

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

IDENTIFYING ETHICAL AND SAFE PRACTICES OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

When adolescents are using social media, they are not giving focus on the ethical and safe practices to use the relevant platforms. So, the understanding of the ethical and safe practices has turned to be a crucial area to be considered, when studying the usage of social media among adolescents. Mostly the adolescents are not aware how social media is affecting to their lifestyles. This study will be focusing on this specific area of identifying the ethical and safe practices in terms of usage of social media. The purpose of this study is to bring the crucial points towards the awareness of the society, so they can get to know about the importance of learning these practices. This paper will eventually highlight and introduce, ethical and safe practices for social media usage among adolescents. The methodology that will be used is based upon qualitative data and observational data. A questionnaire is passed through online media, and we will be collecting the data received through that questionnaire and few interviews will also be conducted. Primary data was collected with 384 participants from the survey and the findings are as follows. The participants are familiar with the social media platforms, and they are not quite aware of the ethical practices to use social media safely. At the end of the paper proper and ethical practices will be suggested.

Keywords: Social media, adolescents, qualitative data, observational data

1. Introduction

When it comes to the terms of social media, the society has the possibility of defining it in different opinions. Since the introduction of internet to the society, people tend to invent different platforms to get connected socially with different people around the world. The formation of novel trends around the world in terms of digital technology has made a quite interesting impact on the social and cultural lives of global population. With the infusion and the availability of advanced and user friendly, interfaces and software designs and the increasing ability to afford mobile devices, the society can witness new applications of social communication and relationship mending. Mostly the process of mending these relationships is named under the title of connectivity by many literates. (BURNETT, 2011) In this research paper, the focus is on the objective which is “The study of ethical and safe practices in terms of usage of social media.” A platform where the users can create, display, share, communicate using multimedia activities can be described as social media. Most of the users tend to spend their day using social media while interacting with other users and engage in activities

which helps their daily survival. Even though people use social media widely most of them are not aware about the ethics and safe practices in the terms of using social media. It could be either one can be the victim in a situation or either the person who causes the trouble or the person who is not adhering to the ethics and safe practices while using social media. (Ruth N. Bolton, 2013)

With the introduction and availability of more active and user-friendly interfaces and program designs, as well as the greater diversity of software, society can witness the newer forms of communicating with public. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and many other social media platforms that contains large number of users can shape up the people's identities, it can help them build social capital. what they speak and share about themselves, and how others speak and share about them will be a key factor when in building social capital. With this effectiveness or the ease of technology the disadvantage of using social media exists as a co-exist as well in this. Cyberbullying, hacking, online sexual harassment, and many other disadvantages are being carried as a bag behind the fact of social media which affects negatively on the users. (Megan A. Moreno, 2013)

2. Methodology

Here the problem will be analyzed using qualitative data. Qualitative data is basically based on the use of words and here in this document, qualitative data will be used for analysis. Also, it will be collected through a primary mode of data collection, by conducting interviews and handing over a questionnaire. The data was supposed to be collected by maintaining the variables. On this topic of study, the variables addressed are usage of social media and the ethical practices. The ethical practices are the dependent variable while the usage of social media acts as the independent variable. Through this qualitative study, real world knowledge will be shared among the social structures and the believes of people will be addressed accordingly. When conducting the interviews, the intension was to find the most suitable participants and then go with semi – structured questions. The interview was supposed to last for around 15 to 20 minutes. Apart from the interviews the study was conducted by using observations done by the participants. The focus was given on the selected group of individuals and the recordings were done through audio recording. A questionnaire was passed out among the adolescents. There, few important questions were asked, to get an idea on the usage pattern of social media among the adolescents. Also, the existing data was analyzed to find out the important material for further reference. Here the focus was to go with the content analysis technique when analyzing the data gathered, because all the data that are gathered were falling under qualitative data. The hope is to categorize and discuss the meaning of wordings and the phrases along the analysis. For the data collection purposes, a survey was conducted with the participation of 384 participants and the analysis based on that survey will also be discussed. (McCombes, 2019)

