Chapter 7

GENERALIZATIONS &
CONCLUSION
Social Networking Sites are very popular among youth and adolescents. The present study provides a strong base for analyzing the technological implications on adolescent behaviour in the domain of sociology. The primary objective of the study is to shed light on the role of social networking sites on adolescent Internet users and their effects on social, physical and psychological aspects of adolescents. The research aims to study the impact of social networking sites on adolescents and to discover whether these sites are promoting deviant behaviour amongst adolescents. The following important generalizations can be drawn from the primary study conducted in Jaipur study. Although little research has been conducted on the effects of the Internet on various aspects of human development, the role of computers and the Internet as a means for socialization, education, information access, entertainment, shopping, and communication is increasing dramatically. The study finds that majority of adolescent users belong to 16-17 years of age group (44.25%). The adolescents of 16-17 years of age group have easy access to Internet in comparison to other age groups and they easily convince their parents for the same. Moreover, most of the parents accept that they are not aware of their adolescent’s online life. It is their adolescent children who teach them the use of technology resulting in Reciprocal Socialization\(^1\). Although many of these sites have age restrictions, there is no effective way to enforce these requirements. The
study reveals that adolescents in their desperation to join the social networking sites do not even disclose their correct age. The fact that adolescents post false age in order to become a member of social networking site indicates the emergence of deviance amongst adolescents. In addition, majority of them (82.5%) study in Private and Missionary schools. Government schools have very few (17.5%) active users of Social networking sites. Private and Missionary schools focus on curriculum promoting the use of internet. Besides these schools inculcate values of freedom, liberty and adaptation to change which is not the case in government schools. It is also noted that both males (52.5%) and females (47.5%) are equally active on Social networking sites. Earlier the parents focused on education of boys only but today girls are given equal attention and access to learning by parents thereby reducing gender-bias. This reflects a dramatic change in the socialisation process of Indian society. The study points out that many adolescent users (67.5%) of Social networking sites belong to upper income section of society. This is because of the fact that they have easy access to technology. They can easily afford latest gadgets (Ipod, mobile phones etc) on which internet can be accessed anytime. Adolescent participation in activities on social networking sites irrespective of their religion and caste reveals that technological progress has broken the barriers of caste and religion and has integrated all global citizens on common platform
to interact and participate. The study reveals that majority of adolescents (90%) have access to Internet connection which gives them enough freedom to use it as per their convenience. This is because parents promote their teenagers to learn and acquire new information from online sources. A culture of media consumption has emerged where parents have a limited role to play. Besides, the adolescents often use social networking sites to connect with friends and build communities. The study points out that 60% of adolescents access their account daily for a considerable amount of time. However, it is observed that adolescents (45%) of both working parents devote more time (more than 2 hours daily) on social networking sites and frequently access these sites on regular basis (35%) in comparison to adolescents who have only one parent working (55%). Working Parents give less time and attention to their children and most of their socialization takes place through mass media(TV) and social media(Social networking sites). Majority of adolescents (70%) use Social networking sites to enhance their status, followed by 65% of them who use it for entertainment, 56% are involved in viewing and posting photographs, 38% use them for searching new friends. These digital natives see social media as a logical extension of traditional communication methods. Adolescents have a deep quest for identity. The desire to be popular amongst the peer group far outweighs the desire to be respected, and their social media accounts
can verify this. It is also found that adolescents who have more friends (67%) on various social networking sites are more popular and viewed as technically sound by their peers. These have become a major source for building social relationships amongst youth in contemporary society. Social networking sites promote new range of activities such as networking, blogging, vlogging, gaming, downloading, uploading, sharing and collaborating with others. According to the study, Facebook is the most popular social networking site among many adolescents (80%) because of several functions which make it attractive to its users. Through social media, adolescents are developing a new sense of identity where they fit into their own community as well as the world community. The study reveals that adolescents are able to explore their identity and more importantly express their identity, through various activities on social networking sites.

