

DEFAULT PRIVACY V/S CUSTOM PRIVACY: EMBODIMENT OF PRIVACY BY ADOLESCENTS DURING THE USAGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE

Sonal D. Nade

Research Scholar, Department of Media and Communication Studies, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune, Maharashtra, India

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ABSTRACT

Though, defining communication has complicated with the transformation and usage of media, since the inception of social networking site (SNS), the arena of communication networking has completely altered. Social interaction through sites have been a phenomenon which each user has quite smoothly adjusted in, but as the technology advances the socialfunction that this media form offers, seems to get more intrusive while forcing to maintain a decorum of privacy which seems challenging. When self - exploration is at its peak such intrusiveness from the communication channels and the continuous pressure of participation gives a scope of implying the change in development and privacy management. While the generations determine their knowledge through age and experience, social media technology where the youngsters who are rightfully considered as the natives of the medium have strategies to handle things in their own ways. Adolescent is considered to be at the developmental phase, where privacy takes up priority than the casual exchange of thoughts. Understanding this dilemma of privacy concern among the adolescents and still managing their social life online; demand strategic planning to sustain self on such open forums.

While the social networking site allows adolescents to socialize on their favored sites and get engaged with the features that creators have interestingly designed, a fact that is never missed is such virtual social gatherings are information exchange. The amount of information supplied consciously and unconsciously triggers the social expression depending upon how much privacy needs is to be reserved.

Its human to hide things for safety but unfortunately, the study shows that adolescents do not intent to hide much than their real age. Every SNS offer a privacy setting making it look quite flawlessly achievable and the adolescents fall for such settings assuming the privacy has cared. Here the question arises when the users have to actually interpret the importance of privacy and achieving it in their own ways. There are research's which considers that adolescents assume that privacy options available to them via social site offer accurate privacy which makes them vulnerable, but this research paper diversifies such studies.

This paper illustrates how adolescents gain and regain privacy; eventually making terms with the public-ness of the social media participations. Instead of controlling their privacy settings adolescents make improvements with the choices of the features that social media offer for their social presence. Social media has a larger socialization platform to offer but adolescents are gradually scrutinizing how they wish to use platforms for their benefits.

KEYWORDS: *Social Networking Site, Adolescents, Privacy, Socialization, Social Media Features, Privacy Settings, Public*

INTRODUCTION

Communication has layered itself with many meanings one can presumably interpret in the vast cluster of media channels. As rightly said by Fiske (1990) “Communication is one of those human activities that everyone recognizes but few can define satisfactorily”. Since the advent of social media networking, communication has coated self with privacy, considering its publicness. New communication milieus like social media sites (SNS) offer additional opportunities and challenges for them which needs a great deal of understanding to know the future of communication in the digital world. Social Media are ubiquitous and can be seen as an integral part of human communication at every walk of life. It is remarkable how teenagers explore the communication process and its vehicles. Social media has been altering its forms significantly and with the considerable use of these by the adolescents even before the official undersigned age, the assortment of concerns requires keen attention. According to Boyd.D, (2016) youths today have an extra element of categorizations apart from age, their experience, desires, interests, and values that are so vividly enriching that makes it difficult to set one grid to understand them with the choice of communication they make.

As this social networking site (SNS) display creative features that demand continuous activation along with commitments from its users it becomes difficult for them to anticipate the digital self in the social networking sphere. Transformation from the desktops to smart phone for such use of technology assures confirmed connectivity with their users and since the adolescence attach the resonance of individual freedom such usage goes unguided by the adults; hence the research stands vital to study to what extent this freedom is been explored and what choice is made to make the social connections with the known and the mutual in the wide pool of socialization.

Interestingly among all the age groups adolescence seem to experiment communication on social media as “they have been seen construct their social networks in a variety of different ways” (Madden Mary, Lenhart A, Cortesi S, Gasser U, Duggan M, Smith A, Beaton M, 2013) “As the adolescents primarily leverage social network sites to engage in common practices, the properties of these sites configured their practices and teens were forced to contend with the resultant dynamics (Boyd, 2008). It is seen that adolescents start making sense of social media and alter their usage according to their preference.

