

The Impact of Social Media on Social Relationships: A Sociological Perspective

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Abstract:

Social media has become an integral part of modern society, connecting billions worldwide. Platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Messenger, Reels, and TikTok influence communication patterns, friendships, and even family dynamics. Social media reshapes traditional norms of interaction, identity, and community belonging. In the 21st century, social media has become one of the most powerful forces shaping human interaction and social relationships. Social media Platforms have transformed the ways in which people connect, communicate, and maintain relationships. Nowadays, people increasingly communicate through digital platforms that allow for instant communication across geographical boundaries. In the 21st century, social media has transformed how people connect, communicate, and sustain relationships. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, have blurred the boundaries between physical and virtual interactions. While initially designed as tools for networking, these platforms have evolved into powerful social structures that shape behaviour, influence social norms, and redefine human interaction. Social media provides a stage for individuals to perform and curate their identities. It is now common to share personal life events publicly, a behaviour that would have been considered inappropriate in the past. This study is relevant in today's world; the online platforms not only affect individual friendships and family bonds but also reshape entire communities and cultures. From a sociological perspective, social media is not only a technological tool but also a cultural space where identities are formed, maintained, and challenged. The central question arises: Does social media strengthen social bonds by expanding networks and maintaining long-distance ties? Social media has blurred the line between the personal and the public, creating opportunities for global connectivity while also introducing challenges such as superficial interactions, social comparison, and digital alienation. Sociology examines how technology, a powerful social force, shapes communication patterns, community, and social stratification. By examining both the positive and negative consequences, the discussion highlights how social media continues to redefine what it means to be socially connected in the modern world. These platforms are not just about communication, but also politics, marketing, and culture. It transformed the ways Indians interacted, formed relationships, and built communities.

Keywords: social media, social relationships, online communities/groups, social capital, identity and self-presentation, digital society, family dynamics, online friendship, social isolation, cyberbullying, networked individualism.

Introduction:

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like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Messenger, Reels, and TikTok influence communication patterns, friendships, and even family dynamics. Social media reshapes traditional norms of interaction, identity, and community belonging. In the 21st century, social media has become one of the most powerful forces shaping human interaction and social relationships. Social media Platforms have transformed the ways in which people connect, communicate, and maintain relationships. Nowadays, people increasingly communicate through digital platforms that allow for instant communication across geographical boundaries. In the 21st century, social media has transformed how people connect, communicate, and sustain relationships. Platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook have blurred the boundaries between physical and virtual interactions. While initially designed as tools for networking, these platforms have evolved into powerful social structures that shape behaviour, influence social norms, and redefine human interaction. Social media provides a stage for individuals to perform and curate their identities. It is now common to share personal life events publicly, a behaviour that would have been considered inappropriate in the past. This study is relevant in today's world; the online platforms not only affect individual friendships and family bonds but also reshape entire communities and cultures. From a sociological perspective, social media is not only a technological tool but also a cultural space where identities are formed, maintained, and challenged. The central question arises: Does social media strengthen social bonds by expanding networks and maintaining long-distance ties? Social media has blurred the line between the personal and the public, creating opportunities for global connectivity while also introducing challenges such as superficial interactions, social comparison, and digital alienation. Sociology examines how technology, a powerful social force, shapes communication patterns, community, and social stratification. By examining both the positive and negative consequences, the discussion highlights how social media continues to redefine what it means to be socially connected in the modern world. These platforms are not just about communication, but also politics, marketing, and culture. It transformed the ways Indians interacted, formed relationships, and built communities.

Meaning of Social Media:

Social media is a form of digital communication where users create online spaces to share information, ideas, personal messages, and various types of content. These platforms allow people to post text, photos, videos, and other forms of user-generated content, facilitating both personal communication and professional networking. (Wikipedia).

