



# INDIVIDUALS & SOCIAL NETWORK SITES (SNS) IN IRISH SOCIETY



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## Abstract

Despite how occupied our lives are and how spread out our families have become, the term social networking seems inevitable since it is now a place where new social connections both personal and professional are made (Waters, 2010.).

In this study, sixty females (N=60) and sixty males (N=60) were surveyed. The sample selected consisted of people 18 years and older. The mean age of the total participants in the study was 32.63 (M=32.63)

## Introduction

Life without social network is almost unimaginable. According to Dijk, (2006), the pervasiveness of network structures in modern society is enforced by combinations of media and social networks. Nevertheless, Dijk (2006) highlighted that there are growing concerns such as, if media and social networks will transform society gradually, if they will have implications for society or if they will have no substantial effect.

Kung, Picard and Towse (2008), in their study stated that it would be very hard to argue that the internet has not affected the way in which people work, study, communicate with others and look for information.

On the other hand, Kert (2011) asserted that as social network sites (SNS) become more embedded in daily life worldwide, they will play a more important role in our life and soon have a more diverse audience in terms of age, socio economic status and culture.

Currently in today's society, there are hundreds of social network sites (SNS) with various technological features encouraging a wide range of interests and practices. Among the early social networks which people communicated with are classmates.com -Founded in 1995, Friendster- founded in 2002, Hi 5- founded in 2003, MySpace founded in 2003 and Facebook founded in 2004 which is now one of the popular and the largest social network (SNS) in the world today with more than 500 million members (Waters, 2010).

## Method

### Participants

The study consisted of one hundred and twenty participants (N=120). The gender breakdown were sixty females (N=60) and sixty males (N=60) and varied along several dimensions. A non probability sample or convenience sample was justified based on participant's availability and convenience. Nonetheless, stratification was used since the stratum of interest is a small percentage of the population and any other method could miss the stratum by chance (Neuman, 2000).

### Design

The methodology chosen was a quantitative, cross – sectional survey design. Burns (2000) points out that, the design of a study can increase the power to detect significant differences. Information about the participants was collected by means of survey questionnaires which had three sections. Participants were all informed that the questionnaire is anonymous, confidential and does not require any personal details.

### Procedure

In order to ensure the validity of the data collection tool, a pilot study was conducted on five participants. Based on this, the data collection method (self administered questionnaires) was modified and finalized. The questionnaire was then administered through the chosen locations. The data collection took place over a two week period to achieve gender balance.

### Data Analysis

The data analysis procedures used in the study were, both univariate and bivariate analysis such as, descriptive statistics, Pearson r correlation coefficient and independent T-test using SPSS 18( a software used in computing for quantitative research).

## Results

In the present study, the mean age for females was 31.74 with SD=9.00 while the mean age for males was 33.55 and SD=7.53. The result indicated 57.5% of participants had acquired third level education. The result also showed 79.2% of participants lived in the urban are of Dublin and use social network sites (SNS) everyday.

Among the males and females, 41.7% of males have been members of SNS for 1 year to less than 3 years while 53.3 % of females have been a member of SNS for 1 year to less than 3 years. 46.6% of participants indicated they access their SNS from their mobile phone and 85% from their home computer.

Furthermore, the result showed 29 participants strongly agreed they were happy with themselves as a social network sites user, 38 participants agreed they were happy, 35 participants neither agreed nor disagreed they were happy as a social network site user.

## Discussion

Looking at the mean age of the total participants 32.63 (M=32.63), and the percentage of participants that use SNS every day, the current study is evidence that SNS usage is not only for teenagers as stated by American Life project (2010).

Overall, there are three hypotheses in the current study. The first hypothesis stated predicted that social network site is not inevitable in today's society. Having used Pearson correlation statistics, the results in the current study revealed that there was a significant positive strong correlation between the relevance of social network sites in the society and it being inevitable in the society ( $r = .515, N = 120, p < .01$ ).

## References

- Burns, R. B. (2000) Introduction to Research Methods (4th ed.) London: SAGE publication
- Van Dijk, J. (2006). The Network Society: Social Aspects of New Media (2nd ed.) London: SAGE publications