The research understands the changing social communication form that adolescents adopt and how technology shapes their thinking and blends their personalities with the digitized self. These digitized personalities’ that adolescents flaunt on social networking sites require a great deal of attention during its usage. While everything that the individuals do on the social media platforms is public in spite of the privacy policy, this concerns the parents as to how to media literate the adolescents for the activities conducted. “We have become the product,” says Rob Livingstone he further states, “We’re being monetized in essence. “We are being mobilized as products with the inducement of the service of we use such as Facebook and Twitter”.

Social Media and Adolescents

The power of social media is rooted in its ability to connect people across time and space. The way these tools are used alters a plethora of practices, including communication, collaboration, information dissemination, and social organization (Benkler 2006; Castells 1996; Rheingold 2002). Social media has affected how people interact with one another and, thus, it has the potential to alter how society is organized. Although they are simply the messengers, social media tools are revered for their potential to connect (Shirky 2008; Tapscott and Williams 2006; Weinberger 2008) and despised as corrupting forces (Keen 2007). These connections take interesting routes through the life of adolescents making them tackle every aspect of social media offering. As adolescents spend more time using new media (internet) than any other leisure, except for sleeping (de Haan & Huysmans, 2004). Adolescents have intertwined new media in their daily lives (Mesh, 2009), seamlessly integrating online and offline communication in order to sustain their social networks by easily switching between types of media (Livingstone, 2003).

Communicating with others is the main reason for adolescents to use new media (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008) and the content of this communication is mostly about identity-management (Livingstone, 2002). Adolescents' use of new media has more of a trial and error identity formation. What suites best and presents best is often been displayed. Issues are not the usage of such fluctuating media form but the continues re-conformity to their identity. Turkle (Digital Downside) says, since "always connected, children, adolescents, and adults become dependent on the presence of others for validation in the most basic ways,". Such validation affects the way individuals look at themselves through the perveance of others. In case of SNS through the comment, followers and click appreciations.

Privacy

While the SNS allow adolescents to socialize on their favored sites and get engaged with the features that they creators have interestingly designed, a fact that is never missed is such virtual social gatherings are information exchange. The amount of information supplied consciously and unconsciously triggers the process. As studied by Dwyer Catherine et al (2007) suggest "Average online social networking (OSN) users can be easily manipulated if they believe that OSN sites are entirely secure, and therefore are more willing to post personal information". Considering the apex of excitement that flows after receiving the feedback for the post's adolescents charge up their social networking formula of sharing the happenings of their life. Such excitement unveils the life of the adolescents on the open platform of socialization. Only by experience, they tend to unfold the hinges of private and publics sharing on social networks.

Various study revolves around the concerns of privacy and adolescents. Lenhart and Madden (2007) studied teenagers' views on their personal privacy and online security. Pew Internet & American Life Project examined how teens understand their privacy through several lenses: by looking at the choices that teens make to share or not to share information online, by examining what they share, by probing the context in which they share it and by asking teens for their own assessment of their vulnerability. A Study by Ralph (2005) on the usage of privacy settings shows that a majority of Facebook users do not change their default privacy settings even though they are able to limit the visibility of their profile information from Strangers.

Such spaces are seen giving adolescents a sense of individuality with and sometimes without adult supervision. Hence making the most of the available by carving their own rules, adolescent set their grounds on the socialized world.

METHODOLOGY

The study is empirical in nature as the crux of the research entailed to understand the privacy perspective of the adolescents in the world of online socialization for which 15 in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussion was been conducted. The basis of Qualitative research in social studies attempts to undertake the socialization of adolescents on social media guides of studying individuals' experiences. To gain a central understanding of the experiences that these adolescents share having a direct contact through conversation allowing the respondents and the researcher to better share their stake of social media as platform interview technique has been adopted for the study. Since Social media has many components of self-presentation certain responses could not hold a group approach. Hence researcher initially took focus group discussion as a technique to study the adolescents in their public nature and understand the concept of privacy, following which few respondents were selected to carry out an in-depth interview.

