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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Influence of Social Networking Sites as a Teaching Aid on Students' Academic Performance and Satisfaction Level

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ABSTRACT

Background/purpose – Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and social media have revolutionized daily life practically worldwide, providing opportunities to connect with others from almost anywhere in the world and at any time. As a nation, Bangladesh is one of the largest users of social media as people from all age groups spend much of their time as its users. Although SNSs can create certain problems such as lack of privacy and cyberbullying, it can also provide users with various benefits too. In this study, we explore the influence of SNSs on students' academic performance and satisfaction levels in Bangladesh.

Materials/methods – A preliminary survey was conducted with 100 students in Bangladesh at the tertiary level to gather data on how SNSs as a teaching tool in the class can influence their academic performance and satisfaction. The STATA statistical software was utilized to conduct *t*-test and to generate the results.

Results – The findings indicate that although the difference in academic performance of both the control and experimental groups remained statistically insignificant, students from the experimental group expressed higher levels of satisfaction in terms of learning.

Conclusion – The study highlights the efficacy of incorporating popular social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook as tools in the classroom which can help students to enhance their learning.

Keywords – Student satisfaction, Student performance, Social network, HEIs, Bangladesh.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, the Internet has become an essential avenue of collaboration in both the professional and personal lives of most citizens, having transformed the way that many people now choose to interact. Cyberspace has become more than just a means to search for information. Living in this age of connectivity, the mammoth expansion of the Internet has had a significant influence on the development of how students worldwide undertake their learning, as well as providing a means for networking and socializing. At present, the connectivity boom has brought us all closer together, irrespective of terrestrial limitations or cultural or political division. The varied range of communication tools now widely available have enabled millions around the world to use facilities such as Internet search engines, online websites, e-mails, e-newspapers, Internet banking, Internet calling, live chatrooms and direct messaging services, live streaming, online shopping, conferencing, multimedia sharing, online news rooms, social networking, online education, virtual classrooms, and many more besides. The connectivity phenomenon has been facilitated by the explosion of Internet availability, with, for example, online social networking sites having gained prominence almost universally (Joinson, 2008).

A significant number of benefits have been linked to social networking sites (SNS), made available through the affordances on the Internet's pervasive connectivity. However, it has also been said to hold controversial influence over students, especially when it comes to their academic commitment, learning, and performance. The trend of spending many hours online is commonplace amongst the urban youth, for whom online social networking is still on the increase (Rahman, 2011). The focal point of social networking is the creation of an avenue for the exchange of thoughts, knowledge, and networking within a global community. Significant transformation has been noted with an ever-expanding array of artificial intelligence applications that utilize social networking sites that enable students to remix, re-contextualize, and interconnect diverse cultures and practices in the acquisition of knowledge, whilst establishing areas of affinity amongst their peers and within the wider Internet-based community. Educators have contemplated on ways to best integrate these practices into teaching, not only so as to take advantage of their students' connectivity through today's digital tools, but also as a means to improving their analytical skills and techniques when engaging in SNSs due to the ever-increasing number of users engaged in the use of such platforms (Hamid et al., 2015). Thus, the rising pace of technological advancement with the ever-increasing creative development of novel resources in social networking sites has pushed educators and students alike to concede what it means to be literate in the 21st century.

SNSs such as Facebook, Myspace, and Blogs facilitate authentic forms of communication as part of class assignments with the aim being for students to apply and extend what they have learned during their formal class-based education (Arnold & Paulus, 2010; Delello et al., 2015; White & Hungerford-Kresser, 2014). As each social networking site has its own unique affordances and limitations in terms of facilitating the experiences of today's learners, a more detailed look at the influences of SNSs alongside classroom lectures is considered vital. This emphasis is necessary so as to develop awareness in educators of how digital technologies can make it simpler for students to experience a wider perspective of sharing what they learn. Hence, with continual growing usage of social networking platforms for pedagogical purposes, and the need to examine and further understand how students can benefit from the usage of social cyberspaces for educational purposes, examining how SNSs

can enhance student learning and satisfaction levels may contribute to the discussion on the educational application of SNSs.

The majority of users of SNSs in Bangladesh are youngsters and are therefore considered as "Digital Natives." The most common users are students at the tertiary level of education, which could potentially influence their academic performance and knowledge acquisition processes. SNSs certainly offer vast potential through real-time online learning, which may appear more innovative than conventional e-learning platforms. Thus, being an inseparable part of this globalization, there is a need for higher education policymakers in Bangladesh to appropriately link students usage of social networking with their academic performance, satisfaction levels, and their learning in order that this new generation may make best use of the technological developments available to them. From the hundreds of social networking sites on offer, the following are the more widely used in Bangladesh: Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Facebook.com is the most popular social networking site in Bangladesh, attracting a large number of domestic and international users due to its provision of easily adaptive and interactive services that can be arranged according to each user's preferred interests and activities (Helou et al., 2012).

