

Social Networking Sites: A Perceptual Study

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There exist several Social Networking Sites (SNSs) to connect academics and support scholarly endeavors, namely Academia.edu, Mendeley, Research Gate, Zotero, Scholastica etc. Various studies on SNSs found that the SNSs have both positive and negative impact. But, no study has revealed which impact is greater. Hence, this study made an attempt to unveil whether the social networking sites boast greater amount of benefits or threats on students. The main objective of this study is to identify the perception of students on Social Networking Sites. The study used both primary and secondary data. Stratified Random Sampling technique has been adopted to select the sample respondents. The sample size of the study was 75 which include 52 students and 23 scholars. Online survey has been conducted to collect the required primary data. Mann-Whitney U Test, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test and Factor Analysis have been employed to test the collected primary data. As SNS becomes the greatest entertainment of students, it could be subject to round-the-clock scrutiny by the service providers. Despite social networking sites offer greater benefits than threats, students must be aware of the threats associated with it, besides, the educational institution must be cautious enough to handle these sites. There are various academic related networking sites to share scholastic proficiency. Instead of surfing into the custom-made social networks, the students should turn towards the academic networking sites which would help them to excel in career.

(Key Words: Social Networking Sites, Perception, Career Development)

Social Networking phenomenon has emerged over the past ten years. Social Networking Sites (SNSs) enable the user to create public profile within that website and form relationship with other users of the same website who access their profile. SNSs offer a platform to the students to interact with one another and share ideas. This facilitates to augment the creativity of students. SNSs inflate the technical and language proficiency of the students so as to turn them employable. Facebook, Moodle, SecondLife, Digg, etc are often used by teachers to communicate with students or for virtual group discussions.

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There exist several SNSs solely to connect academics and support scholarly endeavors, namely Academia.edu, Mendeley, Research Gate, Zotero, Scholastica etc. The mission of these sites is to accelerate the research in the world. Through these sites researchers can disseminate their experiences thereby being a path to the upcoming researchers. The researchers may also use these sites to enhance the citation of their work by uploading their publications. SNSs enable the students to establish contact with entrepreneurs, corporate people and can get valuable information from them. SNSs have taken a new dimension called marketing; it makes the students aware of new market entrances. The most common problem of SNSs is addiction. It causes mental health problems and sometimes it harms the body too. In addition to that, the users provide their personal information to others which is insecure. A number of public cases of bullying and theft are prevalent in these sites. SNSs are the well liked entertainment among the youngsters. Emerging Studies find that youth spend a considerable portion of their daily life interacting through social networks. Subsequently, questions and controversies emerge about the effects of SNSs on adolescent development. Thus, this study was undertaken to assess the students' perception towards SNSs.

Literature Review

Social Networking Sites provide individuals a way to maintain and strengthen social ties, which can be beneficial in both social and academic settings. These same sites, however, also pose a danger to students' privacy, safety, and professional reputations if proper precautions are not taken (Jeff Cain, 2008). Social Networking Sites are an intriguing new environment to study because the technology is such an integral part of teenage life (June Ahn, 2011). Chief Marketing Officers stated that SNSs exert a strong influence over promotional activities such as advertising, external communications and social media initiatives. But, in general, it plays a negligible role in shaping the other three Ps (Jha Vinay & Bhardwaj Rajeev, 2012). Social Networking Sites provide various ways to the students to interact with each other. Research scholars keep themselves updated by surfing profile of each other, posting of messages, videos and photos, share professional and personal information at international online platform (Anil Kumar, 2013). In one hand it provides a way to connect dear ones on the other side it gives a platform that become danger for Indian heritage and culture (Ruchi Sachdev). Indian college students are aware of the danger and risk involved in these sites is a positive indicator that Indian college students are not only techno-savvy and socially active through social networking sites but they also possess social consciousness. (Manjunatha, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Social Networking Sites play an integral role in everyday life and it has brought revolutionary changes in communication meadow. SNSs turned into a widely recognized communication device among students. It presents various opportunities to uplift their career as well as deteriorates the concentration and learning skill of the students. SNSs are not only a perk but also it has some harmfulness such as consumes limitless time, makes an addiction, diminishes learning and research capabilities, curtails physical activities etc. There are various studies on SNSs which reveal that the SNSs have both positive and negative impact. But, no study has revealed which impact is greater. Hence, this study made an attempt to unveil whether the social networking sites boast greater amount of benefits or threats on students.