Historical background of the problem: The rise of social media is a relatively recent phenomenon in the long history of human communication. Online Communication started during the 1960s-1980s. In the 1960s, ARPANET allowed researchers to share messages electronically. By the 1980s, Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) and Usenet groups enabled users to post messages and interact in discussion forums. In the 1990s, Online Communities emerged that connected users socially. AOL (America Online) and ICQ introduced instant messaging. Websites like GeoCities allowed users to create personal pages. WhatsApp innovated in 2000, Friendster in 2002. In 2003, LinkedIn emerged as a professional networking site. Facebook was introduced in 2004, Twitter in 2006, Instagram in 2010, and Snapchat in 2011. And TikTok in 2016.

Review of Literature:

Some scholars have examined the role of social media in shaping social relationships from multiple perspectives. Putnam (2000) warned that technology may reduce face-to-face interaction. Ellison (2007)

found that Facebook helps maintain bridging social capital. Sociologist Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation applies to online profiles, where users carefully curate their identities. Turkle (2011) highlights digital isolation, and McDaniel & Coyne (2016) note that the overuse of social media disrupts family life. Lenhart (2015) shows that teens both strengthen and conflict in friendships via social media.

Objectives of the study:

- To analyse how social media influences interpersonal relationships in social and professional life.
- To analyse both the positive and negative effects of social media on family relationships, friendships, profession, and community in India.

Methodology used:

It is mainly descriptive and secondary data-based research, and used secondary data for the preparation of the report, data collected from sources such as books, survey reports, research publications, and web-based resources.

Statistics on social media users in India:

Social media is an integral part of the social life of Indians. According to the Data Reportal company report, in 2025, about 491 million people are active users in India, and about 33.7% Indians are using social media. Among these users, 445 million are above 18 years of age. In terms of gender, 65.5% are male and 34.5 % are female. According to the Meltwater report in 2015, the total internet users was 806 million, and 491 million are using social media. According to the Napoleoncat report in 2025, a total of 581 million Indians are using Facebook and Instagram, 392 million people are using Messenger, and 388 million people are using LinkedIn. 161 million Indians are using these media. No Karnataka data available.(web sources)

Impact of Social Media on Social Relationships:

Social media has had a profound and multifaceted impact on social relationships in India. Social media effects on family relationships, friendships, profession, and community in India. In India, rapid digital adoption led to increased youth dependency on social media. Its have both positive and negative effects on social relationships. Here are the major effects.

Effects on Family Relationships: Improved communications among family members who stay away, video calls, group chatting, and shared media strengthen bonds, sharing experiences among the family members, sharing the photos, updates, and memories easily. It helps parents to track their children, provide emotional support during stressful times, and share feelings with other members. Family members can create a private group for sharing issues. And it has some negative effects, ie, reduces the face-to-face interaction among family members, overtime use may lead to neglect of responsibilities of the family, and sharing of personal information can cause family disorganization. Children's online activities are sometimes hidden from parents, older people may feel irritated and have feelings of inferiority, overaddiction reduces emotional connections, and sometimes addiction breaks the relations.

Effects on Marital Relationships:- social media helps couples stay in touch through calls, texts, video chats during stay away, increases the closeness among couples, provides emotional support to both partners, strengthens bonds between couples and children. Online dating, friendships, and other aspects have some negative effects, like reducing the time spent with a partner, which may feel neglected or

ignored, misinterpretations of comments, and chats create marital disputes. The ease of "monitoring" a partner's online behaviour can create new sources of conflict and trust issues.

Effects of Professional and Educational Relationships:

Online platforms like LinkedIn help to connect to professional collaborations and find jobs. Building contacts across the globe, access to webinars, tutorials, professional groups, and online courses, enhances knowledge and professional updates. A professional can share their achievements, help promote business, services, products, and professional identity. Negative posts harm professional development.