There has been considerable prior research into the impact of SNSs on students' academic performance; however, studies in the context of higher education institutions in Bangladesh have been quite limited in number. In the context of Bangladesh, there have been hardly any studies which have significantly examined the potential effects of social networking site usage on students' academic performance or their satisfaction levels at the tertiary level of education. Hence, in order to address this gap in the literature, the current study primarily offers an attempt to identify whether or not the use of social networking sites by university students has any tendency to influence their academic results or their levels of satisfaction in the context of Bangladesh.

Thus, the current study examines the perception of online social networking in relation to users' academic performance excellence and students' satisfaction in learning. The research questions proposed in the study offer a two-pronged approach: (1) Does the use of online social networking sites by students impact on their academic performance? (2) What influence does online social networking have on students' satisfaction levels? The participants selected for the current study were drawn from a population of undergraduate students belonging to a particular department from a private university in Bangladesh. Thus, the current study employs a quantitative approach to explore the influences of SNSs on students' academic performance and satisfaction levels. It is believed that the findings of the study will enable policymakers, academicians, and university authorities to better understand how best to utilize online social networking sites so as to enhance student learning.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Positive Influences of SNSs on Students

The development of different social media applications that cater to the needs of students' different learning styles impels students towards social media-based learning (Balakrishnan & Gan, 2016). Use of social media in education can positively affect students' experience of deep learning, is a supportive instrument for both students and educators (Stathopoulou et al., 2019), and facilitates ease of availability of academic information, reducing overhead in terms of time, effort, and cost to obtain such information (Aljuboori et

al., 2020). Different social media applications can contribute to the development of students' writing and cognitive skills, and have also been shown to increase their commitment towards vocational learning (Jackson et al., 2018). Adoption of social media applications in the higher education context for learning activities can positively influence students' satisfaction levels as well as their academic performance (Alamri et al., 2020; Al-Rahmi et al., 2019).

According to empirical research conducted in Malaysia on the identification of student perceptions regarding the use of social media for learning purposes, the study concluded that, academic and social activities, as well as information exchange can be accelerated through the usage of various different social media platforms. Social media has been shown to facilitate interaction between faculty members and students outside of the physical classroom setting, which in turn enhances the learning environment and the students' engagement in the classroom (Hamid et al., 2015; Sugimoto et al., 2015). The multiple features of social media allow for communication with friends and peers, holding discussions about current topics, as well as sharing and watching news and current affairs, etc. (Hajli & Lin, 2014). Social media can also help to facilitate an interactive environment that stimulates both social and peer-based learning (Hajli & Lin, 2014).

Negative Influences of SNSs on Students

On the contrary, a negative relationship between the excessive use of social media and academic performance has been reported in a number of studies (Ahmadi & Zeinali, 2018; Azizi et al., 2019). Use of social media's multiple features can reduce the amount of time dedicated to academic activities (Lepp et al., 2015). Upadhayay and Guragain (2017) conducted a study on medical students that reflected that students who use social media more than average report poor academic achievement and a lack of concentration in the classroom. Excessive use of social networks can produce stress that may hamper students' academic performance (Gabre & Kumar, 2012) and may also contribute to fatigue and lack of proper sleep which can negatively affect their ability to concentrate on studying and learning (Bijari et al., 2013). Cyber security issues are also of significant concern amongst students who regularly use social media platforms (Aljuboori et al., 2020; Mirabolghasemi et al., 2016). Transgressions in terms of privacy and even blackmail are the potential negative impacts of social media usage. A study conducted with students in Germany revealed a positive relationship between addiction to Facebook and narcissism and mental health issues such as anxiety, stress, and depression (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2017). Addiction to social media can adversely affect the mental health of students, with those who use it excessively reportedly suffering from stress, anxiety, or depression (Gasper et al., 2016; Hawk et al., 2019).

Addiction to social media can also hamper students' self-esteem. In a study conducted by Hawi and Samaha (2017), it was revealed that the more a student is addicted to the use of social media, the lower their level of self-esteem was likely to be. Students' cognitive development can be retarded by excessive social media usage, and can also contribute to the social isolation of some students. In a study with 1,839 college students, Junco (2012) concluded that the more time that students spend using Facebook, the lower their GPA is likely to be as the use of social media can negatively affect academic performance (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011; Junco, 2012).