Objective and Methodology

The main objective of this study is to identify the perception of students on Social Networking Sites. The study used both primary and secondary data. Stratified Random Sampling technique has been adopted to select the sample respondents. The primary data were collected from the commerce students and scholars of Pondicherry University. The sample size of the study was 75 which include 52 students and 23 scholars. Online survey has been conducted to collect the required primary data. Mann-Whitney U Test, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test and Factor Analysis have been employed to test the collected primary data. Secondary data were collected from various journals and websites.

Results and Discussion

The following are the main results obtained from this study:

Profile of the Respondents

The majorities (72%) of the respondents were belonging to the age group of below 25 years. 63% of the respondents were male. The respondents of 69% were students and the remaining 31% were scholars. Majorities (95%) of the respondents had an account in social networking sites and only 5% had no account, of which 75% were not interested to use social networking sites. The respondents of 41% were using SNSs for more than 3 years. 64% of the respondents were accessing SNSs using laptop and 62% of them had above 200 friends/connections. The respondents of 48% were using SNSs on a weekly basis and 58% of them were spending less than 5 hours in a week. 51% of the respondents had an account in Facebook, Google+ and LinkedIn. The respondents of 64% were using social networking sites to keep in touch with friends, sharing information and also for entertainment. The

majorities (78%) of the respondents felt social networking sites provide enough opportunities to the students to promote themselves and their career.

Perceptual Differences on SNS Benefits

Social Networking Sites offer various advantages to the student community such as imparting knowledge on various issues, sharing information regarding seminar, unveiling the unknown information etc. The following table depicts the perceptual differences of students and scholars on the benefits of SNSs. H₀: There is no significant difference between the mean rank of students and scholars with respect to the benefits of SNSs.

Table 1 - Mann-Whitney U Test

Status	N	Mean Rank	Z Value	P Value
Student	52	37.75	-0.150	0.881
Scholar	23	38.57		

Since the P value is more than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, conclude that there is no significant difference between the mean rank of students and scholars with respect to the benefits of SNSs. It is clear that there is no perceptual difference between students and scholars on SNS benefits.

Perception on Threats of SNSs

Social Networking Sites not only offer benefits but also it enforces various threats to the users. To figure out the major threats of SNSs to students, factor analysis has been applied.

Table 2 - KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.808
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1666.196
	Df	66
	Sig.	0.000

Value of KMO 0.808 indicates that a factor analysis is useful for the present data. Bartlett's test of Sphericity indicates whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which would indicate that the variables are unrelated. Here, the significant value is 0.000 which indicates that there exist significant relationships among the variables. The resultant value of KMO test and Bartlett's test indicate that the present data is useful for factor analysis.

Table 2.1-Rotated Component Matrix

Threats	Component	
	1	2
SNS revokes cultural values	.943	
SNS encourages racism	.941	
SNS shares false news and rumours	.923	
SNS is a forum to get cheated	.905	
SNS offers less privacy	.896	
SNS disseminates fake profile	.892	
SNS negatively impacts on relation	.877	
SNS creates an addiction	.875	
SNS consumes countless time	.856	
SNS curtails physical activities		.974
SNS adversely impacts on health		.907
SNS reduces learning and research capabilities		.833

From the rotated component matrix, it is apparent that the first factor consists of nine statements and second factor includes three statements. The factors can be labeled based on the statements included in it. Hence, the two components are labeled as Deceive and Monotonous. Deceive explains that social networking sites post threat to the students to great extent. Monotonous exhibits that social networking sites make the students droning in the career.

Impact of SNSs on Students

The earlier studies suggested that the SNSs have both positive and negative impact on student community. This paper attempted to identify which impact is greater in case of SNS using Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test.

H₀: There is no significant difference between mean rank of benefits and the threats of Social Networking Sites.

Table 3: Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Z Value	P Value
Negative Ranks	20 (a)	18.90		
Positive Ranks	52 (b)	43.27	5.526	0.000
Ties	3 (c)			

Notes:

- a. Negative Ranks : Benefit < Threats
- b. Positive Ranks : Benefit > Threats
- c. Ties : Benefit = Threats

Since the P value is lesser than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level of significance. Hence, conclude that there is significant difference

between mean rank of benefits and threats. Based on the mean rank, the opinion regarding benefit is greater than threats. It is obvious that the SNS has greater positive impact than negative impact on students.

Conclusion

Social Networking Sites are similar to double edged sword, which can be used for the career prospects or ruin the career. Student passion towards these sites has been amplified enormously. As it becomes the greatest entertainment of students, it could be subject to round-the-clock scrutiny by the service providers. Despite social networking sites offer greater benefits than threats, students must be aware of the threats associated with it, besides, the educational institution must be cautious enough to handle these sites. There are various academic related networking sites to share scholastic proficiency. Instead of surfing into the custom-made social networks, the students should turn towards the academic networking sites which would help them to excel in career.

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