Effects on Community and Societal Relationships: Social media has broken geographic barriers, allowing Indians to connect across the globe. Connecting people in the event of personal, professional, and community interactions. It helps maintain long-distance relationships and facilitates networking for marginalized groups. Social media gives individuals opportunities to engage beyond traditional social stratifications linked to gender, caste, and region. It enables voices from varied backgrounds to participate in public dialogue and activism. Online communities on platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp provide emotional support to cousins, old school friends, and childhood neighbours, reinforcing social bonds and a sense of collective identity. Social and informational support, especially in times of crisis or collective action. Social media has helped mobilize social movements and awareness campaigns, bringing together diverse voices for collective action on issues like gender violence and social justice. Social media has fundamentally altered the way people form, maintain, and perceive relationships. The visibility of a person's social network on platforms like Facebook can lead to feelings of jealousy. The rapid spread of false information and the formation of polarized groups can erode public trust in institutions and create societal divisions. Reduced quality of deep relationships. Rise of one-sided emotional bonds with influencers/celebrities. Global and Indian Context, Mental health stigma still exists; thus, social media acts as both a platform for awareness and a source of stress.

Effects on Women's Relationships: Women can connect easily with family members, friends, and others across the globe through social media. Give a voice to fight issues like domestic violence, gender inequality, and other issues. In the negative aspect, women face online harassment, trolling, and cyberbullying, sometimes silencing their voice.

Building and Strengthening Social Support Networks: Creating Niche Communities: Social media platforms in India have formed online communities based on shared interests, hobbies, or specific challenges. This is particularly beneficial for individuals who may feel isolated in their offline lives.

Powering Marginalized Voices: Social media provides a platform for individuals and groups who might be marginalized in Indian society. It enables them to connect with others who share similar experiences, creating a sense of belonging and collective strength. This can be impactful on marginalized groups like women, disabled people, the aged, sexual minorities, SC and ST castes, and orientations, helping them build support networks and advocate for their rights. **Sharing and Preserving Cultural Practices:** Platforms like Share Chat and Koo, which support multiple regional languages, have become important tools for sharing and preserving local cultures, traditions, and art forms. This helps to promote understanding and appreciation across different social groups.

Social Movement and Social Change: Social media has been instrumental in mobilizing people for various social and political movements in India. It can strengthen communal ties and collective resilience. For example, movements like #MeToo and campaigns for environmental causes have gained significant traction and support through social media, showing their power as a tool for social cohesion and advocacy.

New Forms of Community: Online communities offer support groups (mental health forums, hobby groups). Sociologist Barry Wellman calls this “networked individualism.” Individuals belong to multiple online networks simultaneously. Called the online community

Impact on Indian Culture: Social media connects Indians with global communities. It promotes cultural exchange, regional languages, folk art, dance, and music to get global visibility. It leads to cultural change.

Impact on children and adult Socialization: The Younger generation of India is more comfortable with online socialization. They are more active on social media.

Impact on the individual: The sharing of personal data, including photos and location, can lead to security risks and the exploitation of individuals. The lack of digital literacy in some segments of the population further compounds these risks. Sociological point of view, while technology offers new ways to connect. It also creates new forms of social alienation and inequality. The challenge for Indian society is to navigate this digital landscape in a way that preserves authentic human connections and strengthens social cohesion, rather than undermining them.

Conclusion:

Social media has become a more strange cultural force in India. It is a double-edged sword in society. It provides social and community support but also exacerbates anxiety, depression, and alienation. From a sociological lens, it reflects changing patterns of interaction, identity formation, and inequality. Social media is a double-edged sword in shaping modern social relationships. It fosters global connectedness, provides platforms for emotional support, and builds communities beyond geographical boundaries. Yet, it simultaneously weakens interpersonal intimacy, increases mistrust, and creates superficiality in human bonds. The Dual Nature of Social Media's Impact on Relationships in India. From a sociological perspective, the impact of social media on social relationships in India is a story of contradictions. Social media has democratized communication, making it possible to bridge geographical divides and maintain long-distance relationships. It has created new avenues for building niche communities and social support networks, which are particularly vital for marginalized groups. These platforms also offer new ways for individuals to express affection and engage in collective action, fostering social cohesion and change. Conversely, social media's rise has come at a cost. It can erode face-to-face interaction, leading to a decline in the quality of deep, personal connections within families and friendships. It has also introduced new sources of conflict and jealousy in relationships. Ultimately, social media is not a force that simply determines our social lives; it is a social construct that is shaped by and, in turn, shapes.

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