3. Literature Review

Social media can be defined as a technology that is based upon computers and mobile platforms which allows the users to share the ideas, thoughts, and information along a virtual community. Social media is completely relying upon the internet and the users are functioning with the electronic communication platforms. The content on the social media platforms might include the personal information, documents, videos, and photos. The users can engage in social media platform through a computer, tablet, mobile phone or even a smart watch with the application of web- technology. (Maya Dollarhide, 2021)

When identifying the evolution of social media, at the initial stages it came up as a mode of personal communication which is allowing to communicate with the family and friends but with the time, these platforms expanded over to the business field as well. Currently social media is used as a mode of marketing by the businesses as the time has brought new features. Through social media

there is a high possibility to connect with anyone across the world and share the information easily even if that person is in continents across the sea.

The world has around 3.8 billion social media users. Each day new applications and software emerge in terms of social media. Mostly established social media platforms are Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram. Out of the total population within the age of 18-29 around 90% is using at least one social media platform. There are different forms or types established in social media. That differentiation is based on the technologically enabled activities like photo sharing, blogging, social gaming, video sharing, business handling, virtual conferencing, reviewing etc. mostly the public officials and popular celebrities use social media to share the content that they want to reach the audience continuously.

For an individual social media can be taken as a form of connectivity to keep in touch with friends and family. Also, this might come as a chance of finding career opportunities. But for a business, social media turns out to be one of the marketing tools. To engage with the customers, to increase sales, for advertising and promotion, and for better customer service opportunities, social media act as a sharp tool.

When the adolescents are considered within the age group of 12-22, they are the ones who are getting used to these social media platforms recently. They are adopting to the technology, but they lack awareness on the proper etiquette of using social media. There are three main principles of social media ethics that can be majorly discusses when the topic of adolescents and the social media usage is concerned. (Carolyn Cohn, 2021)

Authenticity – when using social media, the users should be authentic. If the account holder is sincere and posting or sharing true information, then the followers will give positive responses.

Transparency – the user should be honest and transparent. If you are using social media, then you should honestly mention the reason of using. Without being honest or having hidden agendas will cause people stand against the user.

Communication – mutual communication in true form is a must. Lying or falsifying the information about the personality will bring trust issues. So, communicating as people with honest mindset is a must ethic in social media.

Based on the above three etiquette social media usage can be based on good ethics and it is an important factor to follow good ethics while using social media. A study was also conducted to prove the statement and the below attached are the results obtained.

4. Results and Discussions

With the survey conducted we were able to get the results as follows. Altogether for the survey there were 384 responses, and out of those 384 responses 128 were males and 256 were females. When the data collection was taken, the intention was to focus on the adolescents in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the age group of 12 to 23 were considered as the most eligible age group. Among those respondents, 146 respondents fall under the category of age 16 – 18 which shows that they are about to finish their schooling. Then 53 people fall under the group of 19-20 years while the rest which is 184 respondents fall under the age category of 21-23.



Figure 1. Age categorization

When they were asked about the social media platforms they use, among Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snap Chat, LinkedIn, And YouTube the answers were as follows. 302 responds were for Facebook, 218 responded for Instagram, 37 were using Twitter, 100 were using Snapchat, 83 were using LinkedIn and 324 were using YouTube.

