

The Academic and Social Life Styles of Students and Teachers of Higher Education Institutions in Bangladesh as Consequences of using Social Network Sites

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Abstract

With the emergence of social network sites (SNS), students and teachers of higher education institutions all over the world have been making efforts to meet up with the demands of these information and communication technology (ICT) tools. This paper presents the findings of a study conducted at four private universities in Bangladesh with the aim of exploring the consequences of SNS to the academic and social life styles of students and teachers of these institutions. Random sampling of students and teachers from these institutions was done to get data of the research study. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used for the study. The findings of the study indicated that the academic and social life styles of students and teachers had several consequences due to their integration with social network sites. However, the positive consequences outweighed the negative consequences. The findings further confirmed that students easily made social interactions with friends and formulated group discussions to exchange academic ideas, and teachers also shared course related materials and assignments with their students. It may be concluded that, even though with few drawbacks, SNS has positive consequences in teaching-learning and on the social life styles of students and teachers of Bangladesh higher education institutions. The findings of the research suggested that students and teachers should continue to use SNS so as to exploit more benefits associated with them. Again as the sample of the study was so small, findings of the study may not be generalized to all Bangladesh higher education institutions.

Keywords: *Academic and Social Lifestyles, Higher Educational Institutions, Social Networking Sites*

Introduction

Social networking among students and teachers has become more and more popular today in higher education institutions all over the world. Social network sites have become a way to make connections, not only on campus of higher education institutions, but with friends outside of school. Social networking has made it a way that helps many people feel as though they belong to a community. Due to the increased popularity of these sites, academic administrators are questioning whether grades of students are being affected by how much time is being spent on these sites.

For the purpose of this study, social networking is defined as the use of Facebook, YouTube, blogs, Twitter, MySpace, or LinkedIn. With smart phones being able to access the internet and have applications of social networking, many are concerned about how smart phones with social networking applications will affect students' grades [1]. Information technology as a new and emerging technology is carrying much weight as a new medium for students to build social connections and grow as members

of their institutions [2]. The emergence of Social Network sites has come to play a significant role of interaction between students and teachers and reinforcing the quality of teaching-learning process in higher education institutions. This simply explains that Social Network Sites (SNS) augments quality to the learning community rather than providing an alternative to it resulting in overall enhancement of the learning environment [3]. Social Networking Sites allow individuals to (i) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (ii) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (iii) view and traverse their list of connections with those made by others within the system. The nature of these connections may vary from site to site [4].

Every technological innovation has been a topic of debate and center of researchers' attention and same is the case with the development of SNSs. Various researchers have conducted studies to pinpoint the several impacts of these sites on their users and findings suggested both bright and dark aspects. It has been found that excessive usage causes many psychological, physical, interpersonal and educational problems to users [5]. Numerous studies have also been conducted to delineate the impact of SNSs on young generation and students [6]. This current study specifically aims at exploring the effects of SNSs on the lifestyles of teachers and students in higher educational institutions so would be a value addition to this research area.

Academic and Social Benefits of SNS

Social networking sites have become increasingly integrated into the way many people today act, think, and relate to each other. Social networking has a multitude of implications in the field of education and these impacts on students, educators, administrators, and parents are similar [7]. The communication patterns enabled by social networking technologies mirrors the exact process many educators seek to support in self-directed learning based on constructivist, connectivist, and constructionist [8] learning theories. These communication mechanisms are empowering and engaging to learners, and contribute to the ongoing evolution of human society. It is important to acknowledge that credibility and expertise in social networking comes from the extent of involvement in the network, including the amount of participation, frequency, and the usefulness of the information provided. Teachers and students in virtual worlds must gain benefits [9] through ongoing participation in networks to develop their credibility as a network member.

According to their reiteration [10] it is evident that Facebook's online community meets the requirements set forth by [11] for an environment that promotes student development by providing regular interaction between students and opportunities for collaboration with people from diverse backgrounds and that serves as a social reference group. These affordances for collaborative networking and persistent interactions present Facebook as a vantage point for unraveling lecturer-student power relations, if academics support was rendered via this site [12].

