

UNDERSTANDING IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING ON PERSONAL LIFE USING GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

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Abstract: Information Technology (IT) has made a significant contribution with respect to communication; people can communicate to any part of the world with plethora of medium at their disposal. Today people can be seen active on social networking website at home, office, and public places etc through laptops or mobile phones. The objective of this study is to get acquainted with the reasons of excessive social networking, its effects on family life and its impact on traditional Indian values. This study encompasses four case studies and analyze them using grounded theory approach.

Keywords: Grounded Theory, Indian Values, Personal Life, Social Networking.

Introduction: This is the age of technology. In the last few years, technology has made differences in our lifestyle, in terms of education, ways of communication, work life balance and modes of entertainment among others. What are those special ingredients that have mixed with our lives to make it so convenient? There are many, but probably the biggest contributor is the tremendous growth and subsequent application of Information Technology (IT) in our day to day lives. Specifically, talking about communication, we have come a long way from the time when it used to take weeks or even months for a long distance communication to take place. Nowadays, people can communicate to any part of the world with plethora of medium at their disposal. The most recent trend has been to use online social networking to stay connected with a set of people. Teenagers to older people can be seen communicating with near and dear once anytime they want. Thanks to the social networking websites which are one of the reasons why world is today metaphorically called a Global Village. These websites not only gratify our emotional needs but also caters to our entertainment needs.

Use of social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter has become very prevalent in the society. Four major needs that derive people to participate in Facebook group activities are socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information. However these needs vary depending on demographics of the user [1]. A study on college students found that students spend a lot of time just in observing Facebook contents rather than posting something [2]. It was also found that Facebook was used largely to interact with the friends with whom offline relationship was already established.

People in our family, work-place and public places can be seen using different types of devices to keep them active on these social networking websites. The internet-enabled smart phone with Facebook can cause addiction similar to cigarettes and Irish coffee

[3]. If the addiction is so strong, it will be interesting to know the impact of craving for social networking website on the family life of a working person who stays constantly active on these websites.

Along this the growing research on stress and depression is indicative of the problems faced in the society. Stress is defined as a “psychological reaction to some sort of an imbalance between a person and the environment” [4]. Stress caused by the use of the technology is called technostress. It is defined as “a modern disease of adaptation caused by an inability to cope with new computer technologies in a healthy manner” [5].

Research has found that significant level of depression is associated with the internet addiction [6]. Similar addiction for social networking can cause the person to check the updates like new tweets, new status messages, new shared videos etc. put up by other people on Facebook. Hence, we would like to know how the phenomenon such as IT induced stress, overload, multitasking and addiction be attributed to the use of social networking.

Research methodology: The objective of this research is to generate a descriptive theory of the impact of excessive use of social networking websites on the individuals and their personal lives using following procedure of grounded theory [7], [8]:

1. Collecting and analyzing data simultaneously using analytic process called coding,
2. Creating concepts,
3. Developing categories and relating them to the created concepts,
4. Theoretical sampling,
5. Constant comparison of additional information with established categories until not more information can be found,
6. Writing theoretical memos.

Coding:

The grounded theory approach uses the interviews, observation, documents, videotapes etc. as the sources of data collection like other qualitative

research techniques. Data from these sources are subjected to coding while using this approach [9]. Data is analyzed using three types of coding: open, selective and theoretical. In open coding, the qualitative information or the information obtained from secondary sources is analyzed line by line or paragraph by paragraph and the codes are attached to it by being open to what data is trying to convey. In selective coding, the open codes are grouped into larger categories on the basis of key categories that shape the new theory. In theoretical coding, the categories are examined for the existence of any interrelationships between them. When these categories are related to each other and the relationships between them are considered, a new theory is built. This is the final step of building a theory using grounded theory approach [10].

In this study, open coding identifies the categories of consequences of overuse of the social networking websites. After open and selective coding, theoretical coding was done to integrate the categories to build a theory.

Families Selection for Data Collection: In this study, the phenomenon of interest is the impact of over usage of social networking websites on Indian individuals and their families. This study tries to find out how the overuse of social networking websites at home can go against traditional Indian family values where people live with each other and love to spend a lot of time together [11]. Indians lay emphasis on their traditional values like peaceful co-existence, respect to elders and strong family ties. In a study on the aspects of individualism and collectivism across the cultures, India scores 48 on the scale of individualism which clearly indicates that India is a collectivist society [12]. In such societies, an individual takes

action after taking the opinion of his family members, neighbors and colleagues etc. Even in work environment, the employer and employee relationship is expected to be relatively less professional and rather somewhat familial. According to the Indian worldview, a student should be persistent to make efforts to achieve goals and focused. He should not pay attention to how one looks, desire, anger etc. Similarly, for a householder the focus should be family and community responsibilities [13].

For this study the data was collected from those Indian families where one working member was seen quite active on social networking websites. Researcher observed activities in two such families for full days and interviewed the members of those families. One was the case of joint family while other was a nuclear family case. The researcher also studied a single student staying in the hostel as a third case. In the fourth case, the researcher collected the data from a person who expressed his feelings about how he felt when he stopped social networking for experimental basis. Researcher stopped data collection after this because no new conceptualizations were emerging. This process is called theoretical sampling in grounded theory approach.

