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The Affirmatory and Nugatory Influence of Facebook Virtual Peer in Shaping the Attitudes and Behavior of Adolescence

Azmera Sultana¹ and Humayun Kabir^{2*}

^{1&2}Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Green University of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

*Correspondence: humayun@soc.green.edu.bd (Humayun Kabir, Assistant Professor & Program Coordinator, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Green University of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh).

ABSTRACT

Peer group is an important agent of learning during adolescence and a new form of peer group has emerged in 21st century called virtual peer group. The objectives of this paper are to explore the affirmatory and nugatory influence of Facebook virtual peer in shaping the attitudes and behavior of adolescents. A triangulation method is followed to explore the objectives where a total of 80 respondents were interviewed using survey method for quantitative data through simple random sampling and In-depth interviews (IDI) to gather qualitative data. A theoretical and conceptual framework has been developed to understand the study concept more precisely. Quantitative data was analyzed through Ms. Excel and qualitative data analyzed through narrative analysis. This study has found that the way adolescents think, talk, behave, eat, and dress is positively or negatively influenced by the virtual peer group with who they are connected 24 hours through Social Networking Sites.

Keywords: Virtual peer, Adolescents, Social Networking Sites, Affirmative behavior, Risk behavior.

INTRODUCTION:

Adolescence is the transitional period of life where a massive transition happens in the case of thinking, acting, choosing etc. A hormonal change happens in adolescence period which makes adolescents addicted to make friendship and relationship with new people. It is a social, psychological and physical developmental period where adolescents are more attracted to their friends and feel more comfortable with friends. During this period, adolescents tend to spend more time with their peer group and tend to select peer group on the basis of homogeneous characteristics (Brown *et al.*, 1993). (Veed, 2009) Showed peer relationships in his study not only a friendship networks, patronage and acquisition but also development of empathy, social proficiency, social problem and resolving skills. Peer relationships not entirely positive, notwithstanding,

peers even play a role in the rise of nugatory outcomes such as law academic adjustment, Delinquency, aggression, depressions or social fright.

The development of the communication technology makes interaction easier as a result adolescents get the opportunity to invest more time with their virtual peer more than their face-to-face peer. There has less variation of age, sex, status of face-to-face peer group but virtual peer group are from different age, sex, background that can make influence on adolescents thinking, acting and behavior. The form of adolescent's traditional face to face interaction has transformed by modern cellular technology. The development of cell phone technology increases the ability and sustainability of online relationships and communication which has become a bearable pheno-

menon. The peer influences mechanism is impacted by the shipment of this form of interaction which could possibly affect the social development efficacy. And also, this transformation of peer communication has deep effect on the ways by which organizations as well as school influence the learning and behaviors of adolescents (Gregory, 2015). Adolescents get access to virtual world by which they interact with individuals whose they do not know on a face-to-face basis (Mohammad *et al.*, 2023; Wolak *et al.*, 2002).

The adolescent's culture has already been integrated by the online relationships, relatively a new wave of peer interaction (Wolak *et al.*, 2003). (Steven Sussman, 2007) Stated that youths who are more involved in social events or school, activities such as athletes, academic would show the less prevalence of drug use than the youth who are more involved in virtual peer group. Youth communicate with their virtual friend through Facebook, messenger, whatsapp, twitter and so on. The most frequent form of interaction (Face to face interaction) for adolescents with their peers have changed due to technology (Larson *et al.*, 1996). Binder *et al.* (2009) stated technology has enabled intimacy to leave from the private sphere of personal, face-to-face friend networks to the public domain of global online interaction. Offline networks are rebuilt in online which means that Facebook profiles not only the way of communication with close friendships or social familiarities but contacts of all kinds while this offers a number of manifest benefits for maintaining connections with friends and loved ones and there may also be a negative aspect to such electronically mediated networks that the mechanisms designed to facilitate connectivity create new, unintended, problems that put down the growth of personal networks. Peer appears to become a major source of socialization while parents continue to provide support for adolescents during this age (Beal *et al.*, 2001).

Adolescents get supportive network from the people who have same condition of chronic illness by accessing in websites. Sexting is a social media risk which means transmitting, taking or sending sexually explicit messages or photos which occurs among teens. Adolescents who suffer from Facebook depression are at risk of social isolation as Facebook is widely UniversePG | www.universepg.com

accepted and considered as an important element to contact with peer. Adolescents take help from risky internet sites or blogs when they isolated and which may promote self-destructive behaviors, aggressions and substance use (O'keeffe & Pearson, 2011).

