

Social Networks: Perceived Impact on Student's Academic and Personal Life

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Abstract

The present study attempts to explore usage of social networking sites among the students and their perception toward the impact of these sites on their academic and personal life. For conducting the study, a sample of 500 students from different colleges and universities of Gopalganj district in Bangladesh was constructed through convenience sampling technique. Data were collected through a questionnaire survey, following direct interview method. Different published articles, books, websites, and conference papers also helped the researchers to take insight into this study. Frequency distribution and Pearson correlation analysis were conducted using SPSS15 version software. The results of the study indicated that majority of the students, using social networks, are in the age group of 18-20 years and use these sites up to 5 hours a day for studying, chatting, and watching videos. Social networks affect the students' academic and personal life positively when they use these sites for studying and learning purposes and negatively when they use at late night, ignoring personal, family, and social activities. Thus, excessive and imbalanced use of these sites is making students disobedient, frustrated, aggressive, and isolating them from family tie and real life. Results of Pearson correlation analysis showed that age and level of education are positively correlated with the usage of social networks, whereas gender is negatively correlated. The findings of this study are tentative and may be used as inputs for future research on social networks. As such, the study will be significant for the students, ICT policy makers, educational policy makers, and the other researchers.

Keywords: Student, social network, positive influence, and negative influence.

1.0. Introduction

Social network is a web-based service, enabling individuals to construct a semi-profile within a bounded system and articulate a list of other users with whom they share connections and views [3]. The most popular social networking sites frequently used by an individual are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, MySpace, IMO, Viber, Messenger, WhatsApp, Google +, Skype, YouTube, Academia.edu, and LinkedIn. The use of these online sites among the students is becoming more

popular and fashionable because these sites allow them to have access to information, group discussion, resource sharing, and entertainment [6]. However, online social networking sites have both positive and negative consequences on the students' academic and personal life. More than 50% of the students use a social networking site several times a day for uploading or downloading photos or videos, getting information regarding their career or academic work, chatting with friends, watching online movies, and doing research [1]. But when the students use these sites as a leisure activity, it may have negative impact on their academic performance [17]. Students, generally, disclose homework, questions, and interchange course materials, leading to lower grade point average (GPA) [19]. Moreover, when they use slang language in text message, it affects their writing skills, spelling, and grammatical understanding [17]. Besides, who use it on a regular basis may have more stomach aches, sleeping problems, anxiety, depression, and isolate from real life [14, 18]. Moreover, excessive use and abuse of these sites (e.g., posting abusive photos, videos, and articles) cause moral decadence, mental disorders, and aggressive tendencies among the users [14, 16]. However, the effect of the usage of social networking sites depends on the types of these sites student is using. Students having self-discipline, self-regulation, human adaptability, and human capacity are positively affected by the informative use of internet, while having drastic impact of recreational use of internet on them [13].

The present study will mainly focus on the usage of social networking sites and the perceived positive and negative impact on the academic and personal life of the college and university students of Gopalganj district in Bangladesh. For this, the total study report has been divided into five sections. The first section discusses the related past studies, the second section discusses the data and methodology used in this study, the third section discusses the data analysis and results, the fourth section provides the discussions and suggestions on the major findings, and finally, the fifth section discusses the conclusions and recommendations.

1.1. Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the study are stated below:

- To examine usage level of social networking sites among the students of Gopalganj district in Bangladesh.
- To examine students' perception toward the impact of social networking sites on their academic and personal life.

2.0. Literature review

Helou & Rahim [2] conducted a study on the influence of social networking sites on the student's academic performance. According to this study, social networking sites have created a new social dimension, where individuals can increase their social awareness by keeping in touch with old friends, making new friends, dispensing new data or products, and gathering information in other aspects of everyday life.

Boyd & Ellison [3] identified in a study that teenagers and Youngers have embraced these sites as a way to connect with their peers, share information, reinvent their personalities, and showcase their social lives. Dwyer et al. [4] conducted a study titled 'Trust and Privacy Concern within Social Networking Sites: A Comparison of Facebook and Myspace'. The findings of this study revealed that social networks enable students to participate online for many purposes, such as strengthening communication and maintaining relationships, sharing knowledge and experiences, collaborating on relevant topics, and asking for advice or assistance.

Zwart et al. [5] identified the benefits of using social networking sites, including creation of room for creativity among students, encouraging greater social interaction, reducing barriers to group interaction and communications, and increasing the technological competency levels of its users. In a study, Yunus et al. [7] argued that students can gain more vocabulary and improve their writing skills; can exchange of assignments, resources, and discuss on academic work and other issues by social networking sites. Thus, the positive effects are helping students to improve their knowledge and social skills [6].

