

Usage pattern of Facebook among the students of Dhaka University: a study

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The usage pattern of Facebook by the students of information science and library management (ISLM) department at Dhaka University was studied. Questionnaires were distributed to 160 B.A. (Honours) students of all four years of ISLM Department out of which 139 questionnaires were found usable. The study found that a large number of students create Facebook account after they enter the university. The present study also revealed that personality characteristics, gender, educational level, geographical area and age influence ISLM students' patterns of Facebook use and their perceptions about Facebook. The findings of this study also indicate that use of Facebook would be a supplementary tool in university education.

Keywords: Facebook; Dhaka University; Bangladesh

Introduction

Students today interact with information differently than students did ten years ago¹. Facebook and other social media are having significant effects on the "how" of information literate behaviors and practices. It is important for educators to understand how students interact with information in their daily lives in order to know both what to teach and how to teach it. Bauerlein² stated that students develop bad academic habits through social media use. However, Facebook has evolved into the most visited social networking site in the world with over 90 million active users in the last decade³. Facebook provides a flexible space to interface with a large number of students. In the field of library and information science, Facebook groups have been created to answer reference questions, search online public access catalogs, and host multimedia collections.

Wise et al⁴ discovered three main areas of Facebook--Facebook's uses and gratifications theory; its sociopolitical and psychosocial impacts, and its privacy implications. In this article, we attempt to explore the psychosocial impacts of Facebook by investigating how personal psychosocial characteristics and perceptions about Facebook influence students' patterns of Facebook use.

Review of literature

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites. It began as an on-line student

directory for college students and was recognized as a resource for finding people from as early as 2004⁵. Mark Zuckerberg, a keen computer programmer and founder of Facebook developed a number of social-networking websites while studying Psychology at Harvard University⁶. In February 2004, he launched "The Facebook", as it was originally known; the name taken from the sheets of paper distributed to freshmen, profiling students and staff. Within 24 hours, 1,200 Harvard students had signed up, and after one month, over half of the undergraduate population had a profile. The network was promptly extended to other students of Boston Universities⁷.

Today, there are more than 1.44 billion active users of Facebook, and it is altering the approach of billions of people to communicate with each other and share their information⁸. A rapidly growing body of research has accompanied the dramatic growth of Facebook as social scientists assess its impact on community life.

Witek and Grettano¹ carried out a survey on information literacy on Facebook. They observed that three Facebook functions such as Facebook feeds, share, and comment emerged as the primary means by which information literate practices and behaviors are developed and exhibited on Facebook. In addition, information literacy in the age of social media requires a "meta-literacy": a critical awareness of why we do what we do with information.

Aharony⁹ studied Facebook use by library and information science (LIS) students. The purpose of his paper was to examine whether LIS students' patterns of Facebook use are affected by personality characteristics and by their perceptions about Facebook. He found that personality characteristics as well as gender, level of education and age influence both LIS students' patterns of Facebook use and their perceptions about Facebook. Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis¹⁰ conducted a survey of academic librarians to ascertain perspectives on Facebook and its implications in libraries. They noted their sample of librarians ($n=123$) were aware of Facebook and its use on campus. In terms of Facebook's potential as an academic tool, 54% of those surveyed said there was no academic use, 34% were unsure, and 12% felt that such promises existed. This latter minority suggested the use of Facebook in academic settings to promote library services, set up book clubs, and create online study groups. Survey data found that most librarians were neither "enthusiastic nor disdainful" of Facebook.

Mathews¹¹ contacted 1,500 students in the school of mechanical engineering via a messaging application in Facebook. While some students simply responded "thanks," others initiated questions. Other positive results of this outreach included the author being "friended" by students and being recognized outside of the library at other campus locations. Mathews¹¹ encouraged librarians to embrace social networks to increase visibility and "let students know what the library is all about." Facebook may also fail to provide timely and relevant results when users attempt to get information from persons with whom the user has a feeble relationship. Findings also indicate the limitations of users functioning as quasi-librarians as it relates to the quality of information retrieval³.

Chu and Meulemans¹² gathered data through a survey and focus group which revealed that 67% of surveyed students discussed their schools and professors on these two sites. Students reported a reluctance to communicate with professors via these means and indicated that email was a more appropriate means to communicate with a faculty. Despite the hesitation of some students, the authors pointed out that many other campus entities such as athletes, student associations, fraternities and sororities have a MySpace or Facebook presence. They concluded that having a library page can be a useful promotional tool.

Tancer¹³, in a study, found that information needs were being fulfilled by friends in Facebook thus substituting the user's use of a traditional search engine. The finding provides insight into how humans in social networking sites surroundings can participate and collaborate to meet up user information needs. The information delivered was not just limited to information on the web, but also available from personal experience and referral to print sources.

Selwyn¹