This is crucial to understand the actual influence of virtual peer on adolescents in shaping their attitudes and behaviors. Social, cognitive and emotional sentiments are indeed shaped by peer interaction. The values and attitudes of the peer group are essential elements in learning. Adolescents an important developmental stage as a result it is necessary to understand the influence of peer group. Adolescents feel more comfortable to talk about their interpersonal and other interesting matters with their peer as they only share about their school and career with their parents. Most of the adolescents are virtually connected and having virtual peer. They like to share about their feeling, academic matter, gossiping with their virtual peers who have an influence on them and this paper focuses on the affirmatory and nugatory influence of Facebook virtual peer in shaping the attitudes and behavior of adolescence.

Research questions and objectives

On this study researcher has developed some research question-

- 1) How do virtual peer shaping the behavior of adolescents?
- 2) How do virtual peer affirmatively influencing the behavior of adolescents?
- 3) What are the risk behavior adolescents learn from virtual peer?

Considering the research questions how do virtual peer relationship creating positive and negative impact on adolescents the study focused on the Facebook virtual peer group influence in shaping attitudes and behavior of adolescents and to explain the research question the researcher has tried to the specify some research objectives-

- 1) To know the behavioral pattern of virtual peer.
- 2) To know the affirmative impact of virtual peer in developing academic skills.
- 3) To identify the risk behaviors of adolescents by the influence of virtual peer.

METHODOLOGY:

Study area, sample and methods of data collection

The study has conducted in two areas of Dhaka South City Corporation. The two areas are Azimpur under ward 26 of Dhaka South City Corporation another area is Dhanmondi under ward 49 of Dhaka South City Corporation. The study was conducted by following a methodological triangulation with an aim to get an insight about affirmatory and nugatory influence of Facebook virtual peer on adolescent's behavior and attitudes. For quantitative data sampling method for this research was simple random sampling.

A total number of 80 respondents were chosen randomly from two different study areas that were studied at different colleges in Dhanmondi and Azimpur area. All of them were interviewed face to face following a survey method with a semi-structured questionnaire where few questions were unstructured or open ended. For the qualitative data a total of ten In-depth interviews (IDI) were conducted randomly to know and understand the influence of virtual peer on adolescent's behavior and attitudes through structured interview.

Data analysis techniques

At the end of the day, the structured questions were pre-coded and the answers to open-ended questions were coded at the end of the field research. All open-ended answers have been written separately against each question and consequently the answers had been sorted out and matched with the different categories of answers. Once different categories of answers for open-ended questions were sorted out then coding of the answers has been done as the basis of the interpretation. To analyse and interpret the coded quantitative data Ms Excel has been used in this study. In this study axial coding has been used for qualitative data analysis since it helped to condense voluminous qualitative data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Moreover, some of the qualitative data is presented in descriptive mode as quotations in this study. Based on the written transcripts from audio recordings, seven broad categories in light of the research questions and subcategories were generated. To present processed data appropriate graphs like pie chart, column have been used. Moreover, both

frequency tables and figures have been utilized in order to analyze the data.

Theoretical framework

Charles Horton Cooley's theory of interactionist perspective describes that people get to know themselves through the looking glass self. Charles Cooley, (1902) first introduced the term looking-glass self which refers to the dependence of one's social self or social identity on one's appearance to others. The ideas, feelings, self-concept or self-image that people have about them are developed in response to their perception and internalization of how others perceive and evaluate them (Chandler & Munday, 2011).

According to Charles Horton Cooley, self-images form through interaction with significant others and significant other shapes people as individual. A Significant other refers to someone whose view matter to us and who is in a position to influence our thinking, especially about ourselves. A significant other can be anyone, such as a parent, sibling, spouse, or best friend. Virtual peer group play a role of significant others and significant others are those who have an important influence or play a formative role in shaping the behavior of another. Adolescents spend much time with their virtual peer group through social media and they have developed interaction which forms their self-images.

Cooley suggested a three-step process in developing the self:

- 1) How other person perceive us (imagination of appearance to others).
- 2) What other makes judgement about us based on the perception (imagination of judgment of that appearance).
- 3) Form self-image based on significant others perception and judgement.