There is a negative relationship between time spent by the students on social networks and their academic performance. Students, using social networking sites in classrooms, would have lower academic performance [8-10]. A study conducted by Wang et al. [6] indicated that 57% of 102 students who use social networking sites reduce their productivity and performance. Students might disclose homework questions and interchange course materials [11].

A study conducted by Owusu-Acheaw & Larson [13] showed that majority (96.6%) of the respondents do not use the social-media sites for academic purpose. 74.2% respondents thought that use of social networking sites may not bring any improvement in the academic performance. Moreover, students, spending more time on social networking sites without having their meal, suffer from illness [12]. Larry D. Rosen [18] conducted a study on social networking's good and bad impacts on kids. The major findings of the study revealed that the excessive users of these sites show more narcissistic tendencies, antisocial behaviors, mania, and aggressive tendencies.

Based on the past studies, social networks help the students build and maintain relationship; improve social, communication, technological, and writing skills; improve academic performance and career [2-7]. While, excessive use of this sites lowers the students' academic performance and causes illness, stomach aches, insomnia, anxiety, depression, narcissism, madness, and aggression [6, 8-10, 12, & 18]. So, it can be said that most of the past studies focused on the effects of social networks on the students' academic performance and very few focused on the impact of these sites on the students' personal life and moral values. The present study focuses on the effects of social networks not only on the students' academic life but their personal life and how they go for moral decadence, such as disobedience, frustration, anger, and isolation from family tie and real life through using these online sites.

3.0. Data and methodology

3.1. Research design

The research design adopted for the study is descriptive in nature because this design enables the researchers to provide a secure, reliable, accurate, and correct data and information that are important to assess the usage level of social networking sites among the students and the perceived impact on the students' academic and personal life.

3.2. Population of the study

The population of the study consists of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), under-graduation, and graduation level students of Gopalganj district in Bangladesh.

3.3. Sample size and sampling technique

The sample size of the study consists of 500 respondents from 6 colleges and universities of Gopalganj district in Bangladesh, such as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science & Technology University, Government Bangabandhu University College, Sheikh Fajilatunnesa Women' University College, N.Haque College of Business & Technology, Hazi Lal Mia City University College, and Chandradigholia Poly Technique Institute. Convenience sampling technique was designed to collect these data and information.

3.4. Data collection method and its structure

A well structured questionnaire titled "Usage of Social Networks: A Study on the College and University Students in Bangladesh" was designed to gather data and information from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, such as section-i, section-ii, and section-iii. Section-i provided respondents' demographic information, such as age, gender, educational status, and so on. Section-ii contained the questions, indicating why students use social networking sites and their perception and usage. Section-iii included the questions, indicating social networking sites' influence on the students' academic and personal life.

3.5. Sources of data

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire survey. Five point likert scale was used to conduct the survey, where 1 stands for strongly agree, 2 for agree, 3 for neutral, 4 for disagree, and 5 stands for strongly disagree. Secondary data were collected from different websites, published articles in the journals, conference papers, and books.

3.6. Data analysis software

The collected data were coded and analyzed by the well-known software, i.e., Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 15.0. Frequency distribution and Pearson correlation analysis were conducted through the software.

4.0. Results

Table.1 below shows that 4.6% of total respondents are in the age group of 15-17 years. 47.6% belong to the age group of 18-20 years. 37.2% respondents' age ranges from 21-23 years and 10.6% from 24 years to above. Among 500 respondents, 52.6% are male and 47.4% are female. 17.8% of the students have completed their Secondary School Certificate (Equivalent to 'O' Level), 70.6% have completed their HSC (Equivalent to 'A' Level) and are studying at different universities for completing under-graduation program, and 11.6% are graduate students.

The **Table.2** below shows the usage level of social networking sites among the college and university students of Gopalganj district in Bangladesh. Among 500 respondents, 79.2% said that they use social networking sites up to 5 hours a day, 15.4% from six to ten hours, and 5.4% spent more than 10 hours a day in using social networks.

