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SOCIETAL IMPACT OF ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS: A BIRD VIEW



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ABSTRACT

In the present generation, the social life of everyone has become associated with the online social networks. These sites have made a drastic change in the way we pursue our social life. Adding new friends and keeping in contact with them and their up-dates has become easier and often, unknown numbers of strangers. One of the most important advantages of the use of online social networks is the online sharing of knowledge and information among the different groups of people. Online tools and technology has not only mediated communication in countless ways, but that the very ways we communicate and even the ways we talk and think about communication are changing as a result. Online social networks have the potential to fundamentally change the character of our social lives, both on an interpersonal and a community level. This paper attempts to study societal impact of online social networks, simply describe users' current status and its implications in the society.

KEYWORDS: *Online Social Networks, Social impact, Current status,*



INTRODUCTION:-

Online social networks are often thought of as places to catch up on the personal information and current activities of social ties. In addition to social and playful uses, however, many users are harnessing their social networks as sources of information and productivity, for example by using business-oriented networking tools like LinkedIn or Beehive. Social networking services provide a source of information that is complementary to that provided by search engines; the former provide information that is highly adapted to an individual and comes from a highly trusted source, while the latter provides objective data from a variety of sources on a variety of topics. Understanding for what question types and topics people turn to a social network, rather than a search engine, and their motivations for doing so, can help in designing next-generation search tools that integrate both search engine and social functionality. The term of online social networks refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue. Online social networks takes on many different forms including magazines,

Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, micro blogging, wikis, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. With the world in the midst of online social networks revolution, it is more than obvious that online social networks like facebook, twitter, orkut, myspace, skype etc., are used extensively for the purpose of communication. This form of communication can be with a person or a group of persons.

Today most of the people specially the youngsters are hooked onto the different online social networks for keeping in contact with their peers. Online social networks are social interaction as a superset beyond social communication. One most important advantage is the online sharing of knowledge and information among the different groups of people. This online sharing of information also promotes the increase in the communication skills among the people especially among the learners/students of educational institutions. There is also a flip side to the use of online social networks tools. Sometimes, such tools are misused by people which lead to interference into one's privacy. Such instances can lead to dangerous proportions keeping in view the ethical aspect of the use of such media. The online social networks tools have virtually brought people close to one another specially those living in far off places.

SOCIAL SEARCH

Broadcasting a question to one's social network is one way to find information online; other common methods include using a search engine or emailing a question to a particular person. The term social search refers broadly to the process of finding information online with the assistance of social resources, such as by asking friends, reference librarians, or unknown persons online for assistance. Social search may also involve conducting a search over an existing database of content previously provided by other users, such as searching over the collection of public Twitter posts, or searching through an archive of questions and answers, such as in the Answer Garden system. Some researchers have built special tools to integrate social information with search engine use, such as HeyStaks, a browser plug-in that enables users to mark search results as relevant; these results are then boosted in the rankings of socially connected users who do searches on similar topics. Collaborative search is a social search where several users share an information need and work together to fulfill that need, in some cases using tools like SearchTogether. Although people who ask questions via social network status messages do so to enlist the help of others, they are not engaged in collaborative search as the information need belongs solely to the question asker; they are, however, engaged in the broader phenomenon of social search.

Social search behavior appears to be common. In a 2008 survey, Wells and Rainie found people used a mixture of internet search and social resources (e.g., phone calls and face-to-face meetings) to answer many types of questions. Torrey et al. found that craft-artists kept their social networks informed of current projects in the hopes of receiving "gifts of information," including pointers to relevant online resources that might benefit their projects. Some researchers have proposed formal models to describe the interplay of online information seeking with the use of social resources. For example, Pirolli developed a model of social information foraging, and Evans and Chid described the various stages in the search process when users engaged with other people.

SOCIAL IMPACT

The online social networks have impact on the science, education, grassroots organizing, employment, business, etc. Researchers have been studying these online social networks to see the impact they make on the people. Teachers can reach the students easily through this making a friendly

environment for the students to study, teachers now-a-days teachers are getting themselves familiar to these sites bringing online classroom pages, giving homework, making discussions, etc. which improves education a lot. The employers can use these social networking sites to employ the people who are talented and interested in the work, their background check can be done easily using this. Most of the OSN are free but some charge the membership fee and use this for business purposes and the rest of them raise money by using the advertising. This can be used by the government to get the opinions of the public quickly.

BUSINESS

Net savvy companies are using online social networks to advertise their products, build customer loyalty and many other functions. Interactions and feedback from customers help businesses to understand the market, and fine-tune their products and strategies. Many firms organize contests and give away prizes to entice consumers to visit their social website page more often. Compared to television advertisements and other expensive forms of marketing, online social networks presence is a cheap and effective means to enhance brand image and popularity.

PRODUCTIVITY

Many companies have blocked social networks on their office Internet as addicted employees can distract themselves on such sites, instead of focusing on work. In fact, studies show that British companies have lost billions of dollars per year in productivity because of online social networks addiction among employees.

POLITICS

Every politician worth his salt needs to jump on the online social networks bandwagon. This is because social websites have played an important role in many elections around the world, including in the U.S., Iran, and India. They have also served to rally people for a cause, and have inspired mass movements and political unrests in many countries.

EFFECT ON SOCIALIZATION

Social networks offer the opportunity for people to re-connect with their old friends and acquaintances, make new friends, trade ideas, share content and pictures, and many other activities. Users can stay abreast of the latest global and local developments, and participate in campaigns and activities of their choice. Professionals use online social networks sites like LinkedIn to enhance their career and business prospects. Students can collaborate with their peers to improve their academic proficiency and communication skills. You can learn about different cultures and societies by connecting with people in other countries.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS

Unfortunately, there are a few downsides too to social networking. Many introverts and socially reclusive users place too much emphasis on virtual interaction, and ignore the real world outside. Read on to learn about a few more negative repercussions of online social networks.

CYBER BULLYING AND ONLINE HARASSMENT

If you are not careful, unscrupulous people can target you for cyber bullying and harassment on social sites. School children, young girls, and women can fall prey to online attacks which can create

tension and distress. If you are a victim of cyber bullying, do not take it lying down, but try to take appropriate legal action against the attacker.

PRIVACY

If you are not careful, what you post on the Net can come back to haunt you. Revealing personal information on social sites can make users vulnerable to crimes like identity theft, stalking, etc. Many companies perform a background check on the Internet before hiring an employee. If a prospective employee has posted something embarrassing on online social networks, it can drastically affect their chances of getting the job. The same holds true for our relationships too, as our loved ones and friends may get to know if we post something undesirable on social networks.

CONCLUSION

Online social networks offer a variety of avenues through which we can communicate with people. In fact, online social networks are known to have been used widely in educational field also. Online social networks provide simple, inexpensive ways to organize members, arrange meetings, spread information, and gauge opinion. As more systems emerge, there will be greater capacity for groups to organize and participate in collective action, a hallmark of civil society. Online social networks can be effective for building social authority; individuals or organizations can establish themselves as experts in their fields, and then they can begin to influence these fields. Online social networks technologies are capable of reaching audiences all over the world. Exercise caution to ensure they do not fall victim to online dangers. Online social network is up to each user to use social sites wisely to enhance their professional and social life.

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