Chapter 12
Nexus Between Social Network, Social Media Use, and Loneliness:
A Case Study of University Students, Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This paper mainly explores how real-life social network and social media use are related to loneliness among university students in Bangladesh. To carry out this paper, primary data and several methods are used. This paper uses Lubben Social Network Scale and UCLA loneliness scale to measure the level of real life social network and loneliness, respectively. Besides Pearson's partial correlation matrix is used to find out the correlation between social network, social media use, and loneliness. The study finds that students are averagely engaged in real-life social network and moderately lonely. The study also finds a significantly positive relationship between social media (Facebook) use and loneliness, and a significantly negative relationship between real life social network and loneliness. This paper calls for the students to be careful in using social media and be engaged more in real life social network to avoid loneliness.

Table 1. Internet users and 2019 population statistics for Asia

Asia Region	Population (2019 Est.)	Population. % World	Internet Users 30-June-2019	Penetration (% Population)	Internet % Users	Facebook 31-Dec-2018
Asia Only	4,241,972,790	55.0	2,200,658,148	51.9	49.8	867,984,000
Rest of World	3,474,250,419	45.0	2,221,836,474	64.0	50.2	1,331,444,570
All the World	7,716,223,209	100.0	4,422,494,622	57.3	100.0	2,199,428,57
Bangladesh	168,065,920		94,445,000	56.2		28,000,000

Source: https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm

INTRODUCTION

One of the most defining characteristics of the human being is their need for meaningful social connection and they feel pain without it. The need for interaction with others is deeply embedded in human being genetic code. Cacioppo and Patrick (2009) metaphorically termed loneliness as social pain but is very much similar to physical pain or hunger. By using functional magnetic resonance imaging (FMRI), they found that loneliness and social isolation or rejection activates the same parts of the brain as physical pain. Researchers often use the terms loneliness and social isolation interchangeably. Contrarily, Valtorta and Hanratty (2012) argued that these two terms are completely distinct concepts. For them, individuals can be lonely despite having numerous persons to interact with. On the other hand, an individual may not feel lonely despite being isolated from the social world or not having a huge number of active social connections. So, loneliness is a two dimensional phenomenon– both social and emotional. Social loneliness can be measured by a number of connections of a person has. On the other hand, emotional loneliness can be understood in terms of quality of the relationship and desired companionship. Lack of social contacts and interactions and lack of meaningful quality and quantity relationship lead to social isolation (Victor and Bond, 2009).

Latest modern communication technologies and social media platforms have connected to each other today than ever before. Internet, mobile phone and social Medias are the key factors to this connections. According to the statistics of International Telecommunication Union (ITU), about 51.2 per cent of the global populations (3.9 billion) used the internet actively by the end of 2018 (ITU, 2019). This figure has been changed to more than 56 percent (4.33 billion) by July 2019 (Statista, 2019). According to The Global State of Digital in 2019 Report, worldwide the number of social media users was 3.484 billion and mobile phone users was 5.112 billion in 2019 while on an average people had 7.6 social media accounts around the world and daily time spent on social was 142 minutes a day (Smith, 2019).

Bangladesh is a country of the third world with 16.8 million population. The access to and use of communication technologies are increasing rapidly in the country. The number of internet users in the country reached at 96.199 million and the number of mobile phone subscribers reached at 161.772 million at the end of June, 2019 in Bangladesh (BTRC, 2019). Several reports reveals that Bangladesh is in the third position in terms of 'growing number of Facebook users'. About 92 million people in the country use internet in multiple devices. Among them, 34 million are active in using various social media platforms which is about 20 percent of the total population in 2019. The table below shows picture of total population, internet and Facebook users in Bangladesh in comparison to South Asia and Global perspective.

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