Table.1: Characteristics of the Study Population, (n=500)

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
15-17	23	4.6
18-20	238	47.6
21-23	186	37.2
More than 23	53	10.6
Total	500	100.0
Gender		
Male	263	52.6
Female	237	47.4
Total	500	100.0
Level of education		
HSC (Equivalent to 'A' Level)	89	17.8
Under-graduation	353	70.6
Graduation	58	11.6
Total	500	100.0

Source: Field Study

The college and university students use social networking sites for both personal and educational purposes. This study implies that 6.0% students use social networking sites only for studying purpose; 1.2% for studying and playing games; 6.6% for studying and watching video; 21.4% for studying and chatting; 1.4% for playing games and watching video; 4.0% for playing games and chatting; 8.8% use for watching video and chatting; 3.0% for studying, playing games, and watching video; 4.0% for studying, playing games, and chatting; 25.4% for studying, watching video, and chatting; 1.0% for playing games, watching video, and chatting; and 17.2% use social networks for studying, playing games, watching video, and chatting with others.

We found different types of social networking sites being used by the students in Bangladesh. Among 500 respondents, 105 (21%) respondents use only Facebook, 22.4% use Facebook and YouTube, 13.2% use Facebook and Google+, 8.2% use YouTube and Google+, 35.2% use Facebook, YouTube, and Google+. So, majority of the respondents use Facebook, YouTube, and Google+. This study found that different individuals and groups motivate students to use social networking sites. 58.4% students are motivated by their friends; 7.4% by their friends and teachers;

5.8% by their friends and family members; 9.2% by their friends and relatives; 4.2% by their teachers and family members; 2.0% by their teachers and relatives; 2.8% by their family members and relatives; 1.4% by their friends, teachers, and family members; 1.8% by their friends, teachers, and relatives; 4.0% by their friends, family members, and relatives; 0.2% by their teachers, family members, and relatives; and 2.8% by their friends, teachers, family members, and relatives.

Different types of mediums and devices are used by the students to access social networking sites. This study revealed that 61.2% of total students use Smartphone to have access social networking sites; 8.6% use Laptop; 10.6% use Smartphone and Desktop; 16.2% use Smartphone and Laptop; and 3.4% use Smartphone, Laptop, and Desktop to access the social networking sites.

Table.2: Usage Level of Social Networks among the Students in Gopalganj District, Bangladesh, (n=500).

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Usage (in hours) of social networks in a day:		
Less than or equal to 5 hours	396	79.2
6-10 hours	77	15.4
More than 10 hours	27	5.4
Total	500	100.0
Purpose of the usage of social networks:		
Only studying	30	6.0
Studying and playing games	6	1.2
Studying and watching video	33	6.6
Studying and chatting	107	21.4
Playing games and watching video	7	1.4
Playing games and chatting	20	4.0
Watching video and chatting	44	8.8
Studying, playing games and watching video	15	3.0
Studying, playing games and chatting	20	4.0
Studying, watching video and chatting	127	25.4
Playing games, watching video and chatting	5	1.0
All	86	17.2
Total	500	100.0
Type(s) of social networks used:		
Only Facebook	105	21.0
Facebook and YouTube	112	22.4
Facebook and Google+	66	13.2
YouTube and Google+	41	8.2
Facebook, YouTube, and Google+	176	35.2
Total	500	100.0
Who motivate students to use social networks?		
Friends	292	58.4
Friends and teachers	37	7.4
Friends and family members	29	5.8
Friends and relatives	46	9.2

Teachers and family members	21	4.2
Teachers and relatives	10	2.0
Family members and relatives	14	2.8
Friends, teachers, and family members	7	1.4
Friends, teachers, and relatives	9	1.8
Friends, family members, and relatives	20	4.0
Teachers, family members, and relatives	1	0.2
All	14	2.8
Total	500	100.0
Types of mediums used to access social networks:		
Smartphone	306	61.2
Laptop	43	8.6
Smartphone and Desktop	53	10.6
Smartphone and Laptop	81	16.2
All	17	3.4
Total	500	100.0

Source: Field Study

As shown in **Table.3**, age is positively correlated with the usage (in hours) of social networks in a day, purpose of the usage of social networks, type(s) of social networks used, who motivate students to use social networks?, and types of mediums used to access social networks. Age has statistically significant impact on the usage (in hours) of social networks in a day and types of mediums used to access social networks. It means that respondents with different age groups use social networking sites in different ways.

Table.3: Correlation between Age and Social Networks Usage, (n=500)

		Usage (in hours) of social networks in a day	Purpose of the usage of social networks	Type(s) of social networks used	Who motivate students to use social networks?	Types of mediums used to access social networks
Age	Pearson Correlation	.115(**)	.023	.025	.067	.182(**)
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.010	.604	.577	.134	.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross- products	23.522	30.318	14.802	73.192	87.520
	Covariance	.047	.061	.030	.147	.175
	N	500	500	500	500	500

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The **Table.4** below shows that gender is negatively correlated with the usage (in hours) of social networks in a day, purpose of the usage of social networks, type(s) of social networks used, who motivate students to use social networks?, and types of mediums used to access social networks. There is a statistically significant impact of gender on the purpose of the usage of social networks, type(s) of social networks used, and types of mediums used to access social networks.

