

# The Hidden Dangers of Social Media Networking – A Study

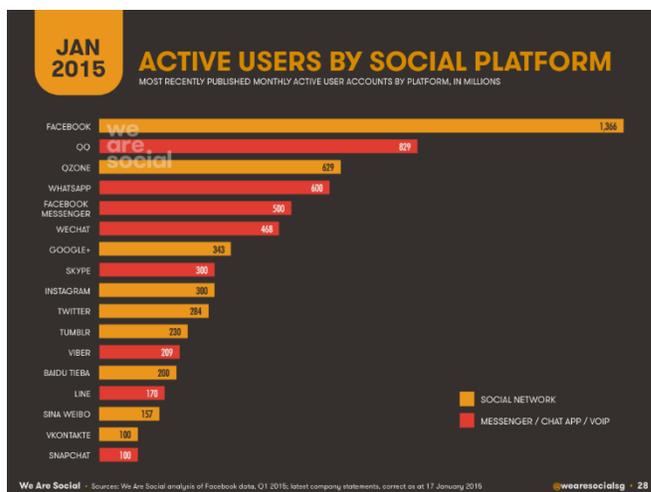
<sup>1</sup> Mr. Allan P Fernandez,

<sup>2</sup>Ms.Illikal Gillie Jayaprakashan

<sup>1,2</sup> Assistant Professor,  
Department of Humanities, St. Claret College,  
Bengaluru – 560013  
Karnataka, India

Social media has vastly changed the way human beings intermingle with one another. In just a split of a second, any person from any place on Earth can easily communicate with multiple people from across the globe. So addicted are we to it, that we have allowed it to permeate our culture and overrun our lives and we do not really understand how it works or how it will affect us.

The reason why Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and similar social networking websites have attracted hundreds of millions of active global users lies in people's desire to feel connected. At our very core, we all long to experience a sense of togetherness and belonging. The sense of being connected with others makes us feel loved, secure, happy—it helps break our attachment to our tiny little egos and identify ourselves with something bigger—a community. But the question is whether social media truly achieve that? Well, not really, and this is the hidden danger of social media: fooling us into believing that it can substitute the real thing we are seeking for. Although social media does help people to connect, the reality is that it does so only on a shallow level. Using social media can help us communicate in the form of text, images, or videos, which is all good and nice—but can that substitute true personal intimacy and physical bonding? This paper explores some of the main drawbacks of social media and how it affects us all in one way or the other.



## Lacking of Social Skills

People who use too much social media lack social skills. In social media, you have the option to scan the input from a variety of sources; you are not required to acknowledge, much less respond to, any input that does not interest you at that particular moment. This behaviour is creeping into our social interactions. And it's not social or good-mannered. It's self-indulgent and irritating.

## Depression

People who spend a lot of time on social media are more depressed. Actually, social media tends to stimulate feelings of envy, longing, and inferiority. People who post a lot on social media seem like they are having a lot of fun. Looking at cute selfies, adorable babies, picture-postcard vacations, and scrumptious meals in trendy restaurants can make our own lives (and our own selfies) seem sort of monotonous. The fact of the matter is that a lot of life is ordinary. We go to work and come home; our kids get dirty and act disrespectful; sometimes lunch comes from the vending machine. Social media is a nonstop window looking out on the life you don't actually have.

## All about Me

You can't go online for long without becoming a bit of a narcissist. If anything was every "all about me" it is social media. Even if you were a fairly reasonable person to begin with, you cannot have a strong social media footprint without developing significant narcissistic tendencies. By making yourself into a celebrity in your own mind, you evolve into a person who is narrating his/her own life to a digital audience.

## Lack of Empathy

Social media denizens lack fellow feeling. The problem with self-focus is that it narrows your scope. While we can like and react to the events in the lives of others, social media denizens become too focused on narrating their own stories to really get a sense of what it feels like to walk in another person's shoes. Ever noticed that there is not a great use of social media to help people deal with grief, loneliness, anxiety, and despair? Nobody cares. Cute puppies, pretty people, and destinations get more likes.

## Recklessness

Social media encourages recklessness. One of the great tools in developing skills as a conversationalist and just a general human being involves direct interaction with other people. When you have a conversation with another person that you can see, that person's reactions and responses help shape the conversation. We all learn what to say and what not to say by trial and error in real conversations with real people. Social media

affords no such safeguards; most of us are more or less alone when we post on social media and we do not have the luxury of seeing how our comments affect others. It is no secret that people will say things on the internet that they would not dare to say to another person face to face. Social media also encourages reckless sexual commentaries and pictures.

## Rise in Road Accidents

Social media apps may be guilty of distracted driving. We all know this by now, but it is still widely done. People are so smitten of their social media presence and people liking or commenting on their entries that they knowingly risk their own lives and the lives of others by texting while driving. Shouldn't this be the equivalent of drunk driving?

## Cyberbullying and Harassment

Any child or teen could become a victim of cyberbullying. While schoolyard bullying may typically happen where there's a power imbalance — for example, a bigger child threatening a smaller one, or a popular kid teasing a less popular student — online, anyone can become a bully or be bullied.

