

## **Social Media, Interpersonal Relations and Sociability: A Study of College Students in Guwahati, Assam**

**Dipankar Mazumder**

Post Graduate

Dept. of Sociology and Social Anthropology

Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati

### **Abstract**

In the contemporary times we are witnessing a growing usage of social media. It is becoming an effective tool in the sphere of communication. Social media are computer-mediated interactive technologies that enable people to share content and other modes of expression across network communities. The main role that social media play is that it enhances communication, however, excessive use of the same is harmful as many a time we see cases where youth's interpersonal relations get impacted by media. This paper focuses on the effect of social media on youth, especially students where the impact of social media usage, their personal and interpersonal relations is studied.

**Keywords:** Social-media, Communication, Youth, Interpersonal Relations, Impacted

### **Introduction**

Social media has become an integral part of all of our lives. Generally, it is used for getting in touch alongside colleagues, relatives, families and acquaintances, keep along with present ongoing affairs, as well as, most critically above all, amuse ourselves. Social networking use was very poor few years ago, and most of us have no idea what it was. All of this suggests that the past of social networking is short but swift, and learning it will help us to grasp how much and how rapidly the environment has shifted. Although, before we get through the evolution regarding growth of internet networking platforms, individually one must begin with the meaning of whatsoever social media is. Quick Google searches for social media definition will provides multitude of results, many of which, in some manner, represent the same meaning. A variety of online correspondence methods people make use of and forms of contact via the internet that people make use of to establish relations, associations and assemblages in order to divulge and swap content, aims, objectives, expertise, skills, comments, and other material, such as images and videos, are referred to as social media (Jones, 2015). Since social networking requires online networking, its existence cannot begin

until the internet's development and mass acceptance. User-generated content is vital to social media's growth. We should understand social networking as a network that involves chat applications like WhatsApp, profile-based sites like Facebook and Instagram, video portals like YouTube, and so on. Social media services are usually accessed through smartphones, laptops and desktops. When communication takes place through these platforms, it creates a web of social networking among the users where a user joins a social network platform and begin connecting - or *networking* - with other users. Through this usage of social media, users are able to develop an online community where individual, communities and organizations are able to share, discuss and participate in various issues creating a web of social networking and worldwide interconnectedness. It has been an integral part of people's everyday lives.

Communication and relations are the fundamental requirements of our life. We interact to fulfil our mutual desires or to sustain our collective quality of life needs and to sustain our social well-being. Many that struggle to connect or that do not talk show low interpersonal growth, untimely death, a loss of identification, and poor levels of happiness (Turnbull, 2010). Social interactions, links, or associations among individuals or groups are referred to as interpersonal relationships. The level of intimacy in interpersonal partnerships varies. These relations can be seen in families, friendship, marriage relations, work, neighbourhoods, etc. On the other hand, the term sociability refers to quality of being sociable i.e., the quality of being friendly and spending more time or enjoying with other people. The definition of sociable is someone or a group of people who are friendly, welcoming and ready for activities. Such people are extroverts who are socially active. But it should be noted that more of something can be good, but too much of the same rarely is. The technological revolution that has been going on for the last couple of years has made new ways of interaction for people by creating different ways of communication, of which communication through social media is at the peak. But many a time we see that due to this increasing usage of social media for communication, it has actually resulted decline of the offline relationships. We came up with the idea of social media for the sake of interpersonal contact; however, we ended up sacrificing interpersonal communication in order to make way for social media (Beniwal, 2018). The traditional media, such as tv, news, radio, including newspapers, mostly facilitate one-way contact, while social media provides a medium for user engagement. Even with their uneasiness, those who consider it much more empowering and relaxed to communicate digitally rather than face-to-face benefit immensely from social media thereby helping to connect people with same interests. However, rather than putting us closer along, social networking has the potential to build space. Despite the fact that individuals are being more interactive or socially adept as a result of their utilization of social media, there is still a change in our contact styles. The trust in internet contact has resulted in a decrease in face-to-face engagement. Alienation is the most damaging regarding social media's detrimental effects on intimate relationships. Social technology, as found in one research Friends, Facebook, and Neighbours (Blow, 2010) leads to friendship reconditioning and social isolation. A high level of loneliness and distance between individuals is referred to as social

alienation. People prefer to expend fewer resources on their near surroundings so they focus much of their time on the virtual world. As a consequence, social relations deteriorate, and the desire to communicate and involve oneself in the relationship is lost, culminating in social isolation. The secret to a rich relationship is nonverbal communication. In the lack of it, signals are difficult to read with certainty, and the sense of a communication is elusive. As a consequence, the level of contact deteriorates, contributing to heightened emotional hostility.