According to Cooley's three step of developing self, adolescents evaluate their appearance on the basis of their virtual peer with whom they are connected through social media. Virtual peer influences on adolescents' way of thinking, dressing, food habit etc. which make perception about themselves. Adolescents form their self-images based on virtual peer group feedback about themselves which influences their behavior and attitudes.

Conceptual framework

On the basis of Charles H Cooley’s theory of socialization a conceptual framework has developed in this study which is drawn below:

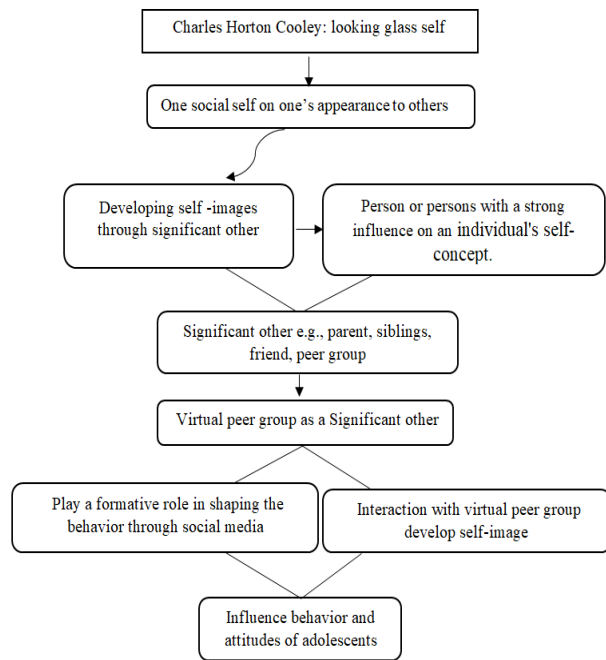


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework.

This study has been conducted in Azimpur and Dhanmondi area of Dhaka city on the college going

students. Among them 48.75% are male, 51.25% are female. In this study 70% of the respondents age from 16-17 years and 30% of the respondents age from 18-20 years as the study aim to explore the impact of virtual peer on adolescents. The family pattern of the study respondents is that 85% from nuclear family, 13.75% from extended family and 1.25% from single parent family. Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country where most of the people follow the Islamic religion, and the rests are followed Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Most of the respondents are from Islam. About 83.75% of the respondent are from Islamic religion and the rest 16.25% are from Hinduism. There had no respondents from Buddhism and Christianity. Fathers occupation of the respondents were 8.75% teacher, 1.25% Doctor, 20% service holder, 23.75% Non-govt. officer, 37.50% businessman, 1.25% immigrant. And the rest 7.5% Of the respondents as 2.50% (frequency=2) respondents father are dead and 5% (frequency=4) respondents father are retired. The research reveal the household income of the respondents as 37.50% respondents household income is from 20000-30000 Tk, 43.75% respondents household income is from 40000-70000Tk. and 18.75% respondents household income is 80000-110000Tk.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Socio-demographic and economic profile

Respondents gender		Types of family		Educational Status	
Gender	Percentage	Types	Percentage	HSC	Percentage
Male	48.75%	Nuclear	85%	1 st year	58.75%
Female	51.25%	Extended	13.75%	2 nd year	41.25%
Total	100%	Single Parent	1.25%	Total	100%
Age of the respondents		Religious Beliefs		Educational Institutions	
Age-group	Percentage	Religion	Percentage	Dhaka City college	41.46%
16-17	70%	Islam	83.75%	Dhanmondi Ideal college	28.05%
18-20	30%	Hinduism	16.25%	Lalmatia Mohila college	17.07%
Total	100%	Total	100%	Scholars School. & College	13.41%

Use of communication technology and social networking sites

The present era is the era of the communication technology where majority of people around the world use communication technology for easier and faster communication. The Pew Internet and American Life Research Project revealed that 75% of 12- to 17-year-olds now own cell phone (Lenhart *et al.*, 2010). In this

study, 100% of the respondents use communication technology such as smartphone (61.11), computer (15.87), laptop (17.46) and tab (5.56) to communicate with family members, friend. Social Network site is an online platform that allows users to create a public profile and interact with other users on the website. People are now widely use social network sites, create and establish relationship in virtual world. (O'keeffe &

Pearson, 2011) study showed that 22% of teenagers log on to their favorite social media site more than 10 times a day, and more than half of adolescents log on to a social media site more than once a day. 75% of teenagers now own cell phones and 25% use them for

social media, 54% use them for texting, and 24% use them for instant messaging. In this manner large part of this generation's social and emotional development is happening while on the Internet and on cell phones.