SNSs platforms allows the extension of learning discussion outside the formal classroom setting, thereby promoting deeper learning as young people not only engage with the material for longer but are more likely to relate to it and incorporate it into their everyday lives [13]. Another studies conducted on the use of hand-held devices to deliver workplace learning demonstrated that regular accessibility means young people can access resources in a way that is both convenient and relevant to them. This in turn translates into increased levels of implementation into work practice [14]. Many researchers found a positive association between the use of SNSs and academic performance of the student users. Students who used SNSs scored higher on

reading skills test and had higher grades as well. Also it has been found that Face book usage is helpful for cure in case of some psychological problems including low life-satisfaction and low self-esteem [15]. SNSs also provide a rich mean of interaction between teachers and students [16].

As per the arguments of [17], the learning experience of most participants on SNSs is associated with social learning. As a consequence, social learning outcomes constitute the majority of learning outcomes. Cognitively, they learn how to creatively solve problems via information searching and online friends' help. Affectively, they feel free to express and present themselves, share feeling with others, and gain more confidence from champions. Finally, they improve their social skill and collaborative skill, and also more willing to share their own knowledge with peers. He continues that these are beneficial for their well-being development such as self-esteem and satisfaction with life. Although the students do not explicate the academic learning outcomes from online social networking, it cannot deny the impact of online social networking on academic learning outcomes [18]. For junior students, they might first experience social learning and social integration into the university (e.g., learning the culture or subculture of the university and interacting with peers), and then feel more comfortable interacting with faculty to reach a higher level of academic integration and learning outcomes. Thus, students' academic learning outcomes could increase when their social learning outcomes were heightened.

Debates on SNS in Education

It is pointed out that teachers ought to exploit their pupils' existing ICT knowledge and use the tools to which pupils already accustomed [17]. However, some researchers like [18] suggested that certain affordances of ICT, such as SNSs, can be a potential hazard for teachers as some applications allow users to communicate contents that can lead to discrediting or defamatory messages. It has also been pointed out by some researchers that SNSs can be used for plagiarism, cheating, harassment and other types of academic and social misconduct [19]. In all, a situation of risk and danger emerges. It is noted that SNSs can place children at risk of harming themselves and others [20].

SNS discourages Face-to-Face Communication. Some educators are concerned that while real-time digital stream may create a safe harbor for students who are uncomfortable expressing themselves, students are missing valuable lessons in real-life social skills. Students may find themselves at a disadvantage during college admission or job interviews when they need to command attention and deliver a coherent message. At social gatherings and in personal relationships, they need to be able to effectively express themselves and connect with others [21].

Spending much time on SNSs causes an effect on health of individuals. This is because the more time spent while browsing these social network sites can affect the way the genes operate within the human body, and weakens the immune and hormone levels, and function of arteries. In addition, it also has an impact on mental health. Moreover, the use of SNSs in education can cause lack of motivation towards learning and can be boring sitting in front of computer for a long time, especially if the scientific material presented is free of audio and visual effects that will attract learner towards learning.

Social and Academic Lifestyle of Students and teachers as they use SNS

SNSs were integrated thoroughly into teacher and student life because of high technology adoption rate and availability of computers, network etc., but more importantly, they were integrated because teacher

and student life lends itself to non-orderly social behavior. Teachers and students need reminders for events, incentives for social gatherings and facilitators for ad-hoc meetings, particularly very sporadic ones. Despite being busy, they are also highly social and SNSs helps them to achieve that [22].

SNSs are used to support offline ties and connections. According to the previous studies, it was found that SNS can be used to leverage other means of communication when lightweight interaction is preferred. Similarly to the way in which text messages were often used in cases where phone calls would not necessarily have been placed before [23]. This does not mean that the communication is insignificant as Nathan also describes in his research experience [24].

University students are at a stage in life where their social life is pivotal to their quality of life. It is also a time where friendships are made, maintained, broken and perhaps revived. Interestingly, students use SNSs to not only plan socialization with friends but also to overcome their shyness over contacting peripheral friends directly [22]. As Nathan also describes, students often have a set of five or six close friends, but these friends also had similar sets of close friends that did not necessarily overlap, making friends of friend's acquaintances or peripheral [24]. In connection with other online social networks, it has previously been pointed out that friendship is a flexible notion and peripheral friendships can grow into closer friendships and Facebook, in this sense was a practical facilitator for precisely this process [4].

