lead to a situation known as "information overload." To filter all of this information, students must develop certain skills. There is a scarcity of literature on filtering procedures. According to Llicardi et al., if students employ the word-of-mouth method to filter the enormous number of information sources they get, online social networks can be a filtering strategy in and of themselves. However, according to this study, 64% of college students choose the first source on their search list, 35% utilise authentic/well-known sites, and only 1% use alternative methods to filter the information they obtain.

As previously stated, college students' use of smartphones to access social networking sites has both beneficial and bad consequences. According to Wang et al., social networking can bring both benefits and challenges to people who are similar, and it can have both bad and beneficial effects on students. The positive benefits include: 1) encouraging student participation in creating and sharing material, 2) asking for academic aid and support, and 3) giving a useful approach to relieve student strain. "Social networking sites are virtual study halls for a connected generation," he adds. However, the first disadvantage is that social networking use is linked to lower grades among college students. Furthermore, social networking sites allow students to procrastinate when it comes to doing their schoolwork. Two-thirds of students said they use social media in class, for studying, and to complete homework. Students may become more distracted as a result of this multitasking. According to a poll done by Wang et al., 57 percent of 102 students believe that using social networking sites reduces their productivity. Furthermore, students may reveal homework questions or exchange course materials, both of which are considered academic dishonesty.

In summary, college students use social networking sites for a number of purposes to meet their daily requirements. Smartphone access to internet networks has become increasingly popular among college students, despite the fact that there are numerous concerns associated with this trend, including issues of trust, selection, and filtering. Social networking platforms, of course, have a beneficial and harmful impact on students. All of these concepts are explored in greater depth in this study.

3. THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

- ***On personal relationships:***

One of the consequences of social media is that it encourages people to develop and appreciate false friendships above real ones. On social media, the term "friend" lacks the intimacy associated with traditional friendships, in which people actually know each other, wish to communicate to each other, have an intimate bond, and frequently contact face to face.

- ***Impact on Politics:***

Every politician worth his salt needs to get on board with social media. This is due to the fact that social media has played a significant role in numerous elections throughout the world, including those in the United States, Iran, and India. They've also used to bring people together for a common cause, inspiring mass movements and political upheaval in a variety of countries.

- ***Impact on Business:***

Social media is being used by internet aware businesses to advertise their products, establish client loyalty, and perform a variety of other activities. Customers' interactions and input assist organisations in better understanding the market and fine-tuning their products and strategy. Many businesses hold contests and award prizes to encourage customers to visit their social media pages more frequently. Social media presence is a cheap and effective way to improve brand image and popularity when compared to television commercials and other expensive kinds of marketing.

Addiction is one of the harmful effects of social media or networks. Spending excessive hours on social media sites might cause one's focus and attention to be diverted from their primary task. It decreases people's motivation, particularly among youths and students. Instead of obtaining the practical knowledge and expertise of everyday life, they rely heavily on technology and the internet.

These social networking sites can have a significant impact on children if they are permitted to use them. The reason for this is that people occasionally post photographs on social media that involve violence or sex, which can negatively impact the behaviour of children and teenagers. It has a negative impact on society since these children and teenagers engage in criminal activities.

Another disadvantage of social media is that users give far too much information, which might put them in danger. Your personal information may be exposed on social media sites even if your security settings are tight.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The impact of social networking sites on college students is investigated using a questionnaire in this study. The study's formal goal is to provide answers to the following questions.:

1. What is the primary goal of using online social networking while in college?
2. Does using cellphones for social networking cause information overload to the point where processing it becomes nearly impossible?
3. Which social media platform is seen as more reliable by college students? Why?
4. How do students sort through the data they find on social media sites?
5. What impact does social networking via cellphones have on college/university students (both positive and negative)?

A web-based survey of college students from various universities and higher education institutes in Oman was used to answer the above questions and meet the research objectives. Using the 'snowballing' approach, the survey was sent by email. "How much time do you spend social networking on your smartphone every day?" for example. and "When utilising social networking on your smartphone, with whom do you communicate the most?"

5. CONCLUSIONS:

Adolescence is a period for spreading wings and taking that first cautious step out into the world, and parents and caregivers must be involved. In the case of social networking, this means parents becoming educated about the benefits and drawbacks of social networking, as well as parents joining social networking sites themselves, not to hover, but to be aware of their adolescent children's activities. Parents must be aware of and manage their children's privacy settings and internet profiles. Open conversations regarding social network protocols and etiquette would help establish. Digital citizenship on a global scale and healthy conduct.

The goal of this study was to look into the impact of using cellphones to visit social networking sites on college students. The majority of students are members of some form of social networking site, according to one of the study's most notable findings. The majority of them use social media for research, amusement, and getting more course-related resources.

When questioned with whom they communicate the most on social networking sites, however, 71 percent indicated it was with friends. This could be because social networking sites are well-known for being effective communication tools, but students also stated that they utilised them to contact with other students, faculty members, and subject-matter experts on occasion.

Many of the students polled stated that utilising social media can lead to knowledge overload, making it more disruptive than helpful. They didn't seem to have any obvious processes for filtering data, other than depending on search engines and visiting well-known websites. Finally, the respondents agreed on a list of good social network effects as well as a smaller list of negative effects..

Due to time constraints, the findings of this study have some limitations that could be the subject of a future study. To begin with, it was conducted in only one nation (Oman) with a tiny sample size. As a result, the researchers believe it would be a good idea to expand the study to include additional nations and investigate the differences between them in terms of this occurrence. Second, the study did not focus on the process of filtering information acquired from social networking. Another study focusing on this issue and finding a solution that is practical to execute would be really valuable..

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