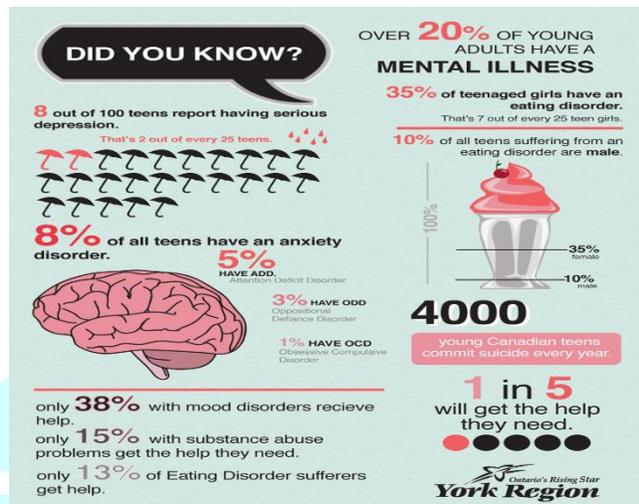


Kids are particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying when they're the new kid in town. Kids who have been in the same school for many years often have a network of friends for support, whereas a new student is more likely to be alienated.

## False Connection and Mental Health Issues

Social media often creates a false sense of connection between people. It's something many people have witnessed in themselves and their friends who've attempted long-distance relationships, where the

overwhelming majority of the communication takes place through messages or video calls (outrunthestigma.ca). And if it's somebody you're having a flirty, sexual, or romantic connection with, the dopamine hits are intensified significantly.



When that dopamine supply is cut off suddenly it can lead to many mental health issues. It is like cutting a rat off an infinite supply of cocaine. Not surprising that it can cause depression. While this interaction is part of our daily lives, it was never meant to be a substitute for face-to-face communication. Texting is a poor way to get to know someone, and we were never meant to be alone together.

## The Illusion of Security

The internet is definitely not secure, no more secure than walking down a street in the middle of the day in a very large city. In such a scenario you are routinely filmed without your knowledge by CCTV, cell phone cameras, regular everyday digital cameras and even the occasional TV camera. The internet is the same way only instead of video, your every keystroke is recorded, and every photo you upload is archived. Did you know you cannot 'delete' a photo from Facebook? You can remove it from your profile and the button is labelled 'delete', but Facebook keeps a copy, they always have, it is in your Facebook end-user agreement. Have you read it? Have you read any of the end-user agreements on these social media websites? You should. Did you know you cannot delete your Facebook account? You can deactivate it but it will always be there and hackers love inactive accounts (beliefnet.com). The password never changes.

On many occasions law enforcement has been able to track people and their activities based purely on internet activities alone. Most of the time this is for a good reason, to be sure, but have you ever asked yourself how they got access to this or that private chat message when they are obviously not a part of the social media circle in question?

Don't forget that every website on the internet has a 'sysadmin' and he can see and watch everything on their network. So, be sure of it, everything you put up on the internet STAYS on the internet for at least a VERY long time and it can be viewed by a wide variety of people for many different reasons. Every time you visit a website your IP address is recorded in a log file somewhere and associated with that website.

### **The Illusion of Privacy**

I once read a story of a woman who suffered from chronic depression. She was given time off from work to deal with the issue and was paid by the medical insurance company while she was off from work. On the advice of a doctor, recommended to her by the medical insurance company, she took a vacation to Mexico to help relieve the stress and depression. She posted pictures of her vacation on Facebook when she got back and the insurance company seen them, they said she was lying and could not possibly be depressed and going on vacation at the same time and cut off her benefits. This woman probably thought she was only posting to her own circle and chances are good the insurance company is not a part of that circle yet they still got the photos. How did that happen? No privacy on the internet.

There are other stories out there as well, teachers who have been disciplined for what they have said on Facebook in private chats or in rooms. Police officers, various other public officials, etc. I won't bore you with them, just remember there is no privacy on the net and there are countless examples that do not relate specifically to government spying or evil agendas. Don't do, post or say anything on the internet you would not do in public.

### **The Illusion of Safety**

The internet is definitely not safe. Especially for your kids. The best piece of advice one can give in this area is to learn how to use the built in firewalls on routers to block out specific websites from children or even for one's own benefit. Do not just rely on the built-in Parental Controls that comes with software firewalls to work. Most of these do not screen out social media the way it should. In my opinion no one under the age of 18 should even be on social media. It serves no purpose to kids other than to distract them, keep them inside and get them into trouble.

Consider the recent bullying cases involving Facebook. In the old days, before social media, a bullied child would at least normally be safe at home from the bullies but now they get no respite at all, bullying in schools pours over to bullying at home in the form of Facebook threats, insulting tweets and constant insulting and threatening text messages. Don't even get your kid a cell phone, I grew up without one, they are not required (IJCAT). They are distractions at best and tools of aggression and hostility at worst. Constant and unrelenting bullying has led to suicide among our young people.

And get into reviewing your kids interactions with social media. Save and review internet history listings in your browsers. Learn how to review the log files that are generated by your routers and operating systems. Everything you need to know is probably there and don't be afraid to block websites.

Keep yourself safe too. Watch who you interact with. Too many bad stories out there begin with the words 'They met on the internet'.

### **Effect on Future Job Prospects**

What you post on a social networking site can have a big impact on your reputation, and once something has been posted on the internet for all to see it is often all too difficult to take back. Despite this, however, most people seem completely oblivious to this fact. Many people will admit that they have typed something that they otherwise would never have said out loud. Damaging your reputation on social networking sites can have long-lasting consequences and can even affect your future job prospects.

In conclusion, social media can be helpful and even fun if used wisely. However, the hidden dangers of social media must be considered at all times when surfing the web or posting things online. Once a person's information is out there, it's out there for good. And anyone can find it.

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