Methodology

This study was conducted with the objective of exploring the consequences of social networking sites on the academic and social lifestyles of teachers and students in higher educational institutions of Bangladesh. Students are viewed as the highest customer segment and the most vivid users of SNSs. A sample of one hundred teachers and one hundred students was selected from four different private universities in Bangladesh. The universities selected were: Islamic University of Technology (IUT), Asian University, Ahsanullah University of Science & Technology and International Islamic University of Chittagong (IIUC). Therefore, data was supposed to be collected from 200 respondents from these four selected private universities. Random sampling was used in selecting the teachers and students from these universities.

Of the 100 distributed questionnaires to the teachers, 84% fully completed questionnaires were returned. On the other hand, a 100% response was received from the 100 distributed questionnaires to the students. Two structured questionnaires were developed in order to collect the data from the teachers and students respectively. These questionnaires involved both restricted and open ended questions with each questionnaire having three sections. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied during data analysis. Furthermore, weighted average was used to analyze the collected data.

Qualitative Analysis and Findings

We present here the findings on several factors related to the use of internet and SNSs. When students were asked where they accessed the internet, majority of them (52%) responded that they accessed the internet from their hostels, 43% from computer laboratory, 8% from their classes and 3% from the library. Some students said they accessed the internet from more than one place such as classes and hostels, hostels and computer laboratory of their institutions. When the same respondents were asked

which SNSs they used, majority (90%) of them said they used Facebook, (15%) of them said they used Twitter, (9%) said they used Google Plus, whereas (6%) indicated that they used other SNSs. It is seen from the analysis and findings that students used different devices to access the internet. This study also shows that 87% used computers, 22% used their mobile phones and 2% used other devices. When respondents were asked about the time they spent on SNSs, majority (47%) of the students indicated that they logged in once in a day, 36% spent said 2-5times a day, 10% said they spent a couple of hours and only 7% said they were always logged on SNSs.

When the teachers were asked which SNSs they used, majority (82.1%) of them used Face book, a great amount of them, (28.6%) responded that they used Twitter, (21.4%) Google Plus and (9.5%) indicated that they used other SNSs whereas the least number (1.2%) used Flickr. Teachers used different devices to access the internet. The study also showed that 96.4% used computers, 36.9% used their mobile phones and 1.4% used other devices. When the same respondents were asked of the time they spend on SNSs, majority (57.1%) of the them indicated that they logged in once in a day, 16.7% said they logged in 2-5 times daily, 15.5% responded they spent a couple of hours a day and only 7.1% said they were always logged on.

The findings regarding the positive consequences show that teachers utilize the opportunity of social networking sites to share information and other course related materials with their students. The teachers said that online learning communities give teachers and students the ability to personalize and share their content. Majority of the teachers also indicated that they managed to learn how to incorporate SNSs into teaching.

Quantitative Analysis and Findings

Fig 1: Students' experience with social networking sites and internet usage.

Responses from students regarding the consequences of using social network sites are depicted in table 1.

Table 1: Consequences of students using social network sites

Statement	WA
Positive Consequences	
Sharing homework, information of study materials, projects, re-sources or ideas	3.87
Communicating to teachers	3.55
General group discussion and exchanging ideas	3.51
Assignment preparation and argument	3.58
Communication among students and their instructors, following announcements about classes and courses	3.53
Negative Consequences	
Paying more attention towards SNS than utilizing this time for their studies	3.85
Poor performance (lower grades)	3.17
Failure to meet study targets	2.94
Missing classes due to SNS	2.66
Reduction in face to face human contact	3.36

Table 1 indicates that, majority of the students agreed that social networking sites helped them receive information about homework, materials, projects, resources etc. These findings continue to show that students used SNSs for communicating with their teachers outside school hours. While responding to the question whether they used SNSs to communicate with each other and to their instructors, follow announcements about classes and courses, majority of the students admitted that they used SNSs for the purposes as clearly indicated by the weighted average. This means the responses on all the statements are statistically significant.

Regarding the negative consequences of using Social Networking sites, research findings indicated that students get lesser time for their study when they use SNSs so much. Based on the findings of the study, majority of the students agreed that they paid more attention towards SNS than utilizing this time for their studies. They went ahead to show that as a result of this, they scored lower grades. Students affirmed that the use of SNSs reduces their opportunities of face-to-face contact with their teachers. Furthermore, the students were unable to give opinions on the claim whether their frequent use of SNSs made them fail to meet their study targets as well as missing their classes. These are seen by their weighted values. In most of the cases, weighted values were less for 'missing classes due to SNS' which indicates the significance on most of the statements.

