

Usage of Social Networks for Academics in Private Universities of Karachi: A Statistical Survey Approach

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Abstract: A new trend of socializing networks such as Facebook and WhatsApp has emerged among university students for academic purpose. This study aims to analyze the impact and usage of Facebook and WhatsApp for academic activities. A quantitative research method has been used in the study. This survey was conducted at eight major private universities of Karachi, Pakistan. The sample size of the study is three hundred students. The survey reveals an interesting fact that frequent use of Facebook and WhatsApp doesn't affect studies but it enhances collaborative learning among university students.

Students perceive that Facebook is more helpful for receiving information regarding class activity and lecture than WhatsApp.

Keyword: New Media, Social Media, Collaborative Learning, Facebook, WhatsApp, Social media and learning, Universities, Academics.

INTRODUCTION

Social media is used for socialization and sharing/getting information. This medium enhances and substantiates level of communication, which has become a significant/essential tool in the everyday life of a person.

Though dissemination of information has been a common factor between conventional media and social media, but social media has an edge over the conventional media with regard to accessibility, usability and permanence. Whereas conventional media is run by the government or private sector entities, social media can be operated by common man. According to the most recent statistics in terms of Facebook, Australia has 9 million users, the highest [1].

Due to its easy access and without any censorship or resections, the social has turned out to be an immense challenge for traditional media. As every individual can share, disseminate, or express his/her views and thoughts with ease and without any restrictions from any regulators or check through social media, this medium has become immensely popular, dampening the attraction/effectiveness of traditional or formal media.

There are various other factors which differentiate social media from traditional media. The clearest distinction between them is that social media is easily accessible and affordable and provide instant information.

Facebook, the most frequently visited social network, has more than 955 million users and an astonishing fact is that 26 percent users are from Asia. The rapidly growing use of Facebook in Asian countries makes it the world's largest continent in terms of Facebook usage. Europe is the second largest. Currently, 278 million Facebook users are from Asia. According to a statistical report in 2012, India is second among top ten fastest growing countries in terms of Facebook usage. Pakistan is not on the list [2].

Facebook has reported that every user spends about an hour on Facebook-ing. Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg has stated that Facebook users spend more than 50 minutes a day on Facebook from their leisure time. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics survey, with the exception of TV and movies (i.e. per day 2.5 hours average); people spend 19 minutes on reading, 17 minutes on sports or exercise and 1.07 hours in drinking and eating [3].

In Pakistan, there are about 10 million Facebook users of which half are between the age of 18 and 24. Facebook is used by the youth among them 2.9 to 3.2 million users are university graduates [4].

The popularity of Facebook in Pakistan is emerging as the new trend of social media. The usage of Facebook is different in every region. The definition of usage could change according to the pattern of use of Facebook. However, there is still the question:

Is the social media the trend setter in Pakistan?

Recently, the use of WhatsApp has increased phenomenally. The level of interaction via WhatsApp is expanding and increasing. As per the statement of the

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Founder of WhatsApp Jan Koum, it has 900 million users on a monthly basis. Facebook bought WhatsApp for about dollar 19 billion in 2014. However, the chief executive of Facebook Mark Zuckerberg stated that the focus is on making the WhatsApp most virtual way of communication for people [5].

The advanced and multiple features of WhatsApp connect people more swiftly. In Pakistan, there are about 23,890,938 WhatsApp users, though per week growth WhatsApp user is 2311 [6]. The Instant Messages (IM) – computer mediated communication tool – is popular among adults. The study formulated that the instant message is a prompt tool of communication and development in a relationship in terms of parallel contemporary media [7].

In the particular area of academics, some social networks can encourage collaborative learning. However, the social networks are mostly used by youngsters for purposes other than education [8].

However, the particular area of this research is to examine the effects of use of social media on academics. The research investigates the use of social media by university students. The aim of the study is to assess different uses of social networks by university students for collaborative learning, interaction with classmates, easy access to course information and lectures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a lot of scholarly work about the effects of the use of social networking sites – SNS(s) by students on academic performance.

Waleed Mugahed Al-Rahmi and MohdShahizan Othman conducted a study on “The Impact of Social Media Use on Academic Performance” among university students. The sample size was 80 undergraduates and postgraduates, 31 male and 49 female for the academic session 2012/2013. Random sampling was selected. In the study, the following variables were observed: Interaction with peers, interaction with teachers and engagements by the usage of social media in the context of academics. The dependent variable was students’ academic performance. The study concluded that there was constructive and significant impact on students’ academic performance through interaction with peers, with teachers and engagement through the use of social media in collaborative learning [9].