Social media is changing our day-to-day life and the way we think as we are spending more time over it rather than other activities. We are getting used to these media platforms because of the content they provide thereby influencing us rapidly. Apart, we don't have to pay for the services they provide except for the internet data which makes it quick and easily accessible for everyone. It can be clearly seen that how these media contents are controlling our behaviors. Social media are sites where users are able to maintain their personal profile. Each member may manage one's account by approving or refusing invitations for being acquaintances from several other user groups. Members of social networking may sustain internet connections for study, research, interest groups, or recreation by extending one's community of contacts. If more individuals partake in social media, the issue of whether it is purely for fun gatherings or for academic success emerges.

Young people are the most frequent users on online communication networks, accounting for the bulk of their users. Thus, in this paper, the use of social media and its impact on personal development and interpersonal relations among college going youths of Guwahati will be discussed.

### **Research Methodology**

The goal of this research aimed at examining and addressing the impact with regard to social networking sites or media on teenagers especially those in colleges on the way they are using these medium and the consequences of that on their personal and interpersonal relation with family and friends. We live in the era of digitization and technology is growing and it is undeniably becoming a very important part of being human. With every passing day it is revolutionizing the way people communicate and socialize which inturn has negative and positive impacts. Thus, it becomes important to understand its impact especially among young people who are the most influenced population group by this media.

The data collection was primary conducted through both qualitative and quantitative techniques, however more emphasis was given on qualitative method, as it helped the researcher to ascertain on the social media utilization among the college going youngsters, as well as the affect that social media has on their interpersonal relationships and contact. Non-probability or purposive sampling was used to choose the subjects and they were chosen for their actions that were appropriate for the sample analysis. These individuals were selected based on a concept that was changed to match the current circumstances.

## **Findings and Analysis**

In this section the analysis and examination of the data is being presented by the researcher.

### **Social media utilization by youngsters**

The study finds that many of the uniformly chosen participants rely extensively on social media platforms and they are most often engaged with social media activities. It led the researcher to conclude that the usage of media platforms among the youth in Guwahati City is high. When participants were first questioned on how often do they utilize social media platforms, it was found that most of the respondents are often focused on the social and online media. While on the other hand few of the respondents indicated a minimal usage and lastly led by another section of the respondents who indicated a rare usage of social media. It was found that, social media, an internet-based networking service helps users to communicate among their peers and families as well as hold everyone updated via posting stories videos, including real-time programs and among other things. It is a useful way to communicate between acquaintances while still providing recreation. As found by the researcher social media is a public medium that allows us to share as well as engage with others. Information about individual thoughts, concepts, perspectives, images, clips, and other media may be exchanged. The study thus finds that the utilization of social media among youth were relatively higher in Guwahati city. Youngsters clearly favoured usage of digital media over other conventional media.

### **Preferred social media amongst youth**

According to the research findings, almost majority of the randomly selected respondents favoured Instagram as their default social networking platform. Instagram seems to be the most influential social media platform among the youth of Guwahati city. According to the results of the data collection and evaluation, Instagram was observed to be most favoured social media over any other social networking sites. On the other side another section suggested limited use of social media with YouTube being the most preferred, and only a few respondents showed a preference towards Facebook as the most appropriate. They stated that Instagram is used mainly for entertainment and to maintain their work profile and YouTube to help them learn new things. It was also reasoned that Instagram is less clutter and thus allows the users to be more in control of the content. It is a nice platform to showcase one's creativities, to start-up home business, etc. As such, it is an effective marketing tool while also helping one to pass the leisurely hours. Apart from that Instagram has a strong privacy setting and thus users feel safe accessing content. It is also less crowded and is also well organized for quick consumption of entertaining post and videos. YouTube is also utilized because it helps users in gaining knowledge about things which sometimes, they can't understand otherwise. It gives lots of information that can enhance our knowledge, know the world, people, subjects that are related to the studies and the places around us. It is also used

for academic purpose, to grab some primary knowledge of the particular subject and also for some personal choices as well. As per the results, Instagram seemed to be the most popular and influential social networking platform among the youngsters of Guwahati, followed by YouTube whereas Twitter and Facebook were least popular.

### **Social media's primary usage**

The results of the study indicates that almost majority of the randomly selected respondents stated communicating, entertainment and maintaining relationships are the primary reasons behind their usage of social media. The specifics and the results of the study and analysis is that the majority of the college going youngster that took part on the research are using social media mainly for establishing relationships, friendships and communicating with each other via messaging as well as posting. On the other side, another section of the participants were using social media for entertainment and recreational purposes. Following up, the rest few respondents of the research indicated towards keeping them updated with the ongoing trends and new vogue. Lastly, only a countable respondent stated work related and academic reasons behind using of social media. Social media are used as a substitute of face-to-face communication with direct messaging and greetings. For the individuals, to contact with people it is much easier for them to give a text on WhatsApp or Instagram rather making a call. The research analysis thus concluded that when many of the uniformly chosen college going youths of Guwahati were asked for specifics on their individual use social media, the most common response was to maintain friendship alongside communication and keeping in contact with friends. These were rated as very significant. While work and scholarly considerations trailed behind entertainment and socialization.

