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"PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH IN INDIA"

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ABSTRACT

Social media is growing as the most relevant part of people's lives in the 21st Century. The Internet has taken over a major portion of youth's schedules and social media is one of the reasons why youngsters seem glued to their phones. Though there is no factor that suggests that the usage of social media is limited to youngsters, it is of course more popular among people belonging to the age group of 15-30 years. While the role of social media as a catalyst to bring change cannot be denied, it has brought too many of ill-effects along that are too significant to ignore. The utility of anything can be judged on the basis of the purposes it serves, keeping into consideration its negative impacts, if any. Such is the case of social media. It is a vast platform that serves entertainment and communication, and is a vast ocean of knowledge and information. There are a number of factors about social media that works together to make it an advanced and better form of media as compared to conventional forms of media. Consumption of the content of any form of media has its own implications and this holds true in the case of social media too. The popularization of social media has caused some noticeable changes in the attitudes and lifestyles of youth in India, both good and bad kinds. The research will study the positive and negative psychological impacts of social media on the Indian youth.

Keywords: Negative, Positive, Psychological impact of India, Social Media, Social Networking Sites, Youth

1. INTRODUCTION

The study focuses on various impacts of social media on youth in India, both positive and negative. Social media is a media that is known to create impact on its users and the society as a whole. The way social media has impacted the youth in India is worth a thorough research to be able to understand if the change it is bringing into the lifestyles and attitudes among youngsters is majorly positive or majorly negative [1].

Social media is the media that enables its users to create and share content and information or to participate in social networking via virtual communities and networks. Social media is the latest type of media that runs on the Internet [2]. As its name suggests, social media is a media of the society and by the society on the contrary to the conventional forms of media that are for the society but are not run by the common people. Social media gives power to a common man to voice his or her thoughts, opinions or knowledge on social networking sites. In the case of social media, its users are

both, the consumers and the producers of the content. Social media is comparatively vaster than the conventional forms of media in the sense that it is much more than just knowledge and information [3].

Social networking has changed a lot over a short period of time, both in the context of the society and in the context of individuals. The impacts of social media among people, especially the youth is significant and demands a thorough study [4].

Social media addiction among youth has now become a common issue, and its commonality is probably the reason why the effects of social media addiction are not being taken very seriously. There is a long list of problems attached to the addiction of social networking, ranging from general repercussions to psychological disorders [5]. However, everything has its own share of boons and curses, and social media is not an exception. While there is so much fuss about the negative implications of youth's inclination towards social media, there is so much the world has gained and is gaining due to social media. There are a number of benefits arising out of social media platforms, if used sensibly.

Indian youth is as active on social networking sites as the youth from other parts of the world, if not more. The rising attachment of youngsters in India with their phones due to social networking is a topic of concern in a particular light [6]. Otherwise, there is so much good social media is contributing towards. Social media is seen as a hope for change by many. Difference of opinions on the utility of social networking is a common phenomenon because if we see from a user's point of view, it is goods of necessity, while if the point of view of a person who does not or rarely does social networking is borrowed; the world is doomed with social media in it. The truth is, social media has a lot to offer to a person who intends to use it for good purposes and if he or she can limit the usage to a reasonable level so as not to interrupt the other things in life. However, addictions yield no good. There are youngsters who are so lost in the virtual world of social media that they have completely disconnected from the reality, which is of course not an ideal thing to do.

On the positive side, social media has become the primary source of knowledge and information for many people. Social media is the platform for common people to be heard, to be read, to be seen. Moreover, social media is serving and has served as a great platform for many successful campaigns for the betterment of the society and to address social issues. Most importantly, social media has erased the distances. People living across the seas are just one click away. Thus, it has made communication much convenient.

On the negative side, the addiction of social media among youth is on a rise and there is a sudden increase in the cases of personality and mental disorders and many of them have direct and indirect connections with social media. It is also responsible for changing attitudes among youngsters. Social media is diminishing the 'real' from the world and virtual reality is taking over what was important once.

The debate is never-ending, but there is of course a way to understand the varying viewpoints by studying the negative and positive impacts of social media.

2. PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

If the impact of social media on youth is to be studied, it is of utmost importance to study and examine the psychological implications of social media on youth [7]. Social media is taking up large chunks out of daily routines and such alarming activeness of youth on social media is bound to have some kind of major impacts on their brain activities.

While social media is emerging as one of the most popular forms of media giving a hard competition to the conventional forms of media, it has its own bright and dark sides, too. On the brighter side, social media is a platform that gives people confidence to raise their voices and break the shackles holding them back from coming out openly. Social media serves as an emotional healer to those struggling with rough times and as a companion to those with few friends outside the virtual

world. To many, social networking is one of the only sources of happiness and entertainment for them, which certainly proves its worth and its contribution for brains and souls.

However, social media has a dark side too. Research shows that social media is the root cause of many modern day mental ailments or disorders. Social media addiction is an ugly addiction, and is observed to be causing a number of mental and attitude disorders among youngsters. Restlessness and sleeplessness are some other major problems the addiction of social media is causing among its users.

2.1. Negative psychological impacts of social media

There is no denying the fact that social media addiction is a very common phenomenon and is on a sharp rise. Any kind of addiction has its direct implications on a person's psychology. Social media is not an exception. There are a number of ways in which obsession with social networking can affect a person's psychology and personality.

Almost every person who is addicted to social networking is dealing with some or the other sort of mental health problem he may or may not even be aware of. Many researchers have established that excessive usage of social media can adversely affect the brain's capacity and functioning and these needs to be taken very seriously. The world has seen many incidents that shared connections with social media, which is a rather alarming thing in itself.

Social media addiction in itself is a mental condition but it has even developed a number of unique mental health issues which are becoming common very quickly. The addiction and obsession with social networking has been reported to cause negative feelings among youth due to several distinct reasons [8].
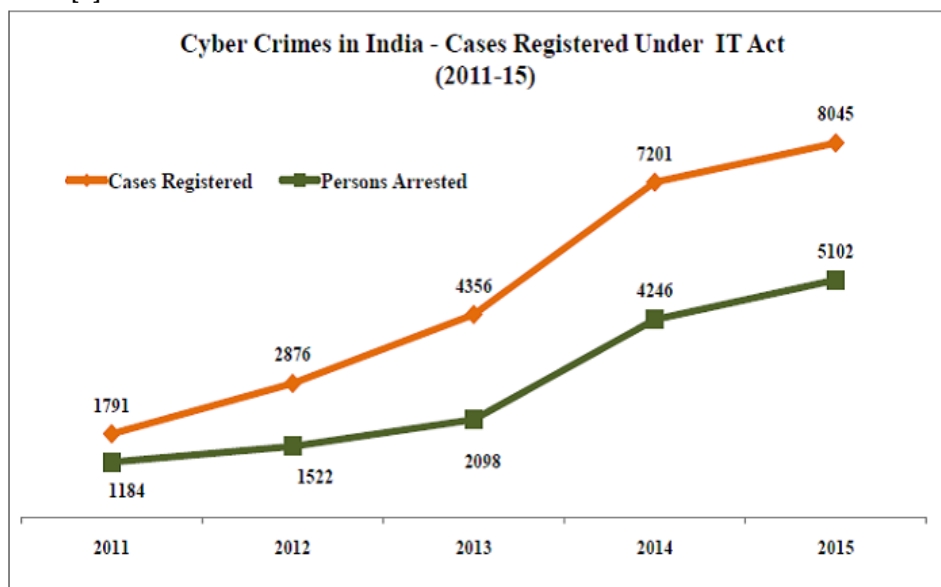

Figure: 1

Following are some common negative psychological impacts of social media on youth:-

2.1.1. Poor Social Skills outside Virtual World

It is a common observation that youngsters these days have confined themselves to socializing on social media and have cut themselves off from socializing outside the Internet. Face-to-face communication is an important part of communicating and is necessary to develop social skills, as it involves eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, etc. Studies have shown that those with fewer Facebook friends have better social skills as compared to those who have several of hundreds of friends on Facebook. The reason is clear – the virtual world of social media has dissociated youngsters from the real world, and they are more comfortable trapped within the box of that social. This, however, in some cases is other way around. The meaning to say is, people with poor social skills find socializing on social media more comfortable as compared to face-to-face conversations.