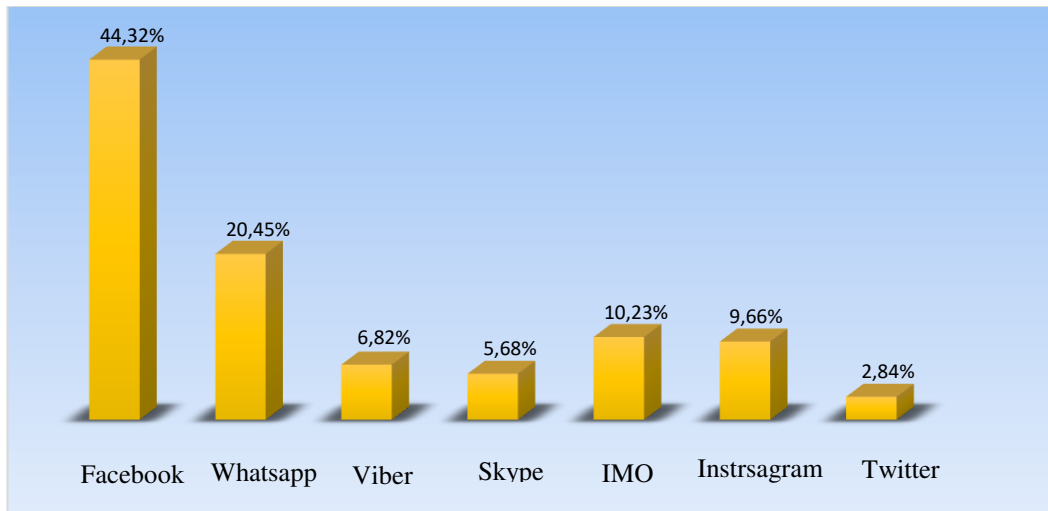


Fig. 2: Type of Social Networking Sites adolescents use.

Fig. 2 shows that 44.32% respondents use Facebook, 20.45% respondents use Whatsapp, 6.28% respondents use Viber, 5.68 percent respondents use Skype, 10.23 percent respondents use IMO, 9.66 percent respondents use Instragram, 2.84% respondents use Twitter simultaneously as Social Networking Sites. This data of the conducted study illustrates that most of the respondents use facebook more than other social networking sites. On this regard a respondent ex-

plained, *“To cope up with the present time it is necessary to have a social networking site account and virtual peer is an important part of our life as we all are more or less connected in virtual world through social networking sites.”* An other respondent mentioned, *“using of social networking site is the sign of smartness.”* Respondents are asked why they use social networking site and they referred the reasons mentioned in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Reasons of using Social Networking Sites.

	Frequency	Percentage
Easy access	45	20.45
Large network	38	17.27
More interaction with friends	44	20
More interaction with family members	21	9.55
Getting information	40	18.18
To learn social norms	19	8.64
Passing time	13	5.91

The behavioral pattern of virtual peer

There have four types of behavior assertive, passive, aggressive and passive-aggressive. Assertive behavior means the ability to appropriately expresses one’s own feelings and wants, this behavior pattern based on the belief that individual is responsible for his/her own problems. Passive Behavior involves not expressing

one’s own thoughts or feelings and putting one’s needs last in an attempt to keep others happy. Aggressive Behavior defined as an unplanned act of anger and aggressors intends to hurt someone or something. Passive-aggressive behavior is the behavior where individuals utilizing this style appear passive but their anger in indirect ways. In this study 41% respondents

follow the passive behavior pattern from their virtual peer where adolescents like to keep their feelings to themselves. Passive behavior encourage individual to be indifferent, lifeless and less confident. 16.25%

respondents adopt passive-aggressive behavior which refers indirect aggressiveness rather than being directly aggressive.