Table.5 shows that level of education is positively correlated with the usage (in hours) of social networks in a day, purpose of the usage of social networks, type(s) of social networks used, types of mediums used to access social networks and negatively correlated with who motivate students to use social networks? Level of education has statistical significant impact on the type(s) of social networks used and types of mediums used to access social networks. It indicates that respondents with different levels of education use different social networking sites in different ways.

Table.4: Correlation between Gender and Social Networks Usage, (n=500)

		Usage (in hours) of social networks in a day	Purpose of the usage of social networks	Type(s) of social networks used	Who motivate students to use social networks?	Types of mediums used to access social networks
Gender	Pearson Correlation	-.081	-.143(**)	-.127(**)	-.018	-.143(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.071	.001	.004	.688	.001
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-11.094	-125.586	-50.654	-13.184	-46.040
	Covariance	-.022	-.252	-.102	-.026	-.092
	N	500	500	500	500	500

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table.5: Correlation between Level of Education and Social Networks Usage, (n=500)

		Usage (in hours) of social networks in a day	Purpose of the usage of social networks	Type(s) of social networks used	Who motivate students to use social networks?	Types of mediums used to access social networks
Level of education	Pearson Correlation	.014	.068	.125(**)	-.004	.091(*)
	Sig.(2 tailed)	.749	.126	.005	.928	.043
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	2.122	64.718	53.402	-3.208	31.520
	Covariance	.004	.130	.107	-.006	.063
	N	500	500	500	500	500

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From **Table.6**, it is found that 51.2% of the respondents 'Strongly Agree' and 36.0% of the same 'Agree' that they use social networks for learning purposes. 81.2% of the students agree that use of social networks provides them with ample opportunities to share news and promote activities. Nearly 79% of the respondents agree that they use social networks to do educational activities and more than 85% of the same believe that use of social networks in academic and learning purposes enhances academic performance. 44% of the students agree that they are having offensive comments and e-mails from unknown sites and links. Nearly 38% of the respondents agree and 36% of the same disagree that they always say 'No' to their family members and friends while using social networks.

More than 35% of the students agree and nearly 47% of the same disagree that they ignore home works while using social networks. Nearly 44% of them are in agreement and 37% of the same are in disagreement that they always get up from bed at late morning for using social networks at late night. Nearly 45% of the respondents agree that they always use social networks though their parents forbid them from using these.

Table.6: Perception about the Impact of Social Networks among the Students, (n=500).

Particulars	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N (%)	No comment N (%)	Disagree N (%)	Strongly disagree N (%)
I use social networks in learning purposes	256 (51.2)	180 (36.0)	37 (7.4)	7 (1.4)	20 (4.0)
The use of social networks provides ample opportunities to share news and promote activities	143 (28.6)	263 (52.6)	75 (15.0)	16 (3.2)	3 (0.6)
I use social networks to do educational activities	166 (33.2)	228 (45.6)	43 (8.6)	59 (11.8)	4 (0.8)
Social networks usage in academic purposes improves my academic performance	275 (55.0)	153 (30.6)	31 (6.2)	24 (4.8)	17 (3.4)
Offensive comments and e-mails are sent to me frequently from unknown sites and links	71 (14.2)	149 (29.8)	115 (23.0)	117 (23.4)	48 (9.6)
I always say 'No' to my family and friends while using social networks	70 (14.0)	119 (23.8)	131 (26.2)	108 (21.6)	72 (14.4)
I ignore home works while using social networks	61 (12.2)	117 (23.4)	89 (17.8)	155 (31.0)	78 (15.6)
I am always late to get up from bed for using social networks at late night	82 (16.4)	136 (27.2)	97 (19.4)	136 (27.2)	49 (9.8)
I always use social networks though my parents forbid me from using these	41 (8.2)	182 (36.4)	103 (20.6)	100 (20.0)	74 (14.8)
I have more friends in social networks than I have in real life	128 (25.6)	166 (33.2)	85 (17.0)	78 (15.6)	43 (8.6)
I always become frustrated and angry when social networks are unavailable	117 (23.4)	175 (35.0)	95 (19.0)	71 (14.2)	42 (8.4)
Excessive use of social networks are keeping me aloof from family tie	98 (19.6)	150 (30.0)	120 (24.0)	94 (18.8)	38 (7.6)
Excessive use of social networks is isolating me from real life	88 (17.6)	160 (32.0)	116 (23.2)	109 (21.8)	27 (5.4)

Nearly 59% of the respondents agree that they have more friends in social networks than they have in real life and more than 58% of the same are in agreement that they always become frustrated and aggressive when social networks are unavailable. Nearly 50% of the respondents are in agreement that social networks are keeping them aloof from family tie. Finally, nearly 50% of the respondents agree and more than 27% of the same disagree that social networks are isolating them from real life.