2.1.2. Social Media Depression

Heavy use of social media has been linked with many negative psychological outcomes by specialists. Social media has given birth to a unique kind of depression, which is becoming quite common among youngsters [9]. The major causes of social media depression include subconsciously comparing one's own life with their social media friends' lives. People on social media tend to post happy and humorous updates which gives some people the idea that their lives are not just as good as others. So, it basically starts with envy and grows into depression. Other factors that may lead to social media depression are bullying, disturbing or negative content, etc.

2.1.3. Restlessness

Youth today are obsessed with social media and this obsession is now developing into a minor form of OCD. This is one of the most common psychological issue being experienced by heavy surfers of social networking sites. Spending too much time surfing social networking sites is developing an unwarranted urge among youngsters to check their social media accounts in short intervals. There is a feeling of restlessness and a strong urge among those who are addicted to social networking caused by the thought of missing out on something interesting.

2.1.4. Distraction

Social networking has emerged as the biggest distraction of this age. The addiction of using social media all the time is causing a serious lack of focus among the youth. The youngsters' inability to focus on more productive activities than just scrolling Facebook newsfeed is growing into a serious concern, for it is affecting their performance in exams negatively. Students can be seen using their phones to check social media in the middle of studies, during classes, almost in all situations. Besides, how social media is distracting the youth is evident from the fact that people are actually avoiding things and people to make more time for social networking.

2.1.5. Anti-Social Behavior

It is apparent that the youth have distanced themselves from real-life socializing and social media addicts avoid going out, spending time with family, hanging out with friends, etc. Anti-social behavior is one of the major negative outcomes of uncontrolled use of social media [10]. It is quite ironical that social networking is pushing into people anti-social traits. Those who were already anti-social have started to believe that being anti-social is okay, while those who were social are slowly crossing the fence to land up on the other side. The importance of real life relationships has diminished and the ties with families are growing weaker because now happiness comes in the forms of 'Likes' and 'Followers'.

2.1.6. Narcissism

Narcissism is a personality disorder characterized by excessive self-admiration and a strong desire to be the centre of attention. Increasing narcissism among youngsters shares a strong nexus with rising popularity of social media and trends therein. Narcissism on social media is not much of a concern for others probably because the commonness of this personality disorder has normalized it. Hunger for attention is a normal sight on social media, which an essential attribute of narcissism. Those with followers in large numbers on social media tend to develop the traits of narcissism more easily.

2.1.7. Unclear Opinions

There is nothing to guarantee the authenticity of content that is posted on social networking sites. Social media is filled with misleading content in the forms of false information and rumors, which play with people's psyche. People relying too much on content seen by them on social media tend to have unclear opinions about things. It is common to find different versions of the same story on social networking sites, which often confuse and mislead youth and thus, disable them to develop a clear-cut opinion on an issue.

2.1.8. Normalizing Violence

The more frequently a person reads or hears about violence, the more easier it becomes for him to develop a feeling of indifference towards it. People get to read very often about the violence going on in some or the other part of the world on social media which normalizes something as immoral as violence. Though social media essentially does not promote violence, frequent exposure to violent content or content that circles around violence is affecting youth. It is alarming that the youth is becoming neutral towards violence.

2.1.9. Provocative content

Though all social networking sites have set community standards, it is not possible to completely get rid of offensive and provocative content. India knows of many instances where offensive Facebook posts led to violence and this is alarming. It has been noted that it is very easy to instill violence in youngsters on social media. People, especially youth are being motivated to resort to violence by political parties through provocative posts. This trend is coming up as a direct source of anger and frustration among the young generation.

2.2. Positive psychological impact of social media

While social media is being considered a threat to the generation 'Y', it has affected millennial's psychology in positive manners too and the list is quite surprising. It is said that if something gets popular and is loved by everyone, there must be element goodness in it. Such is the case with social media. Social media addiction has adverse effects on youth's brains but there are a number of ways in which social media is helping people deal with things they wouldn't otherwise be able to deal with. Social media is literally a blessing in many people's lives, not because they enjoy social networking, but due to the way social media has helped them deal with things like stress, introversion, loneliness, etc. Besides, social media is known to have reshaped youth's ability to connect with social issues and politics, which is indeed a positive outcome of social media usage by youth [11].