Data Collection

The primary source of data collection was an in-depth interview, Maykut&Morehouse (1994:46) states that "The data of qualitative inquiry is most often people's words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behavior. The most useful ways of gathering these forms of data are participant observation, in-depth interviews, group interviews, and the collection of relevant documents".

Focus Group discussion enriched the study by understanding the core activities conducted during the social media usage using social presence as a basis and the perspective of privacy understanding build during such social engagements.

Whereas, in-depth interview allowed the researcher to probe the structural built up of how the respondents (adolescents) journey initiated which would have been difficult using any other technique. The researcher used semi-structured interview which comprised of open-ended questions. Each interview lengthened for the duration of 60 – 70 mins. The research carries data that comprises of 22 Focus Group Discussion with an average of 12 – 15 respondents and In-depth interview of 15 purposively selected respondents.

SAMPLING SCHEME

Determining the research questions that the researcher wanted to invest in, Purposive sampling has been selected. The age group included adolescents from 13 to 19 years selected from various schools and colleges in the Pune city (India). Pune being a cosmopolitan city have a cultural background and is been considered as an educational hub, hence the city has a diverse population of students coming from various parts of the country. Hence the researcher concentrated on only one city capturing various users, though the researcher does not attempt to generalize the findings to the country.

Criteria for Research Respondents for Focus Group Discussion

Adolescents would fall under the age group of 13 to 19 years which is been considered as Teenagers. The respondents should have had or been using Social Media for socialization for at least 4 months. The respondents should have access to social media through any gadgets that are either possessed personally (like a smartphone, laptop) or through any other source.

Criteria for Research Respondents for In-depth interview

These respondents were selected from the focus group of the research. Respondents who had were seen active (used SNS every day for atleast 2 hours) possessed personal gadget with internet connectivity and had the potentials to converse willingly on their SNS usage.

Analysis

The paper used thematic analysis to study the interviews, which aided to carve out the themes developed during the interviews and the adolescents understanding of privacy. Themes express meaningful patterns, stances of the participants, or concerns. Themes may be qualitatively distinct from one another. A theme is kept close to the text, and textual examples of the theme are required to identify another portion of text exemplifying the same theme.

Findings and Observation

The implications drawn out of the research fetches ideas of social media and adolescent's compatibility in ways that are desirable for the socialization. The study keenly observes and was successful in drawing out aspects of selection, interaction, privacy play, and identity displays as a core validation while adolescents map their virtual presence. While the study gave an essence of various themes privacy was central to the overall usage, the research found levels of privacy concerns among the adolescents depending upon what their status of social media guidance was compelled with.

Privacy Anxieties

Like any other individual, privacy did concern the adolescents for the disclosures of ideas, thoughts, information, pictures, perceptions by various means are the key features of Social gatherings on SNS. The obvious concern that would outgrow at any stage is privacy for all the displays of self. Privacy concerns shape up adolescents thinking by experiences they have while socializing online, but much before that adolescents quite interestingly show a desire to follow a much-guided path as suggest and authorized by parents which later irrupts by self-defining the desire to share things out of interest and

self-portrayals. Total understanding of Privacy is seen laid on two profile settings available online.

The hunt for online Privacy varies among adolescents depending on the relationship they share with their parents. The research comes with 3 categories of such privacy seekers first being the Home Ground Rule Privacy Seekers, second Adjusters Privacy Seekers and the last one being the Non-Privacy Seekers. Each of the categories is been discussed analyzing the interviews.

Home Ground Rule Privacy Seekers

Clearly, the adolescent's perspective of Privacy has changed over the usage 30% worry of the Privacy as inscribed by the parents and wishes to see the same online. These adolescents have been seen playing safe with the sharing and online socialization the researcher would rather quote them as the no risk takers. They have their own contribution to the Privacy amendments required in the online Privacy settings available on SNS. Usually, these adolescents tend to have long discussions with their parents about other peers and their sharing which adds up the ground rule of how they are expected to use the medium wisely.

"I have kept all my account settings Private my friends know me so even if they want to tag me, they seek permission I have kept that setting, my mother had shown so many pics of her friends which where been tagged had her friend didn't knew. It's not good that people use your pics this way they personal moments".