Data Collection and Analysis:

Case 1 This is the case of a typical Indian joint family where Divya lives with her husband, kid, father-in-law and mother-in-law. Divya is quite active in social networking and works in a multi-national company with her husband as a software engineer. Table I shows the open coded excerpts from the interview and selective coding is shown in table II:

Family Member	Excerpts	Open Coding
Husband	Divya spends upwards of 3-4 hours of social networking each day. That includes Facebook, chatting on Google etc.	daily social networking
	When I come home from my office, most of my time goes with the kid. I and Divya mostly end up spending weekends together and for periods when I take care of the kid alone, she does social networking.	ignoring kid for social networking
	Though we spend time together on weekends but still not as much as I want.	less time with husband on weekends
	On weekdays, we don't spend more than 1-2 hours together.	less time with husband on weekdays
	When no one else is around, the kid demands undivided attention. If she does too much social networking at that time, he feels neglected.	ignoring kid for social networking

Mother-in-law	I see her most of the time sitting in front of computer. She likes to do social networking, but we don't get much time to talk together even when she is at home.	less time to talk with mother-in-law
	I sometimes feel that this generation doesn't go to their relatives to meet and are not concerned about the people around them as much as our generation did.	unconcerned about others
	Divya doesn't stop using Facebook even while she is teaching the kid.	teaching and networking simultaneously
Divya	I do social networking to connect with family, school friends and college friends whom I cannot meet often.	connect with friends
	I have 200 plus friends and not everyone update their status at same time so I prefer to see my Facebook account every few hours to keep the tab.	frequent networking to know about friends
	That is my interest to discuss new ideas with colleagues and friends on online chat. And I feel stressed when I see these people offline. This makes me think why they are not online.	stress when friends are offline
	I keep doing my daily chores in parallel with social networking. The mind races against the ticker in the Facebook but shutting down Facebook does not come to my mind	daily chores with social networking

Table II: Selective Coding for Case 1	
Selective Codes	Open Codes
Less attention towards family	ignoring kid for social networking, less time with husband on weekends, less time with husband on weekdays, less time to talk with mother-in-law, unconcerned about others
Multitasking	teaching and networking simultaneously, daily chores with social networking
Stress	stress when friends are offline
Social Connection	connect with friends
Addiction	daily social networking, frequent networking to know about friends

Case 2 This is the case of a nuclear family where Vishal lives with his wife. Vishal is quite active on social networking and is a bank employee. Interview

excerpts are shown in the table III and selective coding is done in table IV.

Table III: Open Coded Excerpts for Case 2		
Family Member	Excerpts	Open Coding
Wife	When my husband gets up in the morning, the first thing he does is to start laptop and login to twitter and Facebook.	morning social networking
	Even when we commute from one place to other for e.g. in metro train, he starts doing social networking in his mobile.	social networking while traveling
	Sometimes when I get up in night, I see him using social networking sites.	social networking at night
	When he comes from office and I raise any demand like going for a walk, he says he will fulfill my demand after relaxing and starts using Internet.	social network for relaxing
	I feel that we are not spending quality time with each other because of social networking.	less time with wife
Vishal	I feel social networking websites are a source of entertainment, stress buster and a mode of relaxation.	relaxation source
	I get a lot of information by social networking especially with twitter, although I don't know if it will be useful for me in future.	gaining lot of information
	I don't do social networking to post something, but to read others' updates.	know about others
	Sometimes I keep on reading without realizing how much time I have spent on social networking	no track of time

Table IV: Selective Coding for Case 2	
Selective Codes	Open Codes
Less attention towards family	less time with wife
Social Connection	know about others
Addiction	morning social networking, social networking while traveling, social networking at night, no track of time
Entertainment source	social network for relaxing, relaxation source
Information overload	gaining lot of irrelevant information

Case 3 This is the case of a 25 year old single girl staying in a hostel to pursue higher studies. This girl is very active on Facebook and is seen daily putting status update and pictures many a times. Excerpts from the interview with open coding are presented in the table V and selective coding is done in table VI:

Excerpts	Open Coding
Social networking is a time pass activity for me.	time-pass
Facebook is a subtle medium for me to show off my activities to the friends connected with me.	show off activities
I feel disappointment when through social networking I see other people roaming around the world or achieving something that I am not able to.	disappointment seeing others
When I go home, I spend my time on social networking website instead of parents. I know this but I cannot resist sometime.	less time spent with parents
I keep on posting my new photos on Facebook. I feel bad when people don't like it. Then I re-post it.	re-posting when not liked
I love to self-promote my feelings on Facebook. This gives me more attention among my friends. For e.g.: I kept posting number of minutes countdown on my birthday eve!	birthday countdown on Facebook

Selective Codes	Open Codes
Less attention towards family	less time spent with parents
Stress	disappointment seeing others
Addiction	re-posting when not liked
Entertainment source	time-pass
Self-promotion	show off activities, birthday countdown on Facebook