Following are some of the major positive psychological impacts of social media on youth:-

2.2.1. Attention to those deprived of it

The role of social media in people's lives is debatable and relative, but social media has proved to be quite useful for a large section of youth. There are many youngsters who are deprived of attention due to their poor social skills or fewer friends in their lives. Social media has come up as a blessing for youngsters with low self-esteem and lack of confidence. Using social networking sites and socializing with social media friends helps these youngsters fill the void in their lives. Indian youth find social media a great platform to deal with loneliness.

2.2.2. Acquiring knowledge with entertainment

According to various surveys, most youngsters use social media to kill time or for entertainment purposes. But one positive thing about social media is that it is an informative platform with a lot of knowledge to serve to its users. No matter what objective people go to social networking sites with, they end up gaining knowledge consciously or subconsciously. In fact, there is a large percentage of youth that depends solely on social networking sites to know what is happening in the world. So, this feature of social media where it educates and informs youngsters without them knowing is a positive impact of social media on youngsters' psychology.

2.2.3. Exploring and developing interests

Social media is a wide ocean of information and has so much to explore. Social networking has created many new options and opportunities for youth. Many youngsters have been able to discover their interests and way to use them productively through the platform of social media. Before social media came into play, not many people were interested to be writers, photographers, stand-up comedians, etc. Evidently, the popularization of social networking sites has triggered a sudden increase in youngsters' interest in photography, writing, etc. Thus, it is safe to conclude that

social media has opened new doors for the young generation and has helped them widen their spectrum of interests.

2.2.4. Relaxes

Social media is not short of things to amuse its users with. In fact, the content one finds on social media is addictive. A major portion of the total social media content is comprised of humor and relatable stuff. Social networking is considered a quick getaway from the hustle-bustle and worries of life by most youngsters. This makes social networking an activity that helps people relax their minds.

2.2.5. More Social Support

There are many youngsters who lack social support and so they crave social acceptance. Social networking works as a great means to gain social support for introverts. Often youngsters dealing with stress also tend to turn themselves to social networking to rescue them. It has been helpful for many people looking for social support.

2.2.6. Makes one realize other share the same problems

Reliability of content on social media is its biggest USP. Empathy works better than sympathy. When a person is sad and is on social media, and when that person comes across people or content that is relatable, it causes a soothing effect. Social media is full of different people going through different phases of life. Realizing that there are many people out there who share the same problems or sadness with you serves as a big relief sometimes.

2.2.7. Gateway to creativity

The scope social media provides for creativity is pretty wide. Social media has room for almost all kinds of creativity. Furthermore, it also gives person opportunities to earn money through social media using their creativity. The level of creativity on social media is increasing at a great pace. Indian youngsters are gradually becoming the producers of data rather than being just passive consumers. Different people with different talents and skills are developing ad polishing their creativity on social media. According to a survey, Indians are among the greatest content producers on social media, especially Facebook.

2.2.8. Opening up

While it is a tough task for many with poor social skills or no social circles to express their views and thoughts, social media is a platform that facilitates speaking out for everyone, irrespective of how socially awkward they may be in the real world. Social networking has served as a great tool for many people to break the silence and open up. This way, by giving the confidence and space for people to speak freely and express their inner selves, social media contributes to people's mental health in a positive manner.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social media is the only media where a common person is both the producer and the consumer of information or content. Social media is a platform that can be and is being effectively used as a means to address issues in the society. However, it has been equally used for achieving wrong objectives as well. While social media has proved itself as a source to facilitate political and social movements, it has also been largely used to defame and harass people. There are so many major and minor incidents that became national headlines and that have their catalyst as social networking websites. Some latest Youth Led Incidents Related to Social Media.

3.1. Jalikattu Protest

The 2017 pro-jallikattu protests, also known as the pro-jallikattu movement refers to numerous apolitical youth groups protesting in January 2017 in large numbers in several locations across the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, with some periodic smaller protests taking place across India and even abroad. The major motivation of the protest was against the Supreme Court's order to ban Jallikattu that is a traditional Tamil bull taming sport, which is held during Pongal in the state of Tamil Nadu [12]. The sport is conducted annually. The sport was banned by the Supreme Court in a decision citing cruelty to animals based on a lawsuit filed by PETA, which stressed that the tradition

infringes the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA).Jalikattu protest is one of the greatest examples from the near past showcasing the power of social media in these times. The protests soon gained momentum and spread all over Tamil Nadu. After several days of protests, jallikattu was finally legalized locally on 23 January when the Government of Tamil Nadu passed a bill to amend the PCA Act.