Further when questions were raised if they feel safe with their online with strangers these adolescents quickly narrate their friend list and the choices they make while friending any person. Accepting mutual friend request has a series of rules to be followed for them (which is set by adolescents themselves), the adolescents falling in this category are generally seen taking longer time deciding their friends online, thou family and relatives make to their top list the concern fall with the mutual. There seems an unseen restricted feed from the parents and school authorities which the adolescents tend to follow on accepting any kind of friends online. They show a desire to meet the mutual at least once before they could make any friendly conversation online. Such demands make them more skeptical on privacy requirements. Overall they intend to portray a personality that is unapproachable to the strangers completely. Following which their usage on the SNS differ (which is been discussed in the theme of unique usage) with what they seek in privacy than the socialization. 30% of which has faced some cyberbullying experiences in their schooling.

Taking a closer look at this category of adolescent's profile they seem to have very limited friends having a casual approach of Privacy understanding in reality. These are adolescents that go with the face value of everything available, there seems to be a trust relation formed among the creators and the users. Inquiring about their data online and data breach one respondent explains:

"If have kept everything Private as a setting on the SNS then there is nothing to worry, one other than my friends would be able to see my stuff. Mark Zuckerberg why would he sell my data he is young and does understand how privacy matters to us otherwise why would he give Privacy settings on Facebook".

They tend to trust what is been given and try to play safe, failing the basic requirement of reading what they have signed for. Usually keeping all their accounts on strictly 'Private' giving less chance to explore the open waters among strangers. None among the adolescents have spent time reading the documented privacy setting rules and data usage the company promises. Privacy settings here are treated as a onetime investment and grab every new privacy update available, usually adhering to the rules set at the initial stage and the alteration for such rules seem difficult till they face distant in peer thoughts. Change in though the process of privacy may not vary the settings are regularly changed and they usually are seen with the tendency of not keeping their profile pics as their own picture, they rather opt for scenic things or abstract which would less reveal them as the individual. Fearing the theft of personal information this category of adolescents usually keeps a low profile on information sharing, giving away only the required one, they are seen sharing their real name, a city they belong and email -id which has a private setting.

Password sharing is yet another area of study that the researcher feels have potentials of research, the adolescents who have set standards for their privacy. Where they show concern about taking measures to secure their privacy at every level, strangely some, to be accurate 25% of adolescents share their password with parents. Inquiring about such sharing adolescents simply feel that parents could never harm and in-case of cyber thefts they are the best person to approach, such sharing is seen quite a regular thing while the share

Our family has this thing we share our passwords actually we have put it up on a paper and its fixed inside my mothers' wardrobe, we have to be secured not private from our parents. Even their password is there so it's ok.

Since only limited numbers have the tendency to share their password with parents it won't be applied to the entire category. Others seem to keep their password quite private for themselves and make attempts to change them after six months on an average.

Adjusters Privacy Seekers

This set makes 10% who try to make peace with the available privacy and figure out different ways to re-define the privacy they crave for. Their understanding of privacy is partially built by their understanding of family rules and the rest on their peers. Discussion regarding what privacy requirements is seen happening in subtle ways through the conversations that take place in the leisure hours of college canteens. They tend to take these feedbacks seriously to build up their notion of privacy than having their own say which might negate the parental style. Usually, the parent-child relation that they perceive are authoritative the ground rules are set but still liberty of choice exist which invite peers' suggestions.

"My family is not on Instagram so my account is public, I think it's easy to get good feedback if you have art to display than being private online, but once I heard my friends discussing my art they told me that anyone could use it and the comments added to the trouble, so I changed the setting now it Private, but I might change I am not sure I have not given any personal information so nothing to worry".