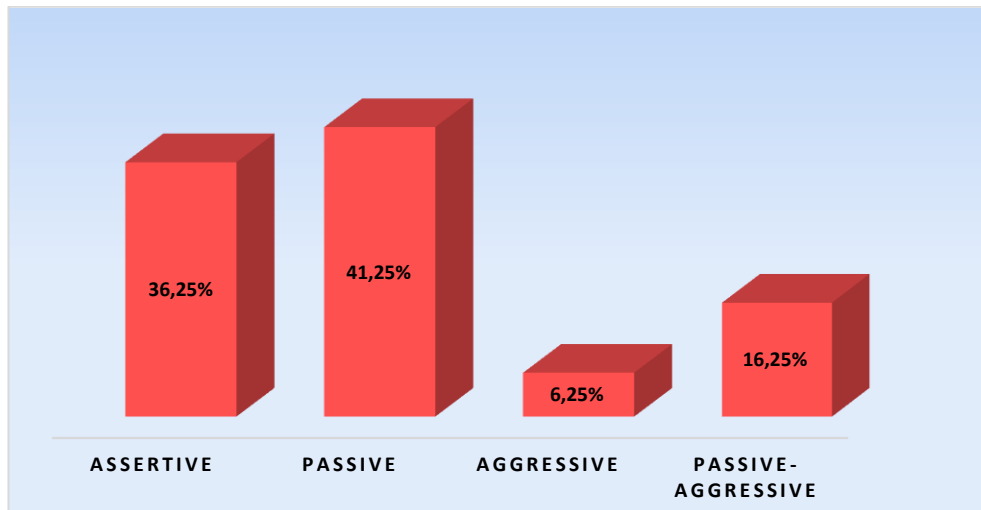


Fig. 3: Behavior of virtual peer adolescents follow.

Adolescents have greater interest to talk with their peer and they share lots of topic with their Facebook virtual peer group. Brown *et al.* (1993) study revealed adolescents tend to spend more time with virtual peer who belong to homogeneous characteristics. This study showed adolescents tend to talk with their virtual peer group about entertainment, deep feelings, relational aspect, secret things, gossiping, academic matter and hangout. It is found from the Fig. 4 that adolescents

tend to talk most about academic matter (28.16%) and the second most discussing topic is entertainment (25.29%) with their virtual peer group. In this fact a female respondents stated, *virtual peer group helps to know about new movies, series and songs as well as give us good advice for study which make us updated. We always share the things about movie, song, drama and so on about entertainment world.*

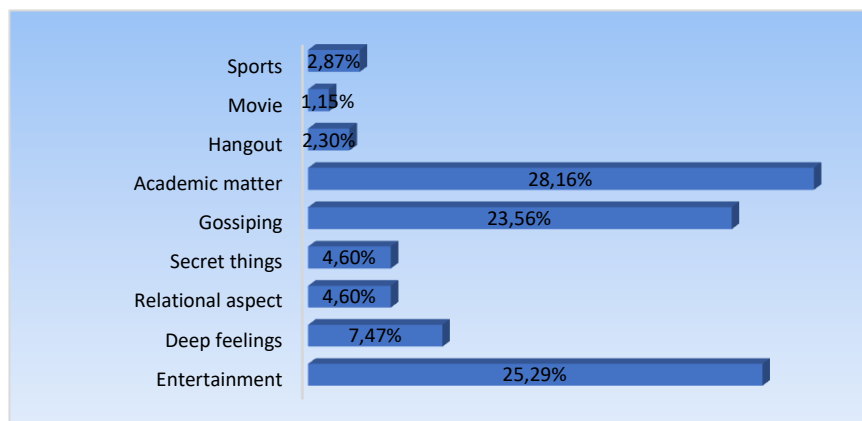


Fig. 4: Topics are often discussed with Virtual peer.

Table 2: Time period adolescents spend with family and virtual peer.

Time period	Family		Virtual peer	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
2-4 hours	10	12.50	15	18.75
4-6 hours	33	41.25	18	22.50

6-8 hours	28	35.00	27	33.75
8-10 hours	05	6.25	16	20.00
10-12 hours	04	5.00	04	5.00
Total	80	100%	80	100%

Adolescents spend twice as much as time with their peer (29%) in high school than with their parents or other adults (15%) (Csikszentmihalthi & Larson, 1986). In this paper respondents are college students they have to spend 8-10 hours in college and coaching. And the rest of the 14-16 hours they spend time at home. From this 14-16 hours they spend time with their family and virtual world, the above table shows that 12.50% spend 6-8 hours with family whereas 33.75% and 6-8 hours with their virtual peer which gives a notion that adolescents tend to spend more time with virtual peer than family.

The affirmative impact of virtual peer

It has been found from the study about 87% of the respondents think that virtual peer have an influential role for developing academic skill by sharing information, giving presentation, generating knowledge, relation build up with audience, getting new ideas and for inspiration.