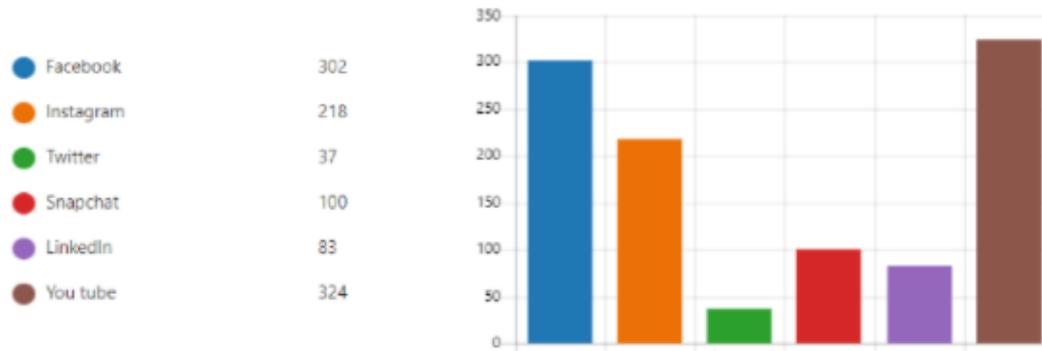


Figure 2. Social media usage based on the survey.

Most of them replied that they were using social media daily while some responded that they are using social media every two or three hours per day. When they were asked the reasons that they are using social media, few responded that they are using it for studying purposes, and 352 responded that they were using it for entertainment. 293 responded that they were also using it for information exchange like messaging. They were inquired whether they are aware of security terms when using social media and few responded that they are aware of the security, while majority responded as they are not aware.

As per the results gained through this study, it was clear that most of the people are using social media. But they are not properly aware about the ways that these platforms can be used for betterment in the society. As they only responded that they are using social media for entertainment, educational activities or as a mode of communication, they are not aware the other advantages the social media platforms forward. Social media can be used to listen to public debate and get an overview on the society, can be used to monitor situations, emergency respond, and management can also be handled, crowd sourcing, collaborative development are the advantages that social media carries. (Alexander, 2014) social media is also considered as a mean where corruption can be exposed, and malpractice can be maintained. The society is only considering social media as the platforms they use, but, social media can be extended blogs, micro-blogs, social book-marking, social networking, forums, collaborative creation of documents (via wikis1) and the sharing of audio, photographic and video files. So, according to the readings done and the observations conducted, it was clear that the intra generational variance that arises from social, economic, and cultural factors make an effect towards the mindset of the adolescents while they are using social media.

Along the discussion and the readings, the idea of a safe and ethical practice for using social media can be read in the following format. As adolescents are adopting to use more and more social media, initially they should be given a safe understanding about the social media platforms which they can use. They limit their awareness of social media only towards WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and other apps. But they should be informed that photography, videography, social networking, collaboration and each of the activities conducted through World Wide Web and internet belong to social media.

Then again, they should be informed the ways to use those applications in an ethical manner. If they are using it few hours per day, then they should be informed how they can earn while using social media platforms. They should be given an understanding, that they can get into investments, through social media.

Also, they should be informed that they can expand their knowledge scale through these platforms. They can develop their career skills. Collectively, they should be informed that they can get into a healthy lifestyle under proper planning through social media platforms. They can handle their finances, daily life activities, educational activities, and many more with a safe and ethical following of the social media practices.

The first step for the safe practices of social media is that the user must be able to keep their personal information that could harm them for their selves without disclosing it on social media whereas every user who is present can view the information. Most of the users of social media disclose their personal information with the idea of becoming popular but it will distort intimate relationships of the user and will harm their image in the long run, and it could run so deeply whereas taking a human life as well. Meanwhile most of the people manage to keep their personal information to their selves but in the other hand they keep sharing and posting other users' personal information or things that could harm a person's life, which clearly depicts the violation of the ethics while using social media. It is perfectly ethical to use social media platforms to convey your message, one that you believe will be of interest to others and will meet a need they. To have less problems social media ethics is conducted so that the user will prevent from falsely accusing, sharing information that will harm another person. (Katherine C. Chretien & Terry Kind, 2015)

5. Conclusion

As this paper is based on identifying ethical and safe practices for social media usage, here the summary of structure that was followed on the document is given as a briefing. The document has given the briefing about the study that was conducted, and the results obtained. The focus of identifying the ethical and safe practices while using social media was successfully conveyed through the findings and the information presented.

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