

# **The Impact of Social Media on Younger Generation: The Use of Facebook among the Undergraduates of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka**

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## **Introduction**

Using social media is among the most common practice of today's younger generation. Any website that allows social interaction is considered a social media, including social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter; gaming sites and virtual worlds such as Club Penguin, Second Life, and the Sims; video sites such as YouTube; and blogs. Such sites offer today's youth a portal for entertainment and communication and have grown exponentially in recent years (O'Keefe and Pearson, 2011). However, although social media yield positive impacts upon the younger generation, it also causes negative impacts upon them, for not all of the social media are healthy environments for adolescents or youngsters.

South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, which is one of the fast developing universities in South Asia, caters to the various needs of students including the Information Technology and other necessary skills required to keep abreast with the modern trends of the world in the contemporary era. Almost all the students at the university have the access to computers, as it has been provided on the basis of 4:1, that is, a computer is available for four students. Moreover, the influence of smart-phones among the students is squarely predominant. In this backdrop, it is inevitable that the students are drawn to social media, particularly the Facebook, for various needs. As such, it is significant to undertake a study of this nature, focusing the use of Facebook among the younger generation representing the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka.

## **Research Aim or Objective**

The use of social media, particularly the Facebook among the youth in the contemporary era is inevitably predominant, given the scientific and technological invention that led to the fast growth

of smart phones. Although the use of Facebook-social networking brings quite a lot of benefits to the university students, it also contributes to the strings of problems that can even disturb or distract their education at the university. As such, this study is undertaken to explore how influential the Facebook is among the undergraduates of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka and what impacts it causes upon them.

### **Research Methodology**

This is a qualitative study encompassing different data collection techniques. While primary data was collected based on the observation, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, secondary data was obtained from books, journal articles, reports and other secondary materials.

25 in-depth interviews and 2 focus group discussions were carried out with students representing 5 faculties of the university. Selection of interviews was based on simple random sampling. The study uses the descriptive analysis to analyze the data gathered at the field.

### **Research findings**

The study finds that the students are facing the problems of Facebook depression, particularly the male students, as they are fully immersed in it almost all the time. It also reveals that the Facebook creates a false sense of connection with the people around the world; a lot of the people in the Facebook roam around with fake ids, which cause innumerable problems. Interestingly, the study reveals that the closed relationship in the Facebook becomes distant and on the contrary, the distant relationship in the Facebook becomes closer. More importantly, the study finds that it causes massive challenges on the socialization process of younger generation and their privacies. However, it needs to be emphasized that the study finds that the Facebook also brings in positive impacts such as forming social networks and relationship, sharing and caring the information of others and so on.

In conclusion, it is noted that the usage of Facebook by the younger generation is contingent upon how they make use of it, either positively or negatively.

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