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Role of social media in Enhancing Pretension among Youth: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

This study tries to explore the role played by social media in the enhancement of pretension among youth. Non-probability sampling technique is used to collect data from 156 youngsters who are active on social media. An online questionnaire was developed the role of social media as a tool of self-presentation, self-expression, and social acceptance among youth. The study obtains neutral responses from youth as majority of the youth uses Facebook with the view to entertain them while others use it to spend their leisure time. Other purposes of usage include getting information about current situation in the country and building virtual relations to get more social around the globe. The results of the study depict that majority of the respondents thinks there is no difference between the virtual and real self of social media users. Through the detailed descriptive statistical analysis, it is proved that social media is not playing any role in enhancing pretentions among youth. Another objective of the study interrogates social media as a tool of self- expression, self-presentation, and social acceptance and results conclude that Facebook is not used a tool of self-presentation and self-expression, but it is used a tool of social acceptance.

Keywords: social media, pretension, youth, expression, presentation

Introduction

We all are aware about the term "Social Media" and its usage. In this age of technology people are living and maintaining their social lives on social media instead of the real world. Teenagers and adults spend more time on using SNS so we can't ignore the impact of that usage. Social media usage plays vital role in creating narcissism, anti-social behavior, and self-promotion among users. (Carpenter, 2012). Social media refers as a new and improved way of interaction among people around the world in which

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they can create, share, or exchange ideas or information in different virtual communities. Jeff Bullas (2014) mentioned in his online research article, 72% of all the internet users are now active on social media and 89% of those are between 18 to 29 years. Moreover, youngsters use Facebook and other social media for several purposes. They use the platform of Facebook to express themselves in whatever way they like. They decide what to display on their profiles (Manago et al., 2008). According to Ganda (2014), using popular social networking platforms such as Facebook has become one of the essential parts of one's daily life activities. Their personal profiles help them to represent themselves the way they want, communicate with others, and gain the attention they want. These profiles are customized, and details are added accordingly. From gender to city of residence, every detail can be added to a Facebook profile. Even many individuals change their identities, make fake profiles, and freely communicate with others. This shows how a person can be selectively anonymous to hide their personal information when they are uncertain about disclosing their identity (Lee, 2016).

However, an increased social media usage and especially Facebook preference for self-identification is also a considerable phenomenon. Today, when individuals represent themselves, their perception about their self-identity is adversely affected. Besides, the feedback they received, further influences their personality and thinking about themselves. This not only affects their everyday life activities also, leads to represent them in a way, that is sometimes fake, pretentious, and misguiding for the others (Ganda, 2014). In this regard, Gündüz (2017) argues that despite social media technology has widely facilitated our lives, it also contains many disadvantages. Constructing fake identity, pretending as someone else, and misperceiving oneself, all are directly attributed to social media usage. Particularly, Facebook contains millions of such users and profiles that belong to someone else. Despite reporting them as fake or highly pretentious, an explicit negligence not only indicates the harm of social media also, shows how young generation is misusing this popular platform. As a result, both profile users and their extended social network face confusions, and even leading to heinous cybercrimes and psychological distress as well (Manago, 2015).

Thus, by keeping in view the importance of Facebook and its increased usage among youngsters for different purposes, the current study also aims

to analyze "self-pretention" as a dominant usage purpose. In this regard, the *first* section of study involves introduction and overview of the problem statement. In the second section, the researcher discussed the relevant literature supporting the study problem. *Third* section involves theoretical framework. *Fourth* section is based on highlighting and discussing the methods used to conduct this study in an empirical manner. *Fifth* section involves study findings. Finally, the *sixth* section involves discussion on result and conclusion is made accordingly. Thus, the current study focuses on the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the dominant SM usage patterns among the youth?

RQ2: Is social media dominantly used as a self-representation tool by youth?

RQ3: Is social media an important tool of self-expression?

RQ4: Do people depict their true self on their social media profile?

Literature Review

Researchers have proved that Social Networking Sites (SNS) play vital role in changing youth's behavior & creating narcissism and self-promotion among its users. Several studies have been conducted in order to find the impact of social media in creating pretentiousness among teens and adults. From the current increasing trend of media, it is evident that these sites have far reaching effects on teenagers and adults. The trend of self-promotion and self-portrayal on these sites is getting popular among them. The culture of socializing on these sites has changed the meaning of real social lives. Our youth gives more value to themselves in the virtual environment as compared to their real self. Different researchers have conducted this study from different dimensions, but one can find consensus among researcher about the effects of social media.

