

EFFECT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE STUDENTS

Pavitra Rana¹ & Sarita Kumari²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Educational Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, India

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ABSTRACT

2000-2010 was the period of development of web 2.0 which could allow for growth and sustenance of social networks and hence, it was during this period that there was a boom of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) which are now seamlessly woven into the daily lives of about 2.62 billion people around the globe. Availability of cheaper smartphones, affordable and faster internet services have increased the reach of the internet; with reports of Internet And Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) providing an estimate of approximately 456 million mobile internet users in India by June 2018. Teenagers, young adults are identified as the most prolific users of internet and SNSs thereby increasing the concerns to understand ways in which SNSs are influencing and shaping the world of the Net Generation students. It is important to understand how students can leverage social networking technologies to enhance interaction among themselves, with their teachers, and use it for knowledge sharing. The aim of this review is to understand the positive and negative effect of SNSs on the academic performance of the students, to figure out which aspect significantly influence the academic performance and to propose solutions to mitigate identified negative effects.

KEYWORDS: Social Networking Site (SNSs), Academic Performance, Students

INTRODUCTION

Massive advancements happening in the field of technology in the recent years have resulted in much faster broadband services, advanced and user-friendly handheld computer devices such as smartphones and tablets, sophisticated software applications allowing people across the world to be connected virtually all the time through a large and complex network. It is the growth of internet services which has led to a significant change in the way people interact and socialize. (Rithika & Selvaraj, 2013).

It's evident that because of technologically immersive setting present around today's learner they have evolved a different thought process and information processing mechanism (Prenkys, 2001). Thus, present-day learners are "native speakers" of the language of computers. Hence, one of the challenges in the field of education is the difficulty of most of the instructors (Digital Immigrant), who does not belong to the digital age.

Oblinger & Oblinger (2005) writes that "the Net Generation" that grew within technologically rich environment has different hopes as well as has a different style of learning. Students studying in university today have seen a significant

proliferation of technology with a parallel boost in the use of the internet which plays important role in their daily lives. (Alwagait, Shahzad Alim,2015).

Thus, it becomes imperative for educators to understand the ways in which new technology and social networking sites are influencing and shaping the world of today's students. The educators need to understand to what factors the students are exposed in their environment, how they learn from that environment, what interests them and then use the findings for the modification of the teaching-learning process. If we can decode how students can positively use networking technologies in everyday life and identify the educational opportunities SNSs can provide, we can make an educational setting more relevant and meaningful for the students.

Social Networking Site

Boyd and Ellison (2007) defines "social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site."

Subrahmanyam & Greenfield (2008) defines SNSs as online means of networking, interaction, and platform for posting content developed by the users.

Carter et. al, (2008) defines SNSs as sites developed in a way that they allow interaction and formation of groups of people have shared interest, who want to interact with like-minded people across physical boundaries.

Academic Performance

According to Michelle Bell, academic performance in educational institutions is a measure of success, or how well a student meets standards which are set out by local government and by the institution itself.

Literature review indicates that several factors (Fig.1) influence academic performance. (Pike and Kuh's ,2005; Singh, Granville & Dika ,2002; Graetz ,1995 Corno & Mandinach, 2004; Hijazi and Naqvi ,2006; Rogaten & Moneta ,2016; Mckenzie and Schweitzer ,2001; Shahzadi and Ahmad ,2011; Wolters, Yu, & Pintrich, 1996).

