

Teenagers` Problems Related with Social-Networking

Albi Dode¹, Genta Rexha², Lediona Nishani³

¹ Department of Computer Science, University of New York Tirana, Albania;

² Department of Economics, University of Elbasan ‘Aleksander Xhuvani’, Albania

³ Department of Computer Science, University of New York Tirana, Albania

Abstract

People have always wondered how to simplify their life by new inventions. In the 21-th century, people are being transformed socially by the computer technology and Internet. Being easy to use, even teenagers are getting addicted after it. Being just a parent nowadays is not an easy occupation. Just giving an advice to your child is not a well-done occupation. Finding the balance between using computer and hanging out in real socio-physical activities with friends is a big concern for parents and educators. Hence, teenagers are experiencing increased loneliness. Minors may encounter even cyber-bullying. However, the real interaction between young users and social networks has not gained the right attention from the researchers. In this research paper, we aim to explore some crucial issues of teenager’s virtual social life. We have decided to select this target of population because they are the most vulnerable part of the society, which is very linked and connected to social media. Furthermore, we present some case studies of the terrible affect that cyber bullying can cause to teenagers by making sense of the socio-physiological damage that websites and internet as a medium induce to the youth generation. Moreover we even take into consideration the data mining for social networks and how marketing specialists use it. Finally, in concluding of the paper we provide some insights how these issues of paramount importance can be mitigated and diminished from teenagers’ real life.

Keywords: *Websites, Social networks, Teenagers, Cyber-bullying, Data mining.*

Introduction

People have always wondered how to simplify their life by new inventions. Since the early 1600`s people invented machines to automate their calculations. Later in the 20-th century, they developed computers, which gained the commercial and industrial scope and now in the 21-th century, people are being transformed socially by the computer technology and Internet. For its vast beneficial usages, 70% of U.S families had a computer and 52% of them had Internet connection (Margie & Richard, 2000). Being easy to use, even teenagers are getting addicted after it. People have the need to express their thoughts and

their feelings to other people they know. Taking into consideration this simple fact, the virtual world of wide web has the so called social web sites. Once the virtual profile is created, the addiction to perfection begins, the same way as being in touch and gossiping are a trend now days. Furthermore, data show that the 35 minutes spent by children in front of the personal profile increases with passing of the years (Margie & Richard, 2000). These numbers have made parents and specialists of the field to get concerned about the fact how to change a children life with a social network. However, there are pros and cons in this topic; they want to get informed about how to reduce the time spent only in front of a computer screen and how to guide children towards good usage of social sites. The inventors have never thought that ethical causes would have been a problem for some of the computer usages. Computer and Internet for children is like playing a minefield game. You need to put red flags in some spots, and get only the best from the game.

Teenagers use these sites to keep in contact, to be updated with the latest from their friends and relatives, as the time in which we are living imposes us to be coherent. It is supposed to give a promotion to the creative expression and discussion and many features like meeting new people, having a public profile, sharing personal media, playing on-line community games was the hook to attract youngsters. Nevertheless, the real interaction between young users and social networks has not gained the right attention from the researchers.

Finding the balance between using computer and hanging out in real social-physical activities with friends is a big concern for parents and educators. This does not only means health problems like eyes problems, but a risk for obesity as their body stays in a static position for a long time, which have made 25% of U.S children tale (Rong & Suzanne, 2005). As their construct is very rigid, seizures coming from quick flashing images, hand injuries, are in great number among children who use computer as their primary source for playing games or reading eBooks and documents for school purpose.

Parents tend to impose some rules within their teenager children. Beside that, it depends from the family incomes and its knowledge for Internet, as “richer have more contact with technology” (Rong & Suzanne, 2005).

There are problems and rules that each family member should respect. It is though in common, that giving access to social sites may in a way or other; improve the user's social life. As we, all know, as numbers taken from the many studies, show that these kinds of sites are mostly used by teenagers, so they are the first to feel the impacts. Therefore, imposed

rules are simple, such as the amount of time to be spent in front of PC, etc. However, another study (Karen & Katinka, 2006) shows that there is “62% of the children” that agree that they in secret do not respect imposed rules and continue being on-line in the social games. Parents have to deal with the time boys spent on hard battle social games and poker compared to less harmful games played by girls. In addition, social websites do not even provide rating system for their on-line social games, making the job for parents even harder.

The concerns raised by web technology were so inevitable that even the American Congress had to pass some laws according to them. Sites were ordered by Children’s On-line Privacy protection Act to “post their policy” and give material about the data collected (Baase, 2008). The data should be encrypted and not to be given to third parties. They take for granted the opt-in option, which means if some teenager wants to use apps (as mostly do), they gave the right to third parties to send bulk email to them and make use of their info. In the virtual world, the data that teenagers’ profiles hold are like a treasure for the predators.