The relationship between gender and social media usage has been confirmed by studies conducted in Iran on medical sciences' students. Azizi et al. (2019) reported that addiction to social media was found to be significantly higher amongst male students when compared to their female peers. There is reportedly a variation in attitude towards social media usage between students and their teachers. A study conducted in Australia revealed that use of Facebook for education garners a positive attitude more for students than for their teachers (Connolly et al., 2019). Manca and Ranieri (2016) studied a large number of university teachers in Italy and revealed that the academics were not much interested in incorporating social media devices into their teaching practices because of institutional constraints, privacy limitations, as well as cultural and pedagogical issues.

Prior Studies in Bangladesh

Khanam (2020) surveyed 154 undergraduate Accounting students in Bangladesh in order to identify any relationship between their use of social media and their academic performance. The study revealed that the use of social media for academic purposes can positively affect students' academic performance through the online sharing of academic materials and the comprehension of academic topics. However, the study also reported that the use of social media for the completion of course-based activities such as assignments and presentations may negatively impact on the academic performance of Accounting students. A similar finding was supported by Jahan and Ahmed (2012), whose study reflected that students in Bangladesh are not that interested in the use of social media for course-related tasks such as quizzes, exams, or tests. The students showed reluctance towards the use of social networking sites for class-based discussions that involved teachers and students. Newaz and Karim (2016), in their study of undergraduate students at private universities in Bangladesh, found that most students used more than two social networking applications.

Another study, conducted by Biswas et al. (2020), aimed to discover the perceptions of university students regarding their usage of mobile devices for educational purposes during the COVID-19 pandemic. They demonstrated that most of the students frequently used various social media applications including Facebook (80.8%), YouTube (69.7%), Google+ (50.0%), and WhatsApp (41.0%). The study also reported that the participant students showed a positive attitude towards mobile device usage in terms of flexibility of learning, as it helped them to learn at any time of day or night and in any situation such as during the pandemic. Munshi et al. (2018) conducted a study with postgraduate students in exploring the perceived usefulness of various social networking sites. The study revealed that Facebook and YouTube were the two most widely used social networking sites among the participant higher education students, with most having reported that social media was seen as helpful when used for academic purposes. The students also reported that discussions, group studies, communication with teachers, and also information sharing were accelerated through the use of social media. Islam and Hossin (2016) found that a relationship exists between gender and Internet addiction amongst graduate students, and that male students were addicted to the Internet more than their female counterparts. They also reported a strong association exists between psychological distress and the overuse of Internet-based media. Rahman (2018) reported that university students became addicted to the Internet at the middle stage of their studies; as in their third or fourth year, or what is termed the "upper level." The students were said to spend between 4 and 5 hours using the Internet

daily. Kabir et al. (2014) concluded that the amount of time spent by students on their regular usage of different social media had a negative effect on their academic results.

Conversely, in a study conducted by Mouri and Arshad (2016) on business students at private universities in Bangladesh, the use of social media was not found to negatively impact on the study time of the students, but rather that it helped provide them with the latest study-related information and class materials. The authors of the study also found that students' usage of social media for academic purposes had a neutral impact (neither negative or positive) on their academic performance. Mahmuda (2016) reported certain challenges to the adoption of online education or technology-based education in Bangladesh in a study with the students and teachers of a private university in Bangladesh. Lack of proper teacher training, high costs of delivering teaching and learning, scope for plagiarism or cheating by students, and social networking sites were some of the challenges reported associated with online education in Bangladeshi higher education.

The current study mainly aimed to examine the impact of social networking site usage on students' academic performance and satisfaction at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. The researchers of the study attempted to understand the impact of students using social networking sites by comparing two classes, with one class of students who utilized social networking sites as an aid to their learning process, whilst another class did not utilize any SNSs. The key objective of the current study, therefore, was to evaluate the impact of social networking sites on students' academic performance and levels of satisfaction, through exploring answers to the following two key research questions:

- Does the usage of social networking sites (SNSs) in the class affect students' academic performance?

- Does the usage of social networking sites (SNSs) in the class influence the satisfaction level of students?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection

The researchers utilized both primary and secondary data, where information was gathered from diverse sources including journal articles, books, archives, university databank, and the Internet, etc. Saunders et al. (2007) opined that the method for collecting research data is linked to the research approach adopted in a study. Using secondary sources as a preliminary step in gaining insights into what the research entails can help put it into the right perspective. Hence, in the current study, data were collected from various secondary sources including books, articles, journals, newspapers, etc.