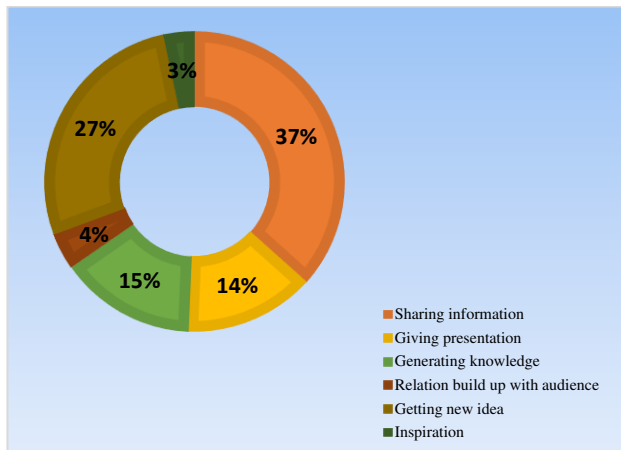


Fig. 5: Virtual peer role in developing academic skill.

And rest of the 13% viewed that virtual peer has harmful effect on academic skill. In response of the question how virtual peer influences academic skill in a deteriorating way, 78.07% of the respondents viewed addiction to spending more time with virtual peer makes harm for study and the rest of 21.93% viewed that it is enjoyable to spend time with virtual peer which kills their time of study and weakening concentration of study. About the harmful effect of

virtual peer, a respondent said that, “Virtual peer have harmful influence on study rather than it develops our study. We use Facebook for passing our leisure time and we involve ourselves in gradual talikng with our virtual friend which makes us addicted to gossip. This gossiping kills our time and causes harm to our study.”

In the question of adolescent’s connectivity in virtual world, respondents of the study trace some reason for Adolescents more connectivity with virtual world. First of all, respondents opined that easy access (26.67%) to Social Networking Sites especially on Facebook responsible for adolescents more connectivity in virtual world. A smart phone and internet connection is the simple tools for accessing in SNSs and this easier accessibility makes interaction easier. The easy way of interaction (28.33%) with many people attracted adolescents to be actively connected in virtual world. Rest of the cause’s respondents mentioned low cost of internet (18.33%), addiction (17.50%) and relieving depression (9.17%) are the reasons adolescents more connected in virtual world.

In this study 58.75% adolescents sharing their problem with their virtual peer and rest of the adolescents do not share their life problem with their virtual peer. In this regard one has said, *I have two virtual friends with whom my relation is very close and we never met. But our relationship is too good that I share my life problem with them without further hesitation because they are trustable and co-operative than my face-to-face peer group.*” Another respondent included that *it is quite impossible to express myself in front of everyone but it is convenient to express to virtual peer because they are co-operative*”. It is important to have virtual peer in this time. Sharing life problem with virtual peer 24.49% response that they share their problem with virtual peer because of reliability, 48.98% share life problem with virtual peer as they are co-opeartive, 16.33% respondents response as it is easy to share life problem with virtual peer, 10.20% respondents share life problem with virtual peer as they feel better.

The risk behaviors of adolescents by the influences of virtual peer

Adolescence likes to spend of much of their time with peer as children than they spend time with their parents. **Fig. 5** illustrates that 41.5% spend 4-6 hours with family rest of the time. About 46.25% of the respondent response that virtual peer can make isolation from parents, siblings, relatives and face to face peer. The rest 53.75% of the respondents response that virtual peer cannot make any isolation from parents, siblings, relatives and face to face friends. The respondents who response virtual peer isolated adolescents from parents, siblings, relatives and face to face peer from them about 24.62% respondent response virtual peer makes isolation from parents, 32.31% response that virtual peer makes isolation from siblings, 29.23% response that virtual peer makes isolation from relatives and the rest 13.85% response that virtual peer makes isolation from face to face peer (Larson *et al.*, 1996).

In the question of the impact of virtual peer on family bondage 71.25% response that much involvement with virtual peer decreases the family bondage as the Table 02 shows respondents of this study spend 2-4 hours (31.25%) with virtual peer. Due to easier accessibility to internet it is easy to interaction (28.57%) with virtual friend makes them addicted to (7.14%) spending much time with virtual peer as a result family ties is weakening gradually. Brown *et al.* (1993) described adolescents period as a social, psychological and physical developmental period where adolescents are more attracted to their friends and feel more comfortable with friends. In this study respondents also viewed virtual peer group as flexible (36.90%) and friendly (7.38%) group with whom they feel free and comfortable to share and discuss any topic they want which causes fragile relationship with family members. On the matter of family bondage one of the respondents described, *'It is more convenient to express feelings with virtual peer than to everyone when I share my problems with my virtual peer, I feel it is unnecessary to share that problem with my family. Virtual peer is more co-operative and reliable than face to face friend because I can interact with face-to-face friends highest 2-4 hours where I can connect myself with virtual peer anytime for example at late*

night 3 a.m.-4 a.m. I can interact with virtual friend and share my problems which is quite tough my face-to-face friend and family.'