Jeffrey Mingle and Dr. Musah Adams conducted research on Social Media Network Participation and Academic Performance in Senior High Schools in Ghana. The sample size was five hundred and twenty-six. Four high senior schools were specified for the research. The stratified sample was used. According to the study, WhatsApp was the most preferable way of communication for students; Facebook was the second. Researchers found that English language usage, grammar, spellings and academic performance were greatly affected by the extensive use of social networking sites. The result revealed that even though there are benefits of sharing information and ideas, the excessive use of social networking sites impairs academic performance [10].

Sam Mozee conducted a survey and semi-structured interview with a focus group while evaluating the impact of Social Media Use on Academic Performance at Urban University. As part of a study 18 students were interviewed about the most popular social networking sites, the time they spend and its effect on their academic performance. They used qualitative and quantitative methods. There is no distinction in the result: some believe that social networking sites (SNS) help them in academics while some perceive that there was a negative impact of social networking sites on academics. Even though, the usage timings of social networks do not affect the performance in academics. Additionally, the student’s grade point and usage of social media remain questionable [11].

Adam MahamatHelou undertook a preliminary survey-based research concerning The Influence of Social Networking Sites on Students’ Academic Performance in Malaysia. The 30 respondents, undergraduates and postgraduates, were selected by random sample method. The study targeted two broad aspects: the reason of the use of social networking sites (SNS) and its impact on academic performance. The study reveals students’ preference for social activity and less impact on academic performance [12].

Waleed Mugahed Al-Rahmi, MohdShahizan Othman and LizawatiMi Yusuf conducted an in-depth study about the consequences and effects of usage of social networking sites (SNS) in their research paper “The Role of Social Media for Collaborative Learning to Improve Academic Performance of Students and Researchers in Malaysian Higher Education”. In this study, 741 respondents were questioned through a survey. It reveals that collaborative learning,

engagement, and interaction have a positive impact on the research group members with peers and the supervisor [13].

Abir S. Al-Harrasi, Sultan Qaboos, and Ali H. Al-Badi, (2014) conducted research on The Impact of Social Networking: A Study of The Influence of Smart phones on College Students. The research reveals the impact of social networking on college students. The main concern of study was to find out the timing of use, and selecting the information and the positive and negative effects. The study is based on a survey with 179 respondents with the snowballing sampling method. It was found that social networking sites were mainly used for research, entertainment and explanatory material related to the courses. There is no other way for data collection. Students have to depend on data that is available on websites. The study concluded that there is a positive impact on academics [14].

Saba Mehmood and TarangTaswir (2013) revealed that the use of social networking sites builds knowledge and increases general awareness of student communities. The cross sectional survey had 100 respondents. Social Networking Sites were the Independent Variable and Students were the Dependent Variable. The study locates the effects of uses and gratification theory on learning among students. YouTube, Facebook, and Google+ social networks are being used frequently by students. The viewed data established that majority of the students use social networking sites for academic purposes. Some of the respondents concealed the use of social networks [15].

A research based on the usage of Facebook and academic performance articulates the relationship between the Facebook use and Grade Point Average (GPA). Students who use Facebook have lower GPA than those who do not use it [16]. The informal environment of social media enhances collaborative learning among students [17].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The statistical data for the research was collected from six private universities of Karachi. The universities were selected on the basis of the strength of students, the subjects the universities taught and the socio economic status of the students. Fifty students from each university and three hundred students in total were surveyed for the study.

Hypothesis

Three hypotheses have been settled.

H1: Usage of social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp) among university students does affects academics.

H2: Collaborative Learning among university students is enhanced by social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp).

H3: WhatsApp is used more than Facebook for academics.

Methods

Scholarly work has been done in different universities for analyzing the usage of social networking sites (SNS) for the purpose of academics. The focal objective of the study is to measure the effects and contribution of social networking sites (SNS) on academics. Moreover, quantitative method of research has been used.

Procedure

Survey method is used for the collection of statistical data. Further, the instrument of questionnaire has been used with 10 questions designed on the measurement of Likert scale. The sample size of study has been settled at three hundred university students. The area of the survey is private universities in Karachi city.

Statistical Analysis

Three hypotheses have been formulated for the study and the hypotheses were tested by using the chi-square test. The formula that we used for the analysis is as follows:

$$\chi^2 = \sum ((f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e)$$

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Hypothesis One

H₀: Use of social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp) by university students does not affect academics.

H_A: Use of social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp) by university students does affect academics.

Gender	Gender and Affect on Academics by Social Media			
	Negative	Helpful	No Effect	Total
Male	9.5%	26.2%	15.3%	51.0%
Female	7.5%	27.9%	12.6%	48.3%
Total	17.0%	54.8%	27.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	d.f.	p-value
Pearson Chi-Square	4.114 ^a	6	0.661

By using Chi Square method we found that p is more than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis accepted. Usage of social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp) among university students doesn't affect academics.