The study observes that majority of the adolescents are online daily for a long period of time due to which their studies are affected negatively resulting in poor academic grades. The study reveals that 50% of adolescents have negative effect on their academic performance. Their academic grades have declined after joining social networking site. Adolescents even rely on the computer grammar and spelling check features. As a result, they have poor command over language and creative writing skills. They rely more on the virtual environment for
learning instead of gaining practical knowledge from the real world. This indicates that the focus on offline learning as well as on retaining information through books has reduced. The academic tasks which were previously done by referring to various books and magazines are now copied from the Internet. It is also observed that students who use social networking sites on a regular basis tend to have negative effect on health such as stomach aches, poor sleep patterns, eye strain, anxiety and depression. The study reveals that 38% have adverse effect on their health after joining Social networking sites. They also stay up in night to use Social networking site leading to adverse syndromes like irritability, anger etc. In addition, the study points that 55% adolescents cut down their outdoor activities after joining Social networking sites. The study also reveals that social networking sites have negative effects on family and kinship bonds. Majority of adolescents (56%) are found to be less interactive with family members after joining Social networking sites. Family leisure time has been replaced by activities on social networking sites and the time that was earlier devoted to family conversations has been replaced by online conversations. A noticeable trend in the study is that adolescents spending too much time on social sites have developed a tendency to spend lesser time on socializing in person leading to poor interpersonal communication skills. Majority of the respondents in the study prefers to spend time on social networking sites as compared to
attending social events. The social networking sites are on the one hand, hindering the ability of teenagers to develop social skills and nurture interpersonal relationships and on the other hand are leading to an emergence of asocial attitude among adolescents. Not only this, adolescents are becoming more self centred and individualistic. The study reveals that many adolescents (55%) have negative effect on their personality. A sizeable number i.e. 55% have developed a tendency to check their account again and again. The data reveals that any restrictions imposed on the use of social networking sites bring in the feeling of aggression, anger and frustration among adolescents. Adolescents don’t want parental control and solicitation. Adolescents using Internet and social networking sites frequently exhibit different standards of behaviour, online and offline. This reflects that they are having on online addiction in which an individual forgets his/her real life and finds solace in virtual life. This trend makes a person avoid his real life problems and indulge in cyber space. This is having an adverse effect on the personality of adolescents who have framed their dual identity one in real world and another in virtual world.

Social networking sites not only affect the adolescent’s way of life but also determine a change in their behaviour. The study seeks to reveal whether these adolescents are involved in deviant activities on Social
networking sites. Various indicators were taken into account for this purpose. The need for social association explains why majority of the adolescents (60%) post their personal information and photographs on social networking sites. They upload images or share personal information such as their real name and geographic location without taking consent from their parents. This trend shows dissipating informal social control in the contemporary society. They believe that they are sharing emotions only with their friends, whereas in fact these are being shared with an unknown audience making them vulnerable to associated risks. They do so in association with their friends. The peer group thus remains one of the most influential forces; a dominant reference group in the lives of adolescents. A new Social networking site terminology has developed (lol,sic,etc) which is being used extensively by the adolescents. The study reflects that many adolescents (32%) are aware of Social networking site terminology and abusive words used on these sites. Absence of any type of control on these sites has given an opportunity to youngsters to adapt to new terms and languages without knowing their bad effects on their personal growth and development. These terms are incorporated by them in their daily lives giving rise to poor personality.

Moreover, many adolescents (48%) accept that they have made friends on Social networking site who are otherwise strangers. The adolescents
are unaware of the potential risks which these strangers can pose. This is an indication that new generation takes risk without knowing about its probable effects. In addition, 41% also create their fake profiles on Social networking sites. They do so to send offensive messages to someone. Other reasons for this are to bully someone, to defame, to try hacking, for downloading illegal music/games, and for spreading viruses. They can navigate effectively between two different worlds of their real and fake identity and have developed bicultural multicultural selves. They feel that they are anonymous and can easily escape from any form of control. 28% adolescent users also accepted to view their friends sending obscene messages or images to someone. Majority of adolescents (51%) also accepted to crack passwords on social networking sites. 20% have also tried hacking on Social networking sites for showing their technical competence to friends. Many of them (33%) have seen their peers spreading viruses for the sake of fun. 39% adolescents have tried identity theft. They have stolen identities of some people and created fake profiles for sending messages. But no one has done it for monetary profit. The study also highlights that 65% adolescents download illegal games, music and videos. They do so as it is easy and is done mostly in association with others. Social networking sites have also created a new standard of social acceptance. A noticeable trend in the study reveals that many adolescents (32%) are involved in
online flaming (hostile and insulting interactions between Internet users). This is also learnt online in association with others. Thus association with deviant peers also result in more deviance amongst adolescents. 32% of them are also involved in sending Hate or offensive messages on Social networking sites. Majority of adolescents (52%) have observed their friends involved in cyber bullying and 45% are involved in cyber defamation on Social networking sites. In addition, many of them (around 60%) do not comply with many restrictions set by their parents on use of Social networking site.