Ahn ([2011](#)) in his study "The effects of Social Network Sites on Adolescents, social and academic development: Current Theories and controversies, studied the effects of SNS (Social Networking Sites) on youth behavior and their development. The researchers have focused on various elements during this study. According to John SNS have strong effects on the upbringing of our children and he witnessed these effects through their relationship between Social Capital, privacy, youth Safety, Psychological well-being, and educational achievement. The study was

supported with theoretical discussion about the effects of SNS on youth; the empirical research indicates that this study is currently based on experimental stage and supported by qualitative accounts and cross-sectional analyses. The study reveals that use of SNS largely affect the lives of youth and it is not confined to increasing trend of use of technology but the content and the interactions (Status Updates, Post comments, wall posts and sharing etc.) on these sites are an important factor for the social development of youth. Moreover, it was found that youth using SNS have more connections and peer group circle than others who are not using.

Further, Carpenter (2012) investigated the "Narcissism on Facebook: Self-promotional and anti-social behavior". Study was based on a survey of convenient sampling. 292 participants, whose ages ranged from 18 to 65 years ($M = 23.26$, $SD = 7.30$). Of this sample, 74.1% were college students and 68% were female and all are Facebook users. The study was consistent with both hypotheses, explaining that Grandiose exhibitionism relates to self-promotion was done with Facebook posts, status updates, photos sharing and number of friends attained by a user. Entitlement exhibitionism relates to the anti-social behavior of users like retaliating on negative comments about oneself and seeking for more social support from others. Boyd (2007) investigated how social lives of our youth is nurtured through the usage of Social Networking Sites in her study "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life". The research was qualitative study comprising two-years study of United States-based youth engaged with MySpace. Referencing through Participant observation, hanging out and interviews conducted with the users. The researcher concluded that these sites have far more reaching effects on our youth and by restricting them from this social network we are creating a divide (i.e., haves and have nots) between them. So, it is necessary for our youth to get them familiar with these sites without being judgmental so they can develop their social personalities. It was also suggested in the study that parents should help their youth rather than restrict them because these social networked lives are spreading rapidly, and one has to deal with it in any case.

A study conducted by Valkenburg et al. (2006) highlighted the consequences of friend networking sites for example Myspace for adolescent's self-esteem and well-being. The survey was conducting among 881 adolescents aging 10 to 19 years old. The study found that usage of

these sites indirectly affects the self-esteem and well-being of adolescents. Like users getting positive comments on their post or status updates tend to have high self-esteem and well-being and who got negative comments have low self-esteem. In short, research has shown that social media has a huge impact on its users, and no one can deny this reality. Youth is finding the way out to present and express themselves through social media.

Thus, in the third world countries due to low educational rate people are not aware of the pros and cons of any technology. Similarly, they unknowingly jumped into the technologies and its usage without analyzing its impact. Researchers conducted this study to highlight the role of social media in enhancing pretentions among its users. People use social media for different purposes, but the most significant reasons are to represent themselves, to do self-promotion, to make friends (relations). Researcher observes that people are spending so much time on SNS, and they have more than one profile. Another observation grabs the attention that people try to present themselves different than their real selves. In the country like Pakistan, people need to be more aware of the physiological and psychological effects of social media users so they can avoid the immoral side of it.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework of this study is based on the uses and gratification theory. The uses and gratification approach focuses on the purposes of the receiver instead of the purposes of communicator. According to the theory people use different media to gratify their specific needs. They have their own motives and purposes behind media usage. It determines what functions are serving by mass communication for the audience. In this study, researcher investigates the needs of the social media users which they seek to gratify by using it. The study hypothesized that youth is using social media (Facebook) to express them, to gain social acceptance and to live their virtual life. Katz et al. (1973) see the mass media used by individuals as a source of connection with each other. There are different kinds of social and psychological needs of media usage existed among humans. (p.273). By keeping the research questions and objectives under consideration, this study also aims to analyze the research problem in the light of Uses and Gratification theory. To recognize the social media effects on its users it is essential to understand the involvement of individual communicators first. In this research, researcher was investigating the

purposes or functions of social media served for its active users. This research is dealing with the nature of usage of social media among youth. Results showed that youth are using Facebook for getting information, to get in touch with their virtual or real-life connections. Majority of the youth used Facebook to spend their free time. Other than that youth uses Facebook to gratify their need of social acceptance, self-presentation and self-expression.