Cyber-Bullying as a phenomenon

Being just a parent nowadays is not an easy occupation. Just giving an advice to your child is not a well-done occupation. It was stated by Kaveri (Kaveri, 2000), that teenagers “have experienced increased loneliness”. Minors may encounter cyber bullying. Even in social networks, this form of bullying is gaining path, causing strong emotional fears and psychological traumas or even worse, the cyber bullying may end up in real life bullying and physical injuries. However, even the bravest children may end up becoming bullies themselves without knowing it. One negative aspect that we deemed appropriate to highlight herein is the harsh language that some adults write in these sites while posting notes that are shared or language spoken in groups created within the social site.

Due to this kind of verbal communication, children end up to discriminate ethnic groups, different races, with the same language used in uncontrolled pages. Many initiatives, even within the social networks, are growing the concern to spread the word about this inappropriate usage of social network. Their physical and psychological issues related with the ethic topic itself, have given start to some initiatives like “Safer internet” to make parents and children aware of this risks. Some gathered log files are indicated from two school labs, and showed that even when security policies were active, still unreliable content

was gathered from web. The protection is offered by the Children`s Online Protection Act (Karen & Katinka, 2006). Furthermore, parents have to install effective firewalls and filters.

Nevertheless, blocking certain pages of a social network is tricky, as some links direct to other pages. The surfing minefield game of internet needs the help of parents to place some safety flags on the way on. A large part of this generation social and emotional development is occurring while being on the network surfing social pages. For any teenager prone to depression, a large number of friends sometimes can make things worse. Parents have to focus equally as much on technology so they “understand the idiosyncrasies” of using a social website. It is really important for parents to kind of tune in to their child`s emotions (Steven & Edward, 2001).

Off-line from Real World

As we mentioned in the beginning, teenagers to keep in contact and to socialize with new friends use social web sites. This new kind of “off-line from real world” socializing has brought into concern some other issues, for instance fake relationships. As stated by Kaveri (Kaveri S. , 2008), the number of cyber bullying cases is increasing, even teens know the bully. Both genders received harassments. The missed feelings from the losses of contact with real world persons have led to the creation of cyber bullies and exporting those feelings to be converted into negative ones in the electronic stage. Thanks to social websites, cyber-bulling is expressed through posting abusive messages on profile wall; add inappropriate comments (an act to amend Section 32261 of the Education Code, relating to pupils, Government Document). The concern has grown even further in the higher law institutions. They are trying to do something about the good needs of virtual social life. If this law will pass, it would be a good victory for the defenders of good socializing and a big loss for the fake contacts that benefit from the innocence of teenagers.

One thing is for sure true, on-line teenagers are exposed to risks that are even more dangerous. The rapid time that information travels and the content within it makes it nearly impossible for the laws to be coherent. This “bug” has led to equal access for all to cyber-pornography. Laws and policies of sites may be prohibiting viewing of “no-good” material, but check and verifications are of low level (Daphyne, 1997). Administrators of such social websites should be more concerned of the impact. In social websites, there is no specific policy, prohibiting the content of material a fan page or group page can show. Businesses profit from this fact to attract the target group they want. As stated by Daphyne (Daphyne,

1997), those kinds of materials should be prohibited only if show prurient images and do not have artistic nature. Nevertheless, are teenagers able to spot these differences?

Girls benefit from social websites to reinforce, whereas boys to flirt. This true statement is proved in the research done by Peggy (Peggy, 2003) the wide network of peers someone have in its social profile, and it is sometimes as good as “relations become progressively significant during adolescence”. Teenagers, better known as the state of time when children want to be free from the rules, with the online chatting, they find themselves in a virtual talk with a person, known or unknown. As “friends” are less concerned about life than parents, they find in them support. Studies generally tell a linear intensification with age in levels of friendship intimacy, and girls' affairs are almost always found to be "closer" than those of boys.

Commenting in social websites for adolescents it is not just a game. Even though augmented attention in the opposite gender is considered an important feature of the adolescent period, “we observed marked differences between boys' discourse directed toward friends and that directed toward romantic partners. Studies in this area recognized that dating is related with “earlier exposure to sexual experiences” (Kaveri S., 2008).

Cyber Bulling Effects in Real Life

The risks that teenagers encounter in the social websites have real life effects too. There is cases worth to be analyzed and which have opened the way to more severe laws and policies on those websites. For some people, virtual and real life was the same. Trolling, bullying, fake profiles have had unexpected consequences to teenage users, pushing them over the edge.

There are real people like Steven Duffy who created fake profiles and used them to make fun of tragedies of passed away teenagers. He got pictures from their profiles and added malicious comments on them. Some advocate that is what freedom of speech is, however the supporters of the ethical and moral point of view ask for more severe punishments for this kind of not allowed jokes. Adolescents tend to be emotionally touched by the situations of everyday life and comments in social websites when been humiliated, and the easy remedy they came across is suicide. The public opinion has to be concerned that suicides from teenagers are related and substantially associated with websites and social networks (Morris, 2011).