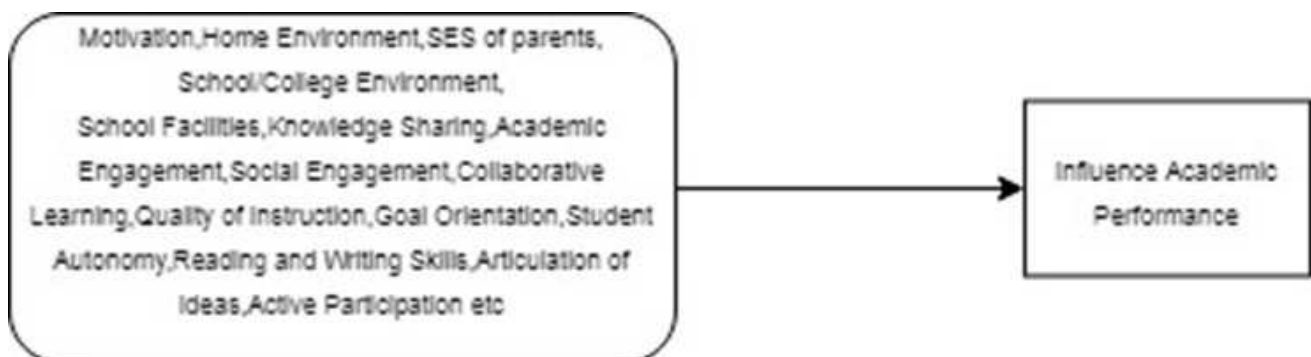


Figure 1: Factors Affecting Academic Performance of the Students

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Advocates of using SNSs for educational purposes predict that social networking technologies will positively transform the way student learn and construct meaning, collaborate over projects, share resources and create new knowledge. Such transformative changes powered by the use of SNSs are believed to change the traditional teaching-learning occurring within the rigid boundaries of a formal set-up into interest-based communities where students; free from any formal authority co-create knowledge through collaborative efforts. (Bingham & Connor, 2015)

Positive Effects of Social Networking Sites on Academic Performance

Several researchers and studies have found a positive impact that social network participation has on students' academic performance. Online community engagement between children and their peers have shown to have educational benefits.

Assist in Learning

SNSs have certain features which can allow discussions, transfer of information, sharing of knowledge which can be used for educational purposes. Highly used platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram provide a scope of using them as a supporting learning environment (Kaya,Bicen 2016).Wang et al., 2011 found pedagogical affordances in the Facebook group and stated that it has the potential to be used as a learning management system which can allow sharing ideas and educational resources, conducting discussions and making announcements. NSs have certain features which can allow discussions, transfer of information, sharing of knowledge which can be used for educational purposes. Highly used platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram provide a scope of using them as a supporting learning environment (Kaya,Bicen 2016).Wang et al., 2011 found pedagogical affordances in the Facebook group and stated that it has the potential to be used as a learning management system which can allow sharing ideas and educational resources, conducting discussions and making announcements.

Make Learning Effective

SNSs provide a platform for net-generation learners to connect and learn in an enjoyable manner making learning more effective and provide educators with a solution to address the learning needs of the students. In this regards, Deng and Tavares (2013) studied how the educational potential of SNSs can be harnessed and identified areas for improvement on ways of creating a web-based system which is more beneficial to learning.

Increases Motivation

Social networking sites are an attractive medium for students as it allows them to interact with people that form their network. Students are often intrinsically motivated to use SNSs for various activities in their day. Teacher's use of Facebook increases students' motivation and learning and result in a more comfortable classroom climate (Mazer et al., 2007).

Platform for Communication

Online groups on SNSs allow students to express themselves, to stay updated, to clarify doubts and to reach out for help whenever they want. Kaya, Bicen (2016) in their study found that Facebook can serve the purpose of communication with classmates and teachers beyond the four walls of the school. Student groups can be made for discussion related to homework or project works.

Social networking sites can allow teachers and students to connect through these platforms in virtual spaces even though they might not be together in real time. Students can connect and communicate even in after class hours using the tools of Social networking (Abdulahi et al., 2014; Ahn, 2011).

Increases Student-Teacher Interaction

Social networking can allow teachers to establish rapport with students, interact with students to help them to observe student's activities. This can serve as the tool to better evaluate them and develop adequate teaching strategies on the basis their evaluation. In a study by Carter et.al. (2008) High school teacher claimed that since SNS (facebook) allowed her to communicate with students beyond the formal school set up, she could better understand and establish deeper relationships with her students. OSNs can help the students to develop good relationships or to enhance existing relationship with their teachers (Khedo et. al.,2012).

Promote Participation of Introvert Students

Students to whom real face-to-face interactions might not be as comforting as online communication can be benefitted to quite an extent as they may feel free to voice their opinion and share their ideas through SNSs. Teachers have seen that students are sometimes more vocal online because of anonymity provided by the virtual spaces. Thus, using the potential of SNSs, classroom instructions can be connected more to the real life of the learner (Carter et.al. 2008).

Students Learn to Articulate their Ideas

Social networking site can help the student learn the art of carefully structuring sentences and using refined thought processes to articulate their ideas to communicate their views and knowledge which can further help in improving academic performance. Tiene (2000) showed that communications in virtual spaces which are mostly written allow students to articulate ideas carefully and put their opinion in a structured way.

Educational Tool for Teachers

Social networking sites can be turned to an educational tool by the pre-service teachers through their creative ideas of incorporating it seamlessly with other classroom activities. This will also motivate students to use SNSs for constructive and educational purposes. Teachers can use SNS for facilitating teaching by sharing information and educational resources. A teacher can also make student groups which can help seek peer support and collaboration on projects (English and Duncan- Howell, 2008).