Peer relationships not entirely positive, notwithstanding, and peers even play a role in the development of nugatory outcomes such as law academic adjustment, delinquency, aggressions, depressions or social fright (Veed, 2009). This paper has also found that besides academic co-operation, developing social network peer group have some negative effect on adolescents where 38.75% agreed that virtual peer can generate risk behavior and rest of 61.25% disagreed. In response of the types of risk behavior respondents mentioned aggressions (68.52%), smoking (12.96%), addiction to alcohol (5.56%), cyber-crime (12.96%) as the types of risk behavior generating by the influence of virtual peer group. A respondent added that *"when I interact with 5-6 people simultaneously and listening their problem through Facebook messaging. It makes me reluctant to interact with my family members which drive me to do aggressive behavior when they want to interact with me."*

In this paper it has been found that 36.25% respondents get threat from their virtual peer group where 63.75% respondents do not get any threat from virtual peer group. The kind of threats they get from their virtual peer are sexually explicit messages means any communication, language, relates to or describes sexual conduct, (14.63%) get sexually explicit images which means any image depicting nudity or depicting any person engaging in sexual conduct (17.08%), hacking threat (39.02%), unavoidable link (29.27%).

The impacts of using social media depend on the purpose and frequency of its use. This paper focused on the effect of Facebook virtual peer on adolescents' behavior and attitudes, regarding this, it is also traced the effect of using Facebook for communicating with virtual peer on health. About 75% respond that they are facing several health problems as they use Facebook for a long time to interact with their virtual peer group. Table 03 demonstrated the problems which respondents faced as a result of using Facebook for a long time period to spending time with virtual peer group.

Table 3: Health problems adolescents are facing.

Health problem	Frequency	Percentage
Headache	40	43.96
Eye problem	31	35.16
Digestive problem	1	1.10
Insomnia	10	10.99
Backbone pain	5	5.49
Obesity	3	3.30

From the above result and discussion, it gives a notion about the affirmatory and nugatory influence of virtual peer group in shaping behavior and attitudes of the adolescents.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Internet and Social Networking Sites provides a new contexts for reflecting upon and trying out new identities for learning, attempting new social skills and establishing affiliations. In the age of communication technology, it is necessary to connected with whole world and Social Networking Sites giving such opportunity to connect worldwide. Various SNSs are prevalence at the present time and Facebook is one of the most widely used Social Site which provides the opportunity to make new relationship with people from different community, status, background and so on. The friends in SNSs are called virtual friend and at the present era adolescents are also getting connected in virtual world and making their new friend virtually where they also connected with their existing face to face friend in their virtual world. Adolescence is a crucial time when they learn social norms, values , behavior and shape their attitudes. Peer group is an important agent of internalizing social norms, regulation and developing self. In this period adolescents are tend to more connected with their peer group alongside with face to face peer virtual peer plays significant role for shaping attitudes and behavior in some cases virtual peer are playing more significant role than face to face peer. In the era of technology and social media virtual peer group become an influential agent which is shaping adolescents attitudes and behavior in both positive and negative way. Virtual peer makes a platform for sharing a lots of untold, unexpressive matter which make adolescents more involved in virtual world. Adolescents share academic information, interest, taking about new things with their virtual peer as well UniversePG | www.universepg.com

as they are influenced negatively by their virtual peer such as aggressive behavior, smoking, alcohol, etc.

Communication technology has added new dimension in human life which give birth of new relationship and virtual friend is one of the new relationship pattern that change the way of human communication. Adolescence as transition period it is necessary to understand their feelings, emotions and sentiments and parents have big role in this stage. During this period, boys and girls are more interested to spend time with their friend and now virtual friend/peer group added in their friend list. Parents should monitor the matter whom with they are making friendship relationship virtually and making their child conscious about virtual world. Media has also some role to present the right way to make virtual friendship.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

The authors declare no possible conflict of interest in the present study.

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