Table 2: Consequences of teachers using social networking sites

Positive Consequences

Statement	W A
Teacher shares information and resources with students	3.76
Teacher learns how social networking can be incorporated into teaching	3.40
Teacher creates student groups to collaborate on projects	3.56
SNS increases teachers availability to students outside school hours	3.25
SNS enables research through the exchange of different materials	3.52

Negative Consequences

Teacher devotes little time to attend to students class related problems	3.09
There is reduction in face-to-face human contact due to SNS	3.53
SNS reduces the time of doing research to improve on your profession	2.79
SNS affects professional reputation and career	2.19
SNS causes stress and affects your health	2.86

According to the present findings, majority of the teachers showed that they used SNSs to create student groups so as to collaborate in projects and to send messages to students about their marks or work. Teacher's opportunities of conducting their research work are improved since SNSs permit the exchange of different materials and ideas. The responses in all the cases are statistically significant based on the weighted values. On the contrary, it was found that teachers devoted little time to attend to students' class related problems. The study continued to show that teachers were unable to give their opinions whether SNSs reduce their time of doing research so as to improve on their professions and careers, causes stress and affects their brain etc. Teachers furthermore disagreed with the claim that their usage of SNSs affects their profession and carrier. This indicated that their profession and career is affected

by other factors and not SNSs. It is seen in all the cases that, the weighted values are less. Therefore, it may be concluded that the responses on all the statements were statistically significant.

Conclusion

Social networking sites are gaining a lot of popularity these days with almost all the educators and educated youth using one or the other such site. These have played a crucial role in bridging boundaries, crossing the seas and enabling them to communicate on a common platform [25]. The aim of this study was to investigate the consequences that social networking sites have to the academic and social lifestyles of teachers and students in Bangladesh higher educational institutions. The findings show that most of the students usually spend little time on their SNSs by logging in once a day. Majority of them use Facebook as their favorite SNS and mostly access it on their computers while in their hostels. It can be clearly seen that students devote little time to these SNSs. The findings continue to show that students use SNSs for academic and non-academic purposes but with academic purposes outweighing the non-academic. Students can formulate group discussions so as to exchange their ideas, share course related materials with their colleagues communicate to their teachers, appeal to their friends about assignments etc. However, there are some drawbacks that SNSs come with. Such drawbacks include spending a lot of valuable time on SNSs which results into poor performance, paying more attention towards SNSs than utilizing this time for their studies, reduction in face to face contact with their teachers, failure to meet their study targets etc. Their responses indicate that SNSs have a lot of positive influence on their lifestyle as compared to its negative side.

However, educators are also among the vivid users of SNSs. According to the research findings, majority of the teachers prefer to use Facebook than any other SNSs. They mostly login once a day and they get access to the internet while using their computers. Teachers have integrated social networking sites into their teaching methods. They use SNSs to share course related materials with their students, communicate with students regarding their coursework's, assignments or any upcoming event, communicate with their fellow teachers from other universities something that has enabled them to improve on their research hence, improving their careers. Much as social networking sites have been so beneficial to the teachers, to a lesser extent, they have also caused some drawbacks. The findings of this study shows that, teachers spend a lot of valuable time on SNSs while reading and answering unnecessary postings thereby devoting little time to attend to student class related problems, reduction in face to face contact with their students, causes stress and affects their health etc. It is suggested that the findings of this study may not be generalized to all Bangladesh universities due to the limited number of universities considered in the research due to unavailability of time.

Recommendation

Due to the time constraints, the researcher could not conduct in-depth study on this subject. To this regard he proposes that further in-depth research be conducted on the academic and social consequences of SNSs to the teachers and students lifestyles in higher educational institutions. The study has provided some information on how the social networking sites benefit the students and teachers as well as the drawbacks it causes to them. Further investigations on whether social networking sites positively or negatively affect teachers and students should be done in the following areas: (a) How to fully

integrate social networking sites into teaching-learning, (b) How to minimize or eliminate the problems caused by social networking sites to students and teachers, (c) Identify measures on how to control students and teachers over usage of social networking sites and (d) How to motivate the teachers who are still resistant to this new technology (social networking sites). However, based on this research study it may be suggested that students and teachers should continue using SNSs so as to exploit more benefits that are associated with them.

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