5.0. Discussion

In this section, we are going to investigate and highlight some major findings we got from our survey results. One of the main objectives of our study was to determine the usage level of social networking sites among the students. The findings of **Table.2** will examine and justify this objective. The **Table.2** indicates that most of the students (79.2%) use Facebook, YouTube, and Google+ up to 5 hours a day and they access to these online sites through their Smartphones because Smartphones are very much available to them. But the percentage of the students (only 6%) in the use of social networks in learning purpose only is very poor though the past studies and the present study showed that use of online social networking sites in learning purposes improves the students' academic performance. Another important finding from **Table.2** was that more than 58% of the students are influenced by their friends to use social networks. According to the study conducted by Khan [15], most of the students (67.3%) use social networking sites due to their friends' influence. One of the main reasons behind this might be that during academic life, students love spending more time with their friends. That's why friends are the most influential people among other people living around you and these friends may influence your life style, behavior, liking and disliking and thus, contribute significantly to shape a good or bad personality. So, it can be said that the friends, using social networking sites with bad purposes, may also persuade them (the students) to do so and vice-versa. According to [13], students having self-discipline and self-regulation are positively affected by the social networks. So, we are recommending the users of social networks (the students) to be very careful in selecting friends and spend time with the friends having self-discipline and self-regulation because they may also teach them (the students) how to be self-disciplined, self-regulated, and well-balanced in using social networking sites.

The findings of **Table.3** and **Table.5** indicate that student's age and level of education have direct relationship with the usage of social networks; while, according to **Table.4**, gender has no direct relationship with the usage of social networks. Another main objective of our study was to investigate

the students' perception toward the social networking sites' impact on their academic and personal life. In this case, the findings of **Table.6** will help justify this objective. As shown in **Table.6**, most of the students (more than 87%) agreed that they use social-media sites for learning purposes and more than 85% believed that the use of social-media sites improves their academic performance. But according to a study conducted by Owusu-Acheaw & Larson [13], nearly 97% of the students do not use social networking sites in learning purposes and more than 74% believed that social networks do not enhance their academic performance. The **Table.6** also shows that social networks cause moral degradation of the students, such as disobedience, depression, aggression, and dispersion from family tie and real life. This moral decadence of the students might be due to the abuse, imbalanced and excessive use of online social networking sites. Larry D. Rosen [16, 18] also supported that excessive use of these sites cause mental disorders among the users. So, the students should ensure proper time management in using these sites.

Finally, throughout the discussion, we suggest some recommendations that can facilitate integrating social networks into the students' both academic and personal lives. We anticipate that the findings and recommendations of the present study will help the students improve their academic performance and moral values through social-media sites.

6.0. Conclusions and future study

The present study indicates that students can improve their academic performance by using social networks in learning purposes, such as exchanging academic and career related information, communicating with teachers and friends for academic purposes, discussing new topics, conducting research, submitting assignment, and asking for advice or assistance. Besides, the students use social networks for recreational purposes also, such as chatting and gossiping with friends, watching videos, playing games, and making new friends. Social networks affect the students' academic and personal life negatively in case of excessive use of these sites, such as suffering from online bullying, ignoring home works, and saying no to their family members.

For academic and personal development, the researchers are recommending the students not to use social networking sites during their class time, late night, and ignoring their personal, family, and social activities rather they should ensure proper time management and should be balanced, self-regulated, and self-disciplined in using these sites. Moreover, age limitation and introducing National Identity Card (NID) in using social networks may ensure control use of social networks among the students in Bangladesh.

Though this study is significant in the context of Bangladesh, however, it has some limitations. Survey was conducted over only 500 students from different colleges and universities of Gopalganj district only. So, a future study might be required with the inclusion of many more colleges and universities of other districts and divisions with large sample size. Moreover, the study is limited to only Facebook, YouTube, and Google+ but social networks consist of many more, such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Academia.edu, and so on. So, future study might be conducted with more diverse types of social networks.

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