The primary data of the study was collected by conducting a survey with a self-administered questionnaire. A survey involves acquiring information about one or more groups of people about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes or previous experiences by asking the participants certain questions and then tabulating their answers (Leedy & Omrod, 2005), and is a method frequently used by researchers to collect information from individuals or groups of individuals. The self-administered questionnaire was employed in the current study due to its cost-effectiveness and the ease of collecting data without personal contact, which was of significant relevance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, in using this technique it was possible to collect data from a large number of participants over a short period of time. According to Fink (2003), self-administered

mailed questionnaires cost 50% less than telephone interviews, and 75% less than face-to-face interviews.

3.2. Sampling Technique

In order to conduct a successful academic survey, the validity and reliability of the selected technique is paramount. Babbie (1990) stated that validity was "the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration", whilst reliability was "a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result each time". Hence, in order to ensure that the results of a research remain credible, it is vital to choose an appropriate sampling technique. In the current study, the population being studied consisted of undergraduate students from a selected private university in Bangladesh. In order to conduct the study, the selection of participants was based on the convenience sampling technique, with 100 undergraduate students selected who were each enrolled in their second year of study within a BBA program, and taking a Managerial Accounting course with a specific course teacher. The chosen university is a well-reputed private institution in Bangladesh considered to have a diverse student population. However, the researchers ensured that the participants selected for the current study were homogenous in nature as in that both classes were formed with students in their second year of undergraduate study, taking the same course, and were taught by the same teacher during the summer semester of 2020. Moreover, all of the selected participants had a similar demographic and socioeconomic background in terms of their age group, family circumstances, and level of family income.

In order to determine which particular class was to be the Experimental Group, the researchers applied the flipped-coin technique, and it was determined that Section 4 would serve as the Experimental Group, whereas Section 5 would be the Control Group. The students of the Experimental Group were informed prior to the experimental application that a particular type of social networking site would be utilized as a teaching aid in their class. The Experimental Group students then used various social networking site features such as discussing lecture notes with peers using the chat box, posting class messages, and sharing lecture notes and videos, etc. On the other hand, the Control Group students were delivered the same lectures by the same teacher, but without the use of the social networking sites during the teaching they received. Hence both the Experimental Group and the Control Group were delivered 24 similar lectures, and at the end of the semester, students from both groups sat an identical comprehensive examination. Moreover, both the groups completed a course evaluation questionnaire as a means for providing feedback on the course and also regarding their satisfaction with the teaching they received.

A major concern held by the researchers was whether or not the selected participants should be informed about the research prior to the experiment. Although some researchers such as Punch (1986) have argued in favor of covert research, other researchers such as Clark (1995) and Kiegelmann (1996) have stated that informing participants about a research prior to the study being applied allows researchers to obtain a better quality of data as the participants can share their experiences honestly and provide feedback in a more appropriate manner. Hence, any sort of participation in the current study was voluntary in nature as the students were informed about the study at the beginning of the semester.

Hypotheses

This is a quantitative study where the primary objective was to test the following hypotheses:

H1   The class where SNSs are used will achieve a better level of academic performance according to their exam scores at the end of the semester.

H2   The class where SNSs are used will experience greater learning satisfaction according to their self-disclosed course evaluation ratings.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To test Hypothesis 1 ("The class where SNSs are used will achieve a better level of academic performance according to their exam scores at the end of the semester"), a comprehensive examination was conducted that used an identical question paper for students in both classes (i.e., both the Experimental Group and the Control Group).

Scores from the examination revealed that the students from the Experimental Group, who received instruction with SNSs applied as a teaching aid, achieved an average score of 54.02; whereas, the those from the Control Group achieved an average score of 53.18. As can be seen, the magnitude of difference between the mean scores of the Experimental Group and Control Group was minimal. A descriptive statistical independent sample t-test was conducted in order to ascertain if the difference in the mean average scores was statistically significant, as it is the most appropriate form of statistical analysis for two homogeneous groups, as in the current study.