It is also observed that half of the users (50%) have set their profile that can be viewed by anyone and majority of the adolescents (60%) are also unaware of the fact that even if images or information once posted are removed, the digital footprint remains accessible on the Internet. When inquired why these adolescents have not been careful with their online behaviour so as to reduce the associated risks, it was found that most of them lacked awareness regarding these risks. Even though the adolescents seem to be getting techno savvy, they remain oblivious to potential risks and security concerns and end up compromising on safety issues. Besides, their reckless online behaviour is not perceived as deviant by them which lead to conclude that deviance is a derivative of modernity. The reason behind this deviance is that the social sanctions
are not clearly defined and implemented in cyber space. The sanctions in cyber space are weak as compared to those in real society. Besides, eroded socialization and poor informal social control functions are also important causes of increase in deviance. In sum, it has facilitated the development of a deviant adolescent subculture which emphasizes on self, pleasure and adventure.

The study also reveals that adolescents unknowingly tend to get victimised through social networking sites. Cybercrime through social networking sites has seen a dramatic rise in last few years. The criminals are using it as a platform for conduction of online criminal acts because of its anonymous nature. The study reveals that adolescents are not only potential online victims of cybercrime but are also potential perpetrators. Some of them exhibit an insatiable curiosity and naivety, a need to assert themselves, and a high-risk bearing attitude on social networking sites. Majority of the adolescents (68%) agree that they have been victims of Cyber bullying that has led to terror, depression and sometimes even suicidal attempts. The study observes that many of the adolescents (66%) suffer from discriminating content on social networking sites which is gender-based or class-based. Cyber defamation is also widespread as seen that 64% have been its victim. The effects of online defamation are worse than offline defamation due to the global nature of
the Internet. Many adolescents (63%) have also faced identity theft on social networking sites. It is because of the technological dependence that adolescents have on electronics, laptops, personal computers, cell phones, wireless networking and the internet. Thus, social networking sites are breeding grounds for conduction of cyber crimes in contemporary society.

Durkhiem\(^3\) considers deviance as serving four major functions; Affirming cultural values and norms, clarifying moral boundaries, promoting social unity and encouraging social change. In his views crime is an extreme form of deviance and is normal to healthy. The study points that deviance on Social networking site has emerged because of technological advancement which has induced social change. Durkhiem also considered very low crime rate related to dysfunctional society. Open, flexible society with freedom has crime and deviant behaviour. Even Indian society is more flexible and open to changes. The study indicates about the emerging trends of deviance and crime on Social networking sites. The law is ambiguous and does not address issues related to adolescents’ involvement in such acts. The fact is that if such acts are not controlled now then we may have an upcoming generation of youth who can be future cyber criminals, given the ease of technology and progress. Besides, the adolescents have adverse effects
on their academics, health and personality which are not good indications for Indian society. These adolescents may face problems in getting good employment. The following Paradigm suggested by the researcher indicates the emergence of cyber crime and deviance through social networking sites, which have emerged as a result of the change in the social structure.

**Paradigm**

The central dynamics of the Information Society is structured around the net and the self. The net stands for new formations based on networked communication media. The self symbolizes people who try to reaffirm their identities under the conditions of structural and cultural change. New social formation which may be sexual, religious, ethnic or territorial are unchangeable and get in contrast with the fast paced changed identities of social landscapes. Social development cannot be separated from technological development since technology is society and society cannot be understood or represented without its technological tools, as quoted by Castells (1996) \(^4\). Network society is the result of this technological development. A culture of real virtuality has emerged which is characterized by timeless time\(^5\) and placeless space\(^6\). The following paradigm developed by the researcher shows the evolution of network society characterized by a change in the patterns of
social interaction,(dominated by virtual relations) and emergence of cyber crime at a global level. A paradigm is a conceptual pattern that sets the standards for performance. It integrates discoveries into a coherent system of relationships characterized by its synergy. A technological paradigm is organized around a series of technological discoveries around some nucleus and a system of relationships that enhance the performance of each specific technology. Researcher on the basis of empirical perceptivity has attempted to construct a theoretical paradigm viz. ‘Network Society and Cyber Crime’ to understand the emergence of cyber crime, particularly as a consequence of network society. It is assumed that by using this frame of reference, the emergence of Cyber crime can be understood in terms of the three aspects of Globalization i.e. Global community, Global economy and Information Revolution. This paradigm construction would not have been possible without going through Castells paradigm of Informationalism\(^7\) i.e. structuration of scientific knowledge and technological innovation based on the augmentation of the human capacity of information processing and communication by the revolution in Software and Genetic engineering.
THEORETICAL PARADIGM OF ‘NETWORK SOCIETY AND CYBER CRIME’

Diagram 7.1

Network Society and emergence of Cyber crime can be understood on the basis of following propositions incorporated in this paradigm:
Due to the liberalization of financial markets, the Globalization era ushered in 1990s. Globalization can be understood as both a process as well as a project. As a process Globalization is more or less a natural phenomenon, while as a project, it refers to an intentional activity. Globalization has given rise to three aspects i.e. Global Community, Global Economy and Information Revolution.

