

**Short Communication****ADDICTION TO SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES AND ITS EFFECT ON LIFECOURSE OF COLLEGE GOING STUDENTS IN SURAT CITY****Chawada BL<sup>1</sup>, Choksi RP<sup>1</sup>, Choksi SB<sup>1</sup>, Dari UT<sup>1</sup>, Pawar AB<sup>2</sup>, Bansal RK<sup>3</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Intern, <sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, <sup>3</sup>Professor and Head, Community Medicine Department, Surat Municipal Institute of Medical Education & Research, Surat**Keywords:** Internet, Social Networking, Students**INTRODUCTION**

Social networking is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like small rural communities or a neighbourhood subdivision... if you will. Although social networking is possible in person, especially in schools or in the workplace, it is most popular online. This is because unlike most high schools, colleges, or workplaces, internet is filled with millions of individuals who are looking to meet other internet users and develop friendships and business relationships, too. We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.<sup>(1)</sup> Internet gives people all around the world, access to social networking sites. This means that although you are in India, you could develop an online friendship with someone in Norway or Mexico. However, once you are inside this online community, you can begin to create your own network of friends and eliminate members that do not share common interests or goals. This study is an attempt for better understanding and knowing perceptions of college going students regarding social networking websites.

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

1. To explore the popularity of social networking websites among the college going students of Surat.
2. To assess the extent of addiction level to social networking websites by college going students of Surat.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This was a cross-sectional field based study. The study period extended from 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2008 to 5<sup>th</sup>

June, 2008. 300 students were selected from various colleges of Surat city on the basis of purposive sampling. All of them belonged to the age group 19-24 years. A pre-tested semi structured questionnaire was used in the study. Verbal consent was taken from all the participants before commencing the study. Maintenance of confidentiality of the respondents was assured to them. The colleges included in the study were: 1. Surat Municipal Institute of Medical Education and Research, 2.Sarvajani College of Education and Technology, 3.Sardar Vallabhbhai National Institute of Technology, 4.Government Medical College, Surat. The collected data was entered in Microsoft Excel, which was subsequently analyzed with the help of SPSS10.

**OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

Orkut was the most popular social networking website among the studied subjects. We also found that almost half of our respondents utilized at least 50% of their time on the internet in surfing various social networking websites. They visited these websites mainly to stay in touch with existing friends. Similar results are found in a study by Raacke J, Bonds-Raacke J.<sup>2</sup> 54 (18%) respondents agreed that dating was their main purpose behind using these websites. 168 (56%) users agreed to the fact that they would be more comfortable in striking up a conversation with a stranger on orkut, rather than doing it in person to person. This reflects the changing mentalities of the youth where they seem to live more in the virtual world created by such websites, and are drawing away from the real world. A striking 110 (37%) respondents agreed to the fact that because of using these social networking websites, their academic studies have suffered.

170 (57%) respondents agreed that if at work places, social networking websites were accessible, they would lead to wastage of valuable time.77 (26%) respondents said that

they could be a victim of blackmail threats/death threats/extortion threats from these websites. Ybarra et al<sup>3</sup> had also reported similar findings in their study. There has been incidences like happened in Mumbai where a 16 year old boy was kidnapped and murdered using the information available from his profile on orkut.<sup>4</sup> 107 (36%) respondents agreed that they watched porn videos from the links available on these websites. Easy accessibility of porn videos and porn literature could lead to alteration in the sexual behaviour of the users which is evident in a study by Moreno et al.<sup>5</sup>

93 (31%) respondents agreed that they were addicted to using these websites. This is a potential threatening disadvantage of using such websites. This could badly affect their mental health.

### CONCLUSION

Looking at the statistics in this study it seems that social networking websites are part and parcel of the lives of youth today. Youth- the life stage of creativity, innovation, exploring of social and cultural life, cheerfulness, physical activity, shaping of personality and social skills etc. seems to be eroded by the evil in the form of social networking websites. Timely counselling of school going children

who are susceptible to addiction of these websites and their parents is the pressing need of the hour. The role of parents and school teachers is crucial in identifying such children and imparting education in this regard. This could be the primary prevention of mental health disorders among future youth.

### REFERENCES

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