As shown in Table 1, the Experimental Group, which used the SNSs during their course, achieved a mean score of 54.02. In contrast, the mean score for the Control Group, who did not use the SNSs in their learning, was 53.18. Therefore, it may be said that the mean scores indicated that the performance of the Experimental Group outperformed the Control Group. The researchers then performed a t-test so as to find out whether or not the dissimilarity between the two mean groups' scores was statistically significant. The t-test value was calculated as being .545 and the significance was $p = .724$, which, being greater than .05, indicates that the difference between the groups' mean score was statistically insignificant. As such, it may be said that there was not much difference between the performance of the students from the Experimental Group and the Control Group. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Finally, in order to test the Hypothesis 2 ("The class where SNSs are used will experience greater learning satisfaction according to their self-disclosed course evaluation ratings"), the course evaluation ratings provided by the students at the end of the semester were utilized. In this evaluation, the students were asked to rank certain aspects of the course and the teaching they received such as class preparation, course design, class participation, class materials, communication and delivery, and teaching methods, etc. In the Experimental Group, where SNSs were adopted, the students reported a higher level of satisfaction with a mean rating of 4.95 (from a maximum of 5.00). On the other hand, the Control Group students gave a lower rating of 4.80, which indicated a lower satisfaction level with the course and teaching, even though their lectures were delivered by the same course instructor. Moreover, in one key parameter of the course assessment, "Teaching Method," the Experimental Group gave a much higher score of 4.92 compared to the Control Group who gave a mean score of 4.55 for the same component. This finding indicates that although

the difference in the students' performance between the two study groups was statistically insignificant, the students in the Experimental Group expressed a greater level of satisfaction in the teaching and learning they received compared to those in the Control Group. Hence based on these findings, Hypothesis 2 was accepted.

Table 1. Results of the Study

Participants	Number of Students	Average Score on Comprehensive Exam (Max. total score = 60)	Course Evaluation Ratings (5-point scale)
Section 4 (Experimental Group)	45	54.02	4.95
Section 5 (Control Group)	55	53.18	4.80

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of the current study was to examine the influence of using social network sites in teaching and learning on the performance and satisfaction of undergraduate students at a higher education institution in Bangladesh. The findings provide a platform towards an improved understanding of social media, its usage in higher education, and the subsequent influence on university students. Whilst this study is by no means deemed fully comprehensive, the findings provide for a scenario that may be reflective of a widely emergent behavioral pattern concerning university students in Bangladesh.

The findings provide two main conclusions. First, the undergraduate students of the selected private university use social networking sites primarily to connect with and keep in touch with their friends, peers, and family. These students spend a substantial amount of time using SNSs, but it was not shown to hamper their studies or negatively affect their academic grades. One reason behind this finding may be that these students also engage in various academic activities such as group studying, research, information gathering, and online study discussions whilst logged onto SNSs.

Second, this study also indicates that although the performance of the participant students did not vary much based on their usage of SNSs, the students in the class where the social networking sites were utilized as a learning aid (i.e., the Experimental Group) expressed a higher satisfaction level in the overall course and teaching according to their course evaluation ratings given at the end of the semester.

In addition to these findings, the study made several literary contributions to the discussion on the usage of social networking sites in higher education learning and teaching. The study found that the majority of the participant students had access to the Internet and to mobile devices and had full knowledge of social networking sites such as Facebook. As a result, they visited their social networking sites frequently and spent a significant amount of time online each day. The findings of this study further highlighted the efficacy of incorporating popular social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook as a tool in which students can actively explore and apply course-related ideas, and to disseminate what they had learned. When designed carefully and affiliated diligently with academic learning, the integration of SNSs in HEIs in Bangladesh, it is suggested that informal learning could be

proven as more effective than traditional classroom learning. Furthermore, the multimodal features of SNSs magnify the choices now open to students in using various different modes of derive new meaning from learning scenarios and to navigate different ways of articulating ideas.

Although the study adds to the current literature, it also has certain limitations, such as its limited sample size and a sample that was elected from a single institution. However, it was not possible to achieve a larger and broader sample that included multiple institutions due both to the restrictions imposed for tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, and also the constraints of time.

It should be noted here that only the quantitative technique was adopted in this study to explore the influence of SNSs on the students' academic performance and satisfaction level. Thus, further studies may be designed that adopt the mixed-method technique, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Moreover, as studies on SNSs in the tertiary educational setting are limited in Bangladesh, this study may serve as a point of reference for future studies in this area. Further research may be conducted according to a wider spectrum that takes its focus on the demographics, geographical, and socioeconomic dimensions (such as age, gender, location, etc.) so that the findings of the current study may be generalized.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contributions Each step of the research was conducted by the authors together, based on an understanding of common responsibility. The authors read and approved the final published version of the article.

Conflicts of Interest The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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Data Availability Statement The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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