- **Global Community** is the product of modernity and has become the basis of global order. Democracy, an important feature of majority of modern societies, is now the basis of legitimation at the global level. Therefore, the individuals are the global citizens who act for a global responsibility.

- **Global Economy** is the result of “time-space” compression, meaning the transition between ‘moments and distances’ between spaces have reduced. Geographic distance is no longer an obstacle. Trade takes place freely around the globe with the least expensive labour and least manufacturing costs.

- **Information Revolution** is the most important aspect of Globalization. Innovation in Information Technology plays a main role in the acceleration of globalization. It has changed
the way in which organizations conduct business because technologies have become cheaper, more standardized and more replicable.

- **Global Identity** is a product of global community which means that an individual’s identity is not restricted to his group/community/nation but he also identifies himself with multiple groups/communities/nations making him global citizen (new social formations like virtual communities).

- Global Economy is mainly characterized by **Global Capitalism** as under the new conditions of Globalization, industrial capitalism has taken a global turn with the capitalist trotting all around the globe.

- **Informational Capitalism** refers to the increasing importance of information within capitalism under conditions of globalization and rapid technological development through global communication mediums. It is closely related to knowledge economy (Drucker[1969]1992) and leads to formation of new organizational formations (MNCs, TNCs, etc).

- Global Identity, Global Capitalism and Informational Capitalism together have led to the dawn of **Information Age**
which is spreading its hold on the global landscape. Information Age has allowed rapid global communications and networking to shape the contemporary society.

- The interaction among the three processes viz. Global Identity, Global Capitalism and Informational Capitalism has given rise to a new form of social structure i.e. ‘The Network Society’. This society goes beyond the information society as it is not defined purely by technology but also by other factors such as culture, polity and economy. It has led to a new form of socialization pattern which now takes place in networked environment centred on social and mass media.

- The Space of Flows plays a central role in network society. It refers to higher level cultural abstraction of space and time leading to a technological and organizational possibility of simultaneity and continuity. Most of the dominant functions in the network society (transnational productive networks, media networks, global governance and global social movements) are working around the space of flows. Space and Time are redefined with the emergence of a new social structure and they express the culture(s) of the network society.
• **Time and Space Compression**\(^{10}\) arises out of space of flows. Time and space are compressed in the global scenario. It has become possible to conquer time and space with the revolution in Information technology. Communication with far off people within a fraction of seconds has given rise to ease of networking and anonymity. Netizens can interact around the globe within network with anonymity. It is because virtual space is embedded with multiple nature of institutions (like media, community, security). It also results in deviance online because of normlessness which is frequent on social networking sites. Adolescents and Youth who are excessively involved in networking develop deviance which is characterized by self-centeredness, aggressiveness and anonymity, which further gives rise to cyber crime. Further, the fact that offenders are spread across the globe weakens the system of law and punishment.

• **Cyber Crime** at a global level is an extreme form of deviance. It has given rise to formation of laws all around the world because of its dynamic nature. Governments all over the world are united together on a common front to combat cyber crime
and deviance which is increasing by leaps and bounds. It is the result of emergence of network structure of society.

Research on cybercrime and Social networking sites is important to our understanding of crime as our society becomes more and more dependent on technology. As the use of computers and the internet becomes further engrained into our society this problem will continue to face legislators and law enforcement officials. The fluidity of technology makes difficult to develop programs and policies. Cybercrime research is an important area of study for criminologist as we move farther into the digital age where there may be a day when the number of cybercrimes committed outweighs the number of traditional crimes committed. Sociology needs a new sub-field ‘Sociology of Cyber crime and Deviance’ to understand, analyze, evaluate and study about the issues of cyberspace and virtual world.

The paradigm constructed by the researcher is only a suggestion of the manner in which cyber crimes are perpetrating in the contemporary society. It is still in its initial stages and can be modified further with new insights and researches.