Hypothesis Two

H₀: Collaborative Learning among university students is not enhanced by social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp).

H_A: Collaborative Learning among university students is enhanced by social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp).

Gender	Collaborative learning enhanced due to Social Media			
	Usually	Always	None	Total
Male	29.9%	14.3%	6.8%	51.0%
Female	33.0%	12.6%	2.4%	48.3%
Total	62.9%	26.9%	9.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	d.f.	p-value
Pearson Chi-Square	84.397 ^a	6	< 0.0001

By using Chi-Square we found that p is less than 0.05. Thus, the Null hypothesis is rejected. So Collaborative Learning among the university students is enhanced by social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp).

Hypothesis Three

H₀: WhatsApp is not more significant than Facebook for academics.

H_A: WhatsApp is more significant than Facebook for academics.

Gender	WhatsApp is easy than Facebook to receive information about Academics		
	Yes	No	Total
Male	40.8%	9.9%	51.0%
Female	40.5%	7.8%	48.3%
Total	82.0%	17.7%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	d.f.	p-value
Pearson Chi-Square	1.930 ^a	4	0.749

By using Chi-Square we found that p is more than 0.05. Thus, the Null hypothesis is accepted. So WhatsApp is not more significant than Facebook for academics.

DISCUSSION

This research study, "The usage of social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp) for academics in Private Universities in Karachi", analyzes the contribution of Facebook and WhatsApp to academics. The study evaluates the contribution to academics and the purpose of use of social networks. The study sets three hypotheses to examine the contribution of social networking sites to academics among university students.

The test of the first hypothesis asserted that usage of social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp) among university students does not affect academics.

Among the students who use social networks, 54.8 percent state that the social networking sites help them in studies. However, 17 percent talk about its negative effect on academics, while 27.9 percent users say there is no contribution at all.

The usage of social networks among university students is increasing day by day. Social networking sites, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, have proved supportive social networks in academics. In addition, the findings highlighted the contribution of social networks to academics.

The same result was found in a study conducted at Nigeria University about the usage and the effects of

social networks. The study has proved that there is no effect on academics of social networks [18]. On the contrary, a study has concluded that the frequent use of social networking sites is for entertainment purposes [19]. Mississippi Urban Research Center conducted a study on the social media usage and its significance in studies. The result found high usage of social media among urban university students [11]. A study investigated the effects of social networking sites on the academic performance in Nizwa College of Applied Sciences. It was found that there was a positive impact of social networks. The empirical data has figured out the social networks are being used for academics purpose [15].

The second hypothesis of the study is "Collaborative learning among university students is enhanced by social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp)".

The value of p is less than 0.05. Thus, there is no significant difference between collaborative learning and the usage of social networks.

Although the null hypothesis is rejected, the result shows 62.9% usually got help for collaborative learning from social media, 26.9% are always dependent on social media, and 9.5% of the respondents say they do not get any help from social media. It is an interesting fact that social media usage pattern has changed in Pakistan. Among the students, usage of social networking sites is helpful for collaborative learning.

Another study in Malaysia examined the collaborative learning and engagements by the use of social media. It found that social media is significantly helpful in academics [13].

Graduate and undergraduate students are using social networks for socializing. In addition, its heavy usage affected the grades of students [20].

The test of third hypothesis; the usage of WhatsApp is not more significant than Facebook for academics.

The third hypothesis is "The usage of WhatsApp is not more significant than Facebook for academics". The study reveals that WhatsApp is not more effective for receiving information regarding class than Facebook among university students.

In another study, it is found that WhatsApp is more effective for academic communication. Its simple features support dissemination of information and

interaction among classmates. Students receive information about the class [21].

A study has observed the helpful usage of social media for educational purposes. The outcome uncovered that the social networks are less helpful for students [22]. The educated people are more likely to use social media on a high level than those who are less educated. However, it is astonishing that the usage of social networks is at minimum level for educational purposes [23].

CONCLUSION

Primarily, the social networking sites are used for socialization and receiving information. In Pakistan, it is not only used for socialization and information, it is also used for academics. That is the new role of social networks in Pakistan. It is not merely used for socializing, news and entertainment, but also being used in various universities of Karachi for academic purposes. The result shows that the frequent use of Facebook and WhatsApp do not have any counter-productive effect on academics among university students. Facebook and WhatsApp do enhance the collaborative learning. In addition, WhatsApp is no more helpful for group communication among students for receiving information regarding class activities and lectures than Facebook.

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