Case 4 This is the case of a person who used to be very active on social networking website. But later on he left it on realizing that he wastes a lot of time on social networking which ultimately leaves him unproductive towards his work. Table VII shows the open coded excerpts from the interview and selective coding is shown in table VIII:

Excerpts	Open Coding
I agree that I got a healthy dose of information through social networking. However at the end of the day I accumulate a lot of garbage in my mind. Keeping track of information of so many people made me feel carrying a lot of load.	a lot of information
I like to pay attention to only one activity at a time. But due to side by side social networking I used to indulge in multitasking which was the reason why I was not performing my best.	inattentive to one activity
When I left Facebook, the very next day I thought about the number of likes in my recently posted picture on Facebook. The very thought of opening browser for social networking was creeping in my mind entire day. I opened browser many times but then closed it. It was very uneasy feeling for me.	thinking of number of likes
I was craving to open my Facebook account. This made me realize how addicted to social networking I was.	craving for Facebook
On third day of leaving social networking, I was alone at home and was feeling bored. I again craved for opening Facebook. I felt as if something important was missing.	bored without social networking
I realized that I used to think of posting something new Facebook on the Facebook. But this time my mind was idle.	desire to post on Facebook
After few days I started feel that my mind was free of garbage. I really felt good.	free mind

Selective Codes	Open Codes
Information Overload	a lot of information
Multitasking	inattentive to one activity
Addiction	craving for Facebook, bored without social networking, thinking of number of likes
Self Promotion	desire to post on Facebook

Theoretical Coding: This is the stage where the selective codes are organized. There should be some interaction between emerging analysis and the research questions. Fig. 1 shows what is obtained when selective codes are put into interactive diagram and codes are related to each other. Various things become clear when this step is performed. This is the stage where it is essential to consider the relationships in detail as only by doing so new theory emerges.

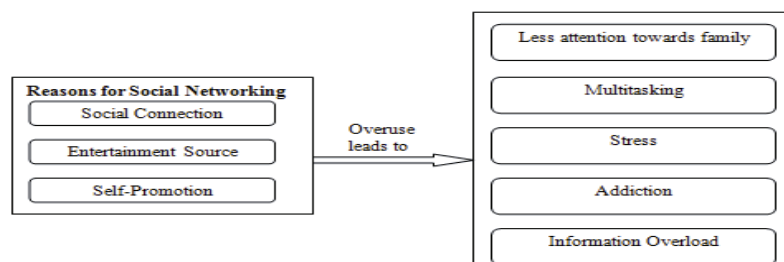


Fig 1: Relating Categories for all the Cases

Discussion and Conclusion: We observed and interviewed individuals who were quite active on social networking websites and their families. We also interviewed a student staying in hostel and a person who had pro-actively left social networking. Through the observation and interview we found out the prime factors which cause one to get excessively involved in social networking. The first factor was intention to make social connection with near and dear ones, school and college friends with whom these individuals cannot meet often. These individuals were interested getting updates on lives of people connected with them. The second factor was social networking for the sake of entertainment. It was observed that people like to play games on Facebook and consider it as stress buster and name it a time-pass activity. Self-promotion was found as the third factor causing excessive social networking. It was seen that the people want to show their success and current happenings in their lives to the others through updating their status for e.g. birthday countdown in the third case of this study. Such people keep on thinking about any witty quote to post on Facebook and twitter on daily basis. This study found the effects of excessive use of social networking on the life of such individuals. The first effect was less attention towards the family members. This was very clear from the first three cases where such individuals were not paying adequate attention

towards their spouses, kids and parents. The second outcome was multitasking. The individuals who were studied used to indulge in other activities as well like teaching kid, working in office while networking socially. Such situations render them less productive towards other important activities. The third outcome was stress. When such individuals see other people succeeding or enjoying their lives, they sometimes feel disappointment and left out for not going through such fantastic phase in their lives and ultimately feel stressed out. Though the people consider it stress buster and use it, but a very interesting finding of this study was that excessive social networking can be the source of stress also. The fourth outcome found in this study was addiction. The fourth case makes it very clear where an individual decides to leave social networking. He craves for opening such websites the very next day itself. He feels that something important is missing in his life and opens and closes the browser again and again. Addiction can also be the factor for paying less attention towards other family members. Information overload was the last outcome found in this study. When the individual in the last study stopped social networking for few days, he felt that his mind was free. Keeping update of so many people day by day resulted into information overload, however out of it a lot of information was not useful. Lack of attention towards family and getting less time

to spend with them is against the Indian worldview according to which a household should focus on the family. This is somewhat affecting the collectivism where individuals put emphasis on familial relations. The lack of attention towards family can cause bias in family which can affect peaceful co-existence and family ties. The interview of the student shows that

she was feeling stressed seeing others succeeding and roaming around the world. As per her, Facebook is the medium to show-off her activities. This is not in sync with Indian worldview according to which a student should be focused to achieve goals not pay attention to how one looks, desire, anger etc.

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