As we have stated above, teenagers live the early relationships very intensively and emotionally. Megan Mayer took her life away as her “virtual boyfriend” insulted her. Even though it is a sad story, the person who was behind the fake profile was an adult. This case serves as an example to show the misuse from adults of social web sites in their favor. The consequences of using a fake profile made the authorities pass a law to impose new restrictions known as an act to amend Section 32261 of the Education Code.

Social Media Networks

All these social web sites for teenagers started, as tracking college student has been an old idea of The Department of Education. They wanted to store teenage students’ information with passing of the year and they decided, “the data would be kept indefinitely” (Baase, 2008). According to our perspective, this raises many questions regarding the privacy, as using social websites to store data of teenage students via secondary data usage with social websites is not as fair as it seems. Teenagers unaware of this fact share ideas of their schools, grades, etc., to the whole world unaware of the sensitivity of the shared information. A better collector of information shared on-line would be a popular social web site.

Existing educational programs discourage children from sharing or posting personal information online, warn about deceptive online messages, and urge parents to monitor children's Internet use. It is recommended that prevention efforts also teach teens how adults can seduce them into sexual relationships and how to recognize appropriate and inappropriate types of communication from adults.

In order to raise the awareness and reach the targeted group, in this case teenagers, entertainment media is being used. This is getting known as entertainment education and puts educational messages into entertaining formats to increase knowledge and create favorable attitudes. In USA embedding messages for teens in media is discussed in the so called Soap Summits, which provide to writers and other executives the place to discuss about the problems that teens face now a days. The statistics published by Harvard School of Public Health show that the most watched TV shows have done their job. The insertion of socially responsible messages in entertainment media is a potentially powerful way of affecting teens.

Adolescents' online self-disclosure resulted in higher-quality friendships and that the direct relationship between online communication and the quality of friendships disappeared when online self-disclosure was added to the analysis. The disappearance of this direct effect implies that online self-disclosure mediates the relationship between online communication and the quality of friendships. It also means that it is not just online communication (or mere exposure to IM) that leads to higher-quality friendships; Internet-enhanced self-disclosure accounts for the positive effect of online communication on the quality of friendships.

There exists the problem that inaccurate information may circulate within the net. To be added here, it is the fact that the so called "Cyber Patrol" apps may not do their work in an appropriate way. Still, what matters here is the fact there are remote areas which do not have access to internet. Only in this way, teens can have access to the right information (Keller & Brown, 2002).

Data mining for social networks

Data mining is also an excellent case in point for the main focus of our Perspective in relation to the interdisciplinary nature of the emerging science of the Web. Analytic modeling techniques will be needed to understand where Web data reside and how they can best be accessed and integrated. Engineering and language development are needed if we are to be able to perform data mining without having to pull all the information into centralized data servers of a scale that only the few largest search companies can currently afford. In addition, data mining provides not just opportunities for better search, but also real policy issues with respect to information access and user privacy, especially where multiple data sources are aggregated into searchable forms. Data mining, another form of information collection, has found wide usage even in the social websites. Marketers see teenagers as a good group of customers. Various ads are shown depending on the interests saved on the profile, so no spam is done. Teen as social website users tend to treat privacy as unimportant. As new features are added day after day in the websites, they do not mind sharing even the most confidential information about their life, leading so an open way to abusive users for stalking, fishing or even trolling and bullying. "Others argue that youngsters do not realize the risks". In this case, parents supervision is needed during the web surfing. Freedom of speech tends to take the negative part. Within social web sites, teenagers are in the dilemma: To share or not to share.

Conclusions and Open Issues

In conclusion, social web sites are transforming the youths. They pass their free time differently from the teenagers of three years ago. Life for them now is virtual and not real. There is the risk of losing connection with the reality; even the time spent on-line may be well spent for someone else. The mine field game may reserve bad surprises if some measures are not taken toward the many social sites operating on-line.

References

- Baase, S. (2008). Gift of Fire: Social, legal, and ethical issues for computers and the Internet. *Pearson Education*.
- Daphyne, T. (1997). Cyberspace pornography: problems with enforcement. *Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy*, 201-207.
- Karen, S., & Katinka, v. S. (2006). Children`s experience on the internet . *Institute for Media and Information Management*, 1-6.
- Kaveri, S. (2000). The Impact of Home Computer Use on Children`s Activities and Development. *The Future of Children*, 10(2), 123-144.
- Kaveri, S. (2008). Online Communication and Adolescent Relationships. *The Future of Children* , 119- 146.
- Margie, S., & Richard, B. (2000). Children and Computer Technology: Analysis and Recommendation. *The Future of Children*, 10(2), 4-30.
- Morris, S. (2011, September 13). Retrieved September 15, 2011, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/sep/13/internet-troll-jailed-mocking-teenagers>
- Peggy, G. (2003). Relationships in Adolescence. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 257-281.
- Rong, W., & Suzanne, B. (2005). Teenagers` Internet Use and Family Rules: A research Note. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67(5), 1249-1258.
- Steven, H., & Edward, H. (2001). Children`s Rights and the Internet. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.