So, the relation with privacy is usually at the level of trial and error helping make amendments for themselves leaving others in the puzzle about their contemporary stand on privacy. Hence the SNS accounts might have different settings for each depending on what they desire to keep in private or public. Which makes them vulnerable to others perspective of their online

displays but still making them the most active lots banging on every change of displaying their life online using every feature of activity that the SNS make available. They tend to share, comment, like surf everything that is displayed. Hence, they are largely popular among the groups and have a considerable number of friends compiled from the requests sent from friends, family, relatives (comparatively less), mutual, strangers. While expressing a tussle of accepting friend request 19-year (boy) share:

“I love watching Game of Thrones (GoT) so I have I joined this group where they discuss every season. It’s really fun to read and comment on, you should see this group they are so vibrant they really understand what they watch I love it. You know once I got a friend request from one of the group members on that group, I thought about it and then finally accepted it. We share so many things alike so such friends are fun on social media”.

They tend to seek people who would appreciate their presence giving less leverage to privacy. So, thou the desire to use the socializing platform to the fullest in all areas makes them take spheres to the concept of online privacy where the set rules are at-times set loose, still, they would behave cautiously while accepting these strangers request. The personal meeting may not be a mandate but they would definitely look for some acquaintance in terms of friends, knowledge, interest as mentioned before. Privacy dangles with sour experience then they tend to alter their presence online, especially when they encounter from absolute strangers having doubtful profiles, which then follow rounds of expert talks with friends with IT (Information Technology) experience. Later tracking privacy write-ups on the Internet.

These adolescents usually keep changing their profile picture on an average once in two months along the change in privacy settings once in four months. Profile pics are their own pics but usually group photos, which makes a clear sign that they want to keep their identity not so revealing. Information shared by them usually circles around sharing their real name, city, college, interest areas, hobbies, rarely even phone numbers and email-id’s. Out of which phone numbers generally have private settings which they relate to the huge risk of sharing in public. They fear this data would be used by marketing people which they tend to avoid in real life situations too. Such data they assume is rather safe and required by the social media creators as they could inform them in emergency hours, hence they feel the desire to share phone numbers and emailid’s. 18 year (boy) narrates:

I was out of town with friends and someone hacked my account I got to know about this because I had provided Instagram with my phone number just imagine if I wouldn’t have I could have been in mess, all I did is change my password quickly.

Passwords for these categories of adolescents have greater value and they really creatively play with them making the most difficult choice or letter and number combinations. These passwords are normally been changed on an average of three months or with new updates in the app. Adolescent show their liking towards the new social app SnapChat where the privacy is quite reserved for the users, they share that this photo-sharing app deletes the pic hours after it has been uploaded and the signs of other individual taking screenshots are been reported, such worries which were not sensed before takes multiple thinking is seen slowly sinking in among the adolescent’s likeness because they worry privacy.

Non-Privacy Seekers

Inhere the adolescents have an absolute carefree attitude rather the researcher would put them as the ingenious of the lot. The casual approach is not with privacy its rather with the data they share. Privacy is not at its peak for this 60% of adolescents they reason that by stating

“I know nothing is private on social media, they (creators) have access to everything and hackers know how to get the information, I have this friend who is a hacker who works for the government he said nothing can be hidden. It’s stupid even to attempt to have secrets online. I have told my friends if you are looking for privacy don’t be online”.

They don’t desire to be private at all and hence most of the profiles are set to the public while others have mutual settings. Surprisingly the non-seekers have a better understanding of privacy. A researcher found that all of them had read the privacy settings carefully and know what to expect. Privacy to them cannot be in sheer available settings, they say it has been created. They have a deeper understanding of the medium and understand their own purpose of using the SNS. So, all the fancies of privacy get washed away while they scrutinize the privacy policies shared on the SNS privacy settings page which become the stand-alone point of how privacy will ultimately be invaded. 17 year (boy) explains:

“It depends on how you protect yourself. If you don’t allow strangers to see your pictures or information there are other strangers who are beyond your knowledge. My privacy is limited to mutual friends, which is pretty risky because I don’t know who my friends have added. I know people who have had issues with identity theft, by an ex because of grudges and also from haters. This is mostly people who know you”.