3.2. 'Abki Baar Modi Sarkaar' Campaign

Narendra Modi occupied the Prime Minister seat in 2014. It is a well aware fact that the social media has contributed greatly in the success of Narendra Modi's campaigning for 2014 General elections. #AbkiBaarModiSarkar #NaMo is one of the most successful and effective political campaigns in Indian history[13]. Optimized use of social media is one of the factors responsible for Modi's victory besides accurate positioning with excessive content seeding and putting on- ground activities online. The right social media policy to endorse the brand Modi helped him gain popularity among youth by rebuilding his image as a decisive leader with a clear development agenda supressing all the negative content about him from the past and putting to rest his old image of an extremist, regional, right-wing politician. The popularity of the campaign and Modi on Twitter during the elections is evident from the fact that according to the data published by Twitter India, between the start of 2014 and the announcement of Modi's victory, there were 58m tweets related to the elections.

3.3. Arjun Bharadwaj Suicide

Arjun Bharadwaj suicide incident where a 23-year-old committed suicide by jumping off the 19th floor of a hotel in Mumbai after recording a live video on Facebook is an incident that shocked the nation. Arjun was a suffering from depression and the content he had been sharing on his Facebook wall shows how lonely and depressed he was. This incident throws light on how relevant social media has become into youth's life because before he ended his life, he decided to express his suffering to the world through social media by recording a live video on Facebook which he called a 'suicide tutorial'. A Psychologist Dr Pulkit Sharma told Hindustan Times that there's a certain 'larger-than-life' element involved to such acts. "It's a masterstroke for becoming known, maybe to become immortal as they die," he said. Just one day after this incident, Bigg Boss Kannada winner and actor-filmmaker Pratham recorded a live video after consuming sleeping pills. In the video, he said, "Anything that I do is being wrongly projected. I cannot take it anymore. This will be my final Facebook Live video and sorry if I have hurt anyone." However, thankfully, he was saved. Such kinds of incidents show both, the youth's obsession with social media and that how needy of people's attention social media has turned the youth into that they want to share everything happening in their lives on social media, even the end of them

3.4. Suchitra Karthik Leaks Incident

Social media can be a perilous place. Anyone can say anything about anyone without fear and guilt. The worst part is that there is no room for privacy. Everything is very much public. One incident that unveiled the darker side of social media is Suchitra Leaks incident. Suchitra Karthik is an RJ and singer. This is a famous incident where a singer Suchitra Karthik leaked South Indian actors' private pictures on Twitter. Suchitra Karthik tweeted a series of private photos of superstar Dhanush, Trisha Krishnan**,** RJ Balaji, Dhivyadharshini, Hansika Motwani, music director Anirudh and many others. A series of pictures and videos were uploaded quite some days. However, after a few days, Suchitra went live on a news channel and explained in her defense that her Twitter account was hacked.

This incident clearly states that blunders in world are just one tap away and one wrong move on a user's part can lead to such horrible incidents. In wrong hands or in somebody's hands with wrong state of mind, social media is a weapon of mass humiliation.

4. CONCLUSION

The data analysis undertaken and the observations made during the course of the research show that while there are some serious negative impacts on Indian youth arising out of social media that need to be taken care of with utmost sincerity, the positive impacts of social media outweigh all the negative ones. To phase out the negative impacts of social media, the Indian youth requires a demonstration and guidance on social media addiction and its harmful implications. The importance of social media in today's world is unparalleled and the negative impacts of social media solely depend upon an individual's usage behavior. If used wisely, social media can benefit youth in n number of ways.

During the course of this research project, various articles, blogs, psychology facts and media theories have been covered in order to fully understand the positive and negative impacts of social media on Indian youth. However, social media evolves too fast and further study can be undertaken on this topic in future when social media is a different place and many new impacts have added to the list.

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