### **Is it true that online communication has limited face-to-face contact?**

According to the research findings, almost half of the randomly selected respondents responded that online communication and relations has resulted in deterioration of their offline or personal relationships. The specifics and the results of the study analysis found that around half of the college going youngster of Guwahati that took part in the research admitted and highly believe that social media and online communication has actually deteriorated their offline and personal relations. On the other side, another section of the research participants stated the other way round indicating no influence of social media on their offline and personal relations. Following up, the rest few respondents of this study indicated sometimes social media addiction can result in deterioration of interpersonal relationships. Lastly, a countable respondent stated social media impacts their offline relationships and bonding rarely. The research analysis concluded on a mixed response where half of the uniformly chosen college going youths of Guwahati agreed on social media impact on their offline relations, whereas another half did not agree to that. That being said, the researcher agreed rather than connecting people closer, social media may actually cause individuals to grow apart as there has been certain unavoidable change in our methods of

interaction, while at the same time, limited use and proper handling of social media would not impact individuals' offline relationships.

## Conclusion

The whole research looks into how college going youth of Guwahati city utilizes social media on a day-to-day basis as well as how these utilization of online media platforms impacts and affects their interpersonal contact abilities and relationships. For all of the advantages that social media platforms have to offer, there remain still a slew of disadvantages. Unwittingly, actively browsing social media habits has harmed individuals' ability to maintain as well as establish personal relationships to some extent while at the same time it has also helped in improving their already established offline relationships. By depending on online connections social media platforms have altered the ways we interact. It has drastically resulted in fewer face-to-face contacts. It is a method of communication as well as the extent of disclosure about private opinions and emotions to establish and sustain lasting relationships. Utilization of social media platforms have in a way improved online connections, while contradictorily, it has weakened our interpersonal and offline connections and interaction which becomes many of the key reasons that affect interpersonal relations. Nonverbal signs and feelings that are usually expressed through communication in general conversation are severely lacking on social media as contact takes place through text messaging. Thus, meaningful relationship intimacy can only be established as well as grow on the basis of regular contact. Growing utilization of media platforms is beneficial but everything must be done appropriately and in moderation as without it social media may become detrimental to society and on individual's personal and interpersonal relations. With the advent of social media platforms culture has reaped the advantages of online communication and connections. Given so many advantages from the digital environment this becomes essential for all individual towards being capable of sustaining positive relationships online as well as offline by effective contact. That being said, since text-based interaction lacks many signs when compared to face-to-face communication, this avoidance of face-to-face interactions can disrupt interpersonal relationships. This research aimed to pursue qualitative findings to uncover profound perspectives and reasoning's as in order to explain as well as comprehend the impact of prolonged internet interactions on interpersonal contact abilities and relationships. This report could be useful for more in-depth study of different aspects of connectivity, as well as for organizations who want to learn more about utilizing online interaction and maintaining as well as developing relationships.

## Works Cited

Britt, Milisaa. *Effects of Social Media use on Interpersonal relationship satisfaction*. North Western Oklahoma State University, page 1-14. 2017

Christense, S. P. *Social Media Use and Its Impact on Relationships and Emotion*. Brigham Young University, USA. page 1-73. 2018

Collin, P, K. Rahilly, I. Richardson and A. Third. *The benefits of social networking services*. University of Melbourne, Parkville-Australia, page 1-29. 2011

Farhan, A. A. N and P.A. Varghese. *Social Media Utilization among Youth*. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*. Journal of Mass Communication & Journalism, Shankaraghatta, India, page1-3. 2018

Tamir, D. I. and P.J. Mitchell. *Disclosing information about the self is intrinsically rewarding*. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Vol No. 109 (21). 2012

Trowbridge, J. *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research*. *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 81, No.6. page 1-3. 1976

Shabir, G., Y. Mahmood, G. Safdar and S.M. Gilani. *The Impact of Social Media on Youth: A Case Study of Bahawalpur City*. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*. Vol. 3(4) November 2014, page 1-17. 2014

Beniwal, Mansi. *Social Media and its impact on interpersonal relationships*. [https://jarvee.com/social-media-impact-interpersonal-relationships/\\_2018](https://jarvee.com/social-media-impact-interpersonal-relationships/_2018)