Adolescents are normally believed to take hasty decisions in hours of difficult but this category has fairly taken quite a stand with how the medium is supposed to be used. They resist sharing any information other than make and email which is mandate keeping all others to themselves. Thou the account setting might have a casual approach with data they have cracked the reality of openness in the system of social media. These ones normally would have their profile picture online as they know their friends have already done the damage by tagging and revealing their identity, hence hiding one would just add up to stupidity. Parents usually don’t make up their friends list because they don’t believe in forming any virtual relationship with them keeping parents and relatives at distance. Interestingly the home conversation does have social media where they do not hesitate to show their profile to parents occasionally for some posts. Privacy for them has a deeper perspective than a few clicks away as narrated by 19 years (boy):

“You need a different kind of privacy, what they give you is for your status (relationship status) you need actually privacy is time. You need time for yourself other than just being. What is a privacy setting its never that you are getting some private time in that for yourself the settings that they give is to just keep your data private not get some online time private. It is just stopping someone from knowing this (data) it’s private information for you”.

Their profile looks more vibrant with their posts making the fullest usage of the display of their creativity. They tend to engage less in socialization among friends, claiming rather a platform for them to seek the interest groups who would appreciate their talent and guide them their ways to excellence. 80% of these adolescents have their account to be public on all the SNS apps they access. Acceptance of friend request have clear standards only common interest do not sever the purpose, the requesting friend has to be active enough maintenance of ethical standards is a priority. These are the no-nonsense tolerate

once who have blocked people unnecessarily commenting on things that they don't pose knowledge about.

Apart from the difference, there is a certain common aspect that is remarkably same with all these categories. School experiences tend to play a vital role in their overall perspective of Privacy. 80% of the adolescents share an experience of theft which has shaken the ground with SNS not being safe at all, hence the trust has seemed to taken toll on the friend request they accept rather than doubting the system itself.

These unpleasant experiences usually come from their own friends or from the romantic relationship which takes ugly turns. Such experiences are seen making these adolescents have a lifetime lesson towards the medium they have to live their life with. They feel the school plays a very important role is educating the freshers and to some extent anything coming from school authorities these adolescents don't seem to challenge. As the initial years are crucial which acts as building grounds with the medium adolescent's show desire to get accurate guidance and understanding of the medium. They look for support systems from trusted sources where the idea of judgement does not hold its ground with the adolescent's experience and sharing. Since there are individual differences the idea of privacy differs for each making each thought equally important for hassle-free journey.

Sharing of personal data has emerged as a popular activity over online social networking sites like Facebook (Yabing Liu, et al., 2011) and users are revealing a large amount of personal information on social networks (Johann Schrammel, et al., 2009) that poses threats, including identify theft, stalking, embarrassment, and blackmail (HR Lipford, et al., 2008). Such large data which pile up adolescent's belief of the technology make them think about their real-life privacy too. Inquiring about their idea of real-life privacy reflecting through the settings available online adolescents have started reversing their ideas, stating the real-life privacy should be on similar terms with online privacy.

This quest for privacy makes each adolescent take a stand on how they would orient their online sharing along making alterations in the relationship they share with the listed friends and family. There is a perception seen among these adolescents that social media is comparatively less harmful than other activities like banking, game addiction, which justifies their sharing of pictures and data without a second thought.

Inference

Considering the statistics of the interviews and the responses given it became evident that percentile wise there is a huge number of adolescents who are growing up the attitude of non-seekers of privacy which according to them seems quite a challenge in the given scenario. Trying their ways to gain and regain privacy which eventually they understand is beyond reach adolescents make terms with the publicness of the participations they socialize with. Instead of controlling their privacy settings adolescents make improvements with the choices of the features that social media offer for their social presence. Social media has a larger socialization platform to offer but adolescents are gradually scrutinizing how they wish to use platforms for their benefits. So, if some site shows their presence in abundance some would have complete anonymity.

Rather than controlling the personal information, they tend to control the perceptions that the audience might carry about them during the virtual encounters. As the socialization progress, the virtual friends with common interest seem more

apprehend and they do not look at social media as a platform meant for social mingling but as an opportunity to develop new hives in knowledge and skills. Researcher fears that adolescents with the rational thinking that is gradually evolving among the adolescents of the SNS and their idea of privacy, they will be a lesser number of adolescents who would take SNS as a medium of socialization. The probable way of looking at this is the simultaneous presence of adults and them being too knowledgeable about the medium, which creates a stringent relationship.

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