Methodology

Study Design and Sample

This is the descriptive study to check the role of social media in enhancing pretentions among youth. Data of the study has collected through nonprobability sampling technique i.e. convenient sampling method to collect the data and sample size of the study was 156. SPSS 17.0 was used in the processing of data statistical analysis. The sample is based on the youngsters who are active on social media sites and actively participate in social media. Employed method to collect data of the study is survey method. A sample of $n = 156$ individuals was selected by ensuring the data privacy and confidentiality for as a basic consideration for all the respondents.

A sample of 156 respondents was selected for this study. All responses were confidential, and the results were then collected at different times. respondents' answers to the surveys were recorded and content analyzed to ensure the validity and reliability of the data.

Instrument Development

The tool of the study was online questionnaire which was developed by the researcher. Descriptive analysis was applied to check the validity of the tool. Likert scale was used to measure the responses. To check the reliability and validity of the tool, Cronbach's Alpha and factor analysis was used respectively. The results of these tests were significant with the obtained value at .796. The construct of the study was pretentious behavior among youth. To check the pretentious behavior among youth researcher, divide the construct of the study into five concepts, i.e. nature of usage of social media, self-expression, self-presentation, social acceptance and virtual representation v/s real-self. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary pretention is "a desire to do something or a claim to be something that is impressive or important". In this research, the conceptual definition of

pretentions among youth is the nature of usage of social media by youth. Researcher checked the usage of social media and identify that what's the most favorable reason of Facebook usage among youth. Additionally, the study investigates the role of social media as a tool of self-presentation, self-expression, and social acceptance among youth.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics in the current study helped to calculate the obtained responses and draw the generalizations. The researchers calculated the responses both in numbers and frequencies to provide the accurate finings. The responses were based on the questionnaires designed on the Five-point Likert scale as per the aims and problem of the current study.

Table 1

Frequency (Percentage) of Nature of Usage of Social media (USA)

Usage of Social media (USA)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I use Facebook more than 5 hours a day?	26(16.7)	51(32.7)	30(19.2)	33(21.2)	16(10.3)
I use Facebook to increase my social circle.	11(7.1)	45(28.8)	46(29.5)	44(28.2)	10(6.4)
I use Facebook to utilize my free time.	7(4.5)	9(5.8)	33(21.2)	84(53.8)	23(14.7)
I use Facebook to get information/ current affairs	4(2.6)	16(10.3)	27(17.3)	76(48.7)	33(21.2)
I use Facebook to entertain myself	2(1.3)	4(2.6)	17(10.9)	104(66.7)	29(18.6)
I always like to comment on different social groups and pages	29(18.6)	48(30.8)	44(28.2)	28(17.9)	7(4.5)
I always prefer to use high vocabulary English	21(13.5)	43(27.6)	50(32.1)	33(21.2)	9(5.8)

Table 1 (USA1) shows that 31.5 % youth use Face book more than 5 hours a day and 49.4% youth deny the usage of social media more than 5

hours a day. While 19.2% gave neutral response. However, (USA2) demonstrates that 34.6 % youth agrees that they use Face book to increase their social circle. While 35.09% did not agree with this notion. 29.5% gave neutral response. (USA3) 68.5 % youth use Face book to spend their free time, while 10.3% did not agree and 33% were neutral about it. Whereas (USA4) reveals that 69.9% youth use Face book to get information on current affairs, while 12.9 did not agree and 27% were neutral. Majority of the youth (USA5) 85.3% use Face book to entertain themselves and 3.9% were denied it, whereas 17% were neutral.

22.4 % of youth (USA6) like to comment on different social group and pages. While 49.4% were against this practice and 44% were neutral. Only 27 % youth (USA7) prefer to use high vocabulary and 41.1% denied this, whereas 50% were neutral. In this descriptive statistical analysis researcher tries to find out the nature of usage of mass media. According to the descriptive statistical analysis, results reveal the mean value of the result is 3.22 (0.56) which depicts the neutral feedback of youth on the fact that people use social media for getting information, to increase their social circle, to utilize their free time, to get information on current affairs and to entertain themselves.