Can be Useful in Research

In research practices, social networking can help in widening the reach and possibilities of exploring resources for research purposes. Asmi & Margam (2018) found that Academic social networking site (ASNS) like ResearchGate is used for connecting to other research scholars and Academia.edu is used for sharing and the following research and help research scholars to share ideas and experiences. Twitter can be used in research to ease the analysis of information (Grosbeck and Holotescu 2011). Gülbahar (2014) noted that YouTube, Twitter, Blogs and academia.edu were stated as the tool used for research by instructors.

Can be in Integrated into Formal System of Education

Social networking sites if used in formal educational process can not only result in better student involvement and participation but also allow students to appreciate the educative use of such sites and develop in them the skills for positive and constructive use of social networking sites to better their academic performances. Khedo and colleagues (2012) did two case studies based on the use of OSN as a learning tool informal set up and observed that students showed more interest in learning the subject using OSN and even teachers were found willing to integrate OSN in their classroom practices.

Negative Effects of Social Networking Sites on Academic Performance

Wastage of Time

Social networking sites are not primarily meant for educational purposes; thus, many time students end up wasting a significant amount of time in non-educational activities. This negatively affects the academic performance as they devote less time to studies. Many studies have reported that excessive time spent on SNSs affects the grades of the students and can result in poor academic performance (Rouis et al., 2011, Junco, 2012).

Sources of Distraction

Social networking can distract students and make it difficult for them to focus on their studies and educational activities. They can divert students' attention. Reduced attention span and lack of concentration in studies may hamper academic performance. Use of SNSs can make studies appear dull and boring to the learner and students may find excuses to avoid academic work. Tariq et al. (2012) observed that students indulge in non-educational activities on Social media which consequently reduces the attention and concentration of students. Giunchiglia et al., (2018) observed that social media use can distract students and affect their academic success. In a study, 60% of respondents stated that extensive use of SNSs does affect their academic performance (Alwagait Shahzad Alim, 2015).

Multitasking with Technology Reduces Efficiency

Even if students are not addicted still the use of social networking reduces efficacy and quality of work and hence, if students multitask with social networking and their studies, they tend to show lower academic performance. It is observed that the negative relationship between the use of SNSs and GPA of the students to some extent may be due to multitasking (Kirschner

& Karpinski, 2010). Multitasking while using technology and specifically using SNSs has been seen to reduce the efficiency of the academic settings (Bowman, Levine, Waite, & Gendron, 2010; Jacobsen & Forste, 2011).

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the review of the literature, few suggestions can be made. Teachers can use social networking sites to support classroom instructional activities, like online quiz and brainstorming sessions, providing guidelines and assistance for projects through social networking sites. They can use the observations made during online collaborative activities on SNSs for formative evaluation. Researchers can use SNSs to subscribe to the relevant discussion forum, to search specific phrase and keywords. Students can subscribe to hashtags, follow pages and join communities to get regular updates on the topic of their choice. Curriculum planners (NCERT, CBSE, State boards of education) can integrate the components of social networking in formal education enabling teachers and students to use SNSs for educational purposes. Teachers and parents can help children develop the skill of time management so as to enable the 21st century learner to efficiently cope up with the technologies around them. NCERT and SCERTs can organize in-service training of teachers to train them in the use of SNSs as an instructional tool. Policymakers can develop policies to use SNSs for educational purpose in the formal education system and devise guidelines for the same. Centre and State governments can consider an allocation of funds for teacher training and for developing requisite technical infrastructure in educational institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

The acceptance and use of social networking sites have grown by leaps and bounds over the past decade boosted by a parallel development in the World Wide Web and greater broadband connectivity and increased affordability. The ubiquitous use of social networking sites indicates their potential for student engagement and can be utilized for improving students' academic performance. Though there is a lot of criticism around the use of social networking sites as they are potential distractors. Literature shows direct as well as indirect evidence that SNSs can prove as an effective means of learning and improve the academic performance of the students. Peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and use of SNSs as collaborative learning tools allow a learner to actively participate in learning and construct knowledge suited to their own needs. It ensures self-paced and self-regulated learning with greater autonomy with the learner to explore and thus fosters the creation of new knowledge without the intervention of adults, teachers or any formal authority. A learner can access educational information through SNSs via educational groups and communities made on such websites and through educational videos, notes, blog posts, presentations shared on these platforms which help in the clarification of concepts.

As the instrumentalism philosophy in technology considers technology as a mere tool under human control. There will always be positive and negative effects of any new technology depending upon human personal interpretation and varying interest of using available technology. It's the discretionary ability of the user which guides him to use the tool for better or worse. If used adequately social networking can potentially serve as a tool to enhance the academic performance of the students.

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