THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING MEDIA – ‘FACEBOOK’ ON THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP IN THE FAMILIAL ENVIRONMENT

ABSTRACT

The increasing digital connect has definitely transformed the way we communicate and interact. We live in a progressively networked world. We are connected to each other through numerous types of ties, with social networking media being one of the most popular methods people currently employ to link with each other. In this era of communication, Facebook has become a virtual family member. The question that is being asked is this: has the evolution of the social networking site Facebook created a void in the connect between parents and their children? Have the children become dependent on the instantaneous, virtual friend to even bother conversing with family?

This thesis examines the influence of social networking media ‘Facebook’ on the parent-child relationship - to see how they differ from traditional offline relationships, and will focus on how Facebook has generated a new type of relationship between family members. The study used the theoretical frameworks of ‘uses and gratifications’ approach from media studies. The main objective of the thesis is to evaluate how the social networking site, Facebook, impacts relationships in the real world. To address the purpose of the study effectively, a triangulation design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analyses was decided upon. The design of the study comprises surveys, conducted among 356 children between 13 – 21 years of age in Chennai, and in-depth interviews with 40 parents, regarding the use of social networking media, especially
Both Qualitative and Quantitative analyses of the study showed that not much difference is seen in the Parent-children relationship after the intervention of Facebook. The new virtual friend, Facebook has helped them understand their children beyond familial environment. The Quantitative analysis of the data revealed that children are elated with this new found freedom to express their views and the way they wanted to be. Children feel that Facebook deepens the mutual trust between children and parent by adding their parent as a ‘friend’. The study concluded that the influence of the social networking media Facebook has not affected the Parent-children relationship; rather it augmented the existing traditional face to face communication.