Table 2

Frequency (Percentage) of Self-Expression (SEP)

Self-expression (SEP)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I update my status daily.	44(28.2)	76(48.7)	26(16.7)	8(5.1)	2(1.3)
I like to share my feeling with my Facebook friends	25(16.0)	51(32.7)	53(34.0)	22(14.1)	5(3.2)
I am more open to my Facebook friends.	36(23.1)	60(38.5)	41(26.3)	17(10.9)	2(1.3)
Whenever I go somewhere I always check in.	24(15.4)	41(26.3)	49(31.4)	36(23.1)	6(3.8)
I think there is no harm to talk with strangers on social networking sites.	40(25.6)	40(25.6)	36(23.1)	34(21.8)	6(3.8)

Table 2 (SEP) shows (SEP1) 76.9 % respondents said that they don't update their status daily. While 6.4% agrees with this notion and 26% are neutral. (SEP2) 48.7% reported that they did not like to share their feeling with their Facebook friends. Whereas 17.3% likes to share their feelings on Face book and 53% gave neutral response. Only 12.2 % respondents (SEP3) are more open to their Face book friends. However, 61.6 oppose and 41% gave neutral response. Results show 41. 7% youth (SEP4) did not check in whenever they go out and 26.9% have the same opinion while 49% gave neutral response. Only 25.6 % respondents (SEP5) think that there is no harm to talk with strangers on SNS. However, 51.2% disagree with the statement and 36% gave neutral response. The descriptive statistical analysis demonstrates the mean value of self-expression is 2.42(0.62) which depicts that social media is not enhancing self-expression among youth.

Table 3

Frequency (Percentage) of Self-presentation (SPR)

Self-presentation (SPR)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I change my profile picture weekly.	57(36.5)	59(37.8)	23(14.7)	16(10.3)	1(.6)
I use to update my profile information frequently.	42(26.9)	63(40.4)	31(19.9)	17(10.9)	3(1.9)
I always tag myself in pictures.	73(46.8)	56(35.9)	14(9.0)	10(6.4)	3(1.9)
I always use software to treat my profile picture	49(31.4)	52(33.3)	34(21.8)	19(12.2)	2(1.3)

Table 3 shows the self-presentation frequency of youth on social media. 74.3% youth (SPR 1) did not change their profile pictures weekly. Whereas 10.3 % agree with the statement and 23% were neutral. Results reveal that 67.3% respondents (SPR 2) didn't update their profile information frequently. While 17.9% update their status daily and 31% were neutral about it. There were only 8.3% respondents (SPR 3) who like to tag themselves in pictures and 82.7% vary with the statement and 14% give neutral response. Results show 13.5 % respondents (SPR 4) use software to treat their profile pictures. However, 64.7% do not treat their profile pictures and 34% shows neutral response. The descriptive statistical result

reveals that self-presentation is 2.05 (0.75) which means social media is not enhancing or not working as a tool of self-presentation among youth.

Table 4

Frequency (percentage) of Social Acceptance (SAC)

Social acceptance (SAC)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think people update their good profile pictures to get more like and friend requests	4(2.6)	17(10.9)	24(15.4)	72(46.2)	39(25.0)
Do you think people are more into their virtual connections rather than real life connections?	4(2.6)	89(5.1)	28(17.9)	83(53.2)	33(21.2)
I don't like when people give hostile comments on my posts	2(1.3)	23(14.7)	53(34.0)	53(34.0)	25(16.0)
I would like to get more comments and likes on my posts	10(6.4)	19(12.2)	48(30.8)	59(37.8)	20(12.8)

Table 4 shows that 71.2 % respondents (SAC 1) thought that people update their good profile pictures to get more likes and friend requests. While 13.5% deny this statement and 24% gave neutral response. 74.4 % thought (SAC 2) that people are more into their virtual connections rather than their real-life connections and 7.1% did not think the same whereas 28% gave neutral response. Likewise, 50 % respondents (SAC 3) didn't like the hostile comments on their posts and 16% disagree with the notion however 34% were neutral. 50.6% respondents (SAC 4) love to get more comments and likes on my posts and 18.6% disagree with the statement however 48% gave neutral response. According to the descriptive statistical analysis of social acceptance the result is 3.63(0.63) that means social media is acting as a tool of social acceptance among youth.

Table 5

Frequency (percentage) of Self-representation v/s Real self (VRRS)

Self-representation v/s Real self (SRRS)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Do you think people's profiles information depicts their true selves.	25(16.0)	45(28.8)	51(32.7)	31(19.9)	4(2.6)
Do you think profile pictures depict people's true personalities?	23(14.7)	54(34.6	48(30.8)	26(16.7)	5(3.2)
Are people much expressive as they are in their Facebook posts?	15(9.6)	49(31.4)	52(33.3)	36(23.1)	4(2.6)
Do you think groups and pages joined by people always depict their real-life thoughts and ideologies?	17(10.9)	51(32.7)	44(28.2)	42(26.9)	2(1.3)
Do you think people are much concerned about their privacy on social sites as compared to their real life?	8(5.1)	20(12.8)	41(26.3)	63(40.4)	24(15.4)

According to the Table 5, results reveal 44.8% respondents (VRRS 1) were of the view that people's profile pictures didn't depict their true self. While 22.5% agree with the statement and 51% were neutral. 49.3% youth (VRRS 2) thought that profile pictures did not depict their true personalities and 19.9% agree with the statement whereas 48% gave neutral response. Findings demonstrate that 41% respondents (VRRS 3) thought that people are not much expressive as they are in their Face book posts. 25.7% thought that people are much expressive on their face book while 52% gave neutral response. 43.6% respondents (VRRS 4) think groups and pages joined by people did not depict their real-life thoughts and ideologies and 28.2% agree with the statement whereas 44% gave neutral response. However, 55.8% people (VRRS 5) think that youth are much concerned about their privacy on social sites as compared to their real life. While 17.9% are of the view that people are not concerned about their privacy on social sites and 41%

gave neutral response. The descriptive statistical result reveals that virtual reality v/s real self is 2.84 (0.63) which depicts the responses are neutral. Majority of the respondents thinks there is no difference between the virtual and real self of social media users. Through the detailed Descriptive Statistical analysis hence it is proved that social media is not playing role in enhancing pretentions among youth.

Discussion and Conclusion

The primary purpose of this research was to examine the students' social media usage and its attribution their needs as specified by used and gratifications theory. The first objective was to find out the nature of usage among youth. The findings show the neutral responses of youth as majority of the youth use Facebook to entertain them while other spend their leisure time in using Facebook. Other purposes of usage include getting information about current situation in the country and building virtual relations to get more social around the globe. The next objective of the study interrogates social media as a tool of self- expression, self-presentation, and social acceptance. Results conclude that Facebook is not used a tool of self-presentation and self-expression, but it is used a tool of social acceptance. There's a variance in the responses. Researcher observed that people were more reluctant to answer the direct questions or to those questions which are related to them whereas, they are more valiant to express their opinion about others. The third objective intended to find the difference between the real-self and virtual representation of social media users. Majority users are of the view that people are different from their profile pictures and their Facebook profile information. Results of this research are quite different from previous research done in the past. During this research, researcher found it difficult to get actual responses of the sample. The reasons might be that youngsters don't want to answer these questions directly that is why researcher got a very neutral response. Hence, it was not proved that social media is being used as a tool of self-presentation and self-expression.

People tend to have duplicitous facets to their personality. According to an ancient Japanese proverb, people tend to have at least three faces. The first face is the one that is displayed publicly. The second face is shown only to close friends and family members. The third face, never shown to anyone, is the truest reflection of a person. In this regard, it can be assumed that people have different aspects of their personality meant for different people. Similarly, people have a desire to be famous and to be liked, which is termed

as social acceptance. These motives tend to drive them into forming habits and behavioral patterns, even entire personalities in order to fit in. People use different media to gratify their needs and social media is one of them. It is evident from the research that social media (Facebook) is not at all contributing to enhancing pretentious behavior among its users. It is just a medium used by people to show their personas to the world. They use this media as a platform to express, represent and accept themselves.

Furthermore, self-serving bias also shapes how an individual responds to questioning. The self-serving bias is essentially a mental process whereby a person tends to focus only on positive questions while overlooking critical or negative inquiries. It has been observed in this particular research that the answers of the respondents have been in accordance to the research questions for generalized or objective questions whereas the answers have been opposite to the hypothetical proposition for personalized or subjective questions. As a result, this study is consistent with the previous studies witnessing social media as playing major role in enhancing pretentions among teenagers and adults – has not been approved by the results and findings of the research. This, however, poses as an interesting reference for future research to take note of the shortcomings in this research and to use these in the development of an objective survey that is mostly indirect or from a third person perspective to get authentic answers from the respondents.

Being a citizen of global village, we are surrounding by all the new inventions and innovations. Similarly, with the boom of media and information technology our youth is indulging themselves in virtual activities. They waste their energy in building their virtual relations instead of their real ones. They like to pretend themselves often on Facebook because that's the easiest and most approachable platform they have. We are living in the world of brands, status, and price tags. Media has started the war among public. Everyone wants to look different and acceptable, so people adapt different styles to do that. In this research, researcher just wanted to check the role of social media in enhancing pretentions among youth. Social media just provides the platform to express them. It doesn't enhance their pretentious behavior. It just gives them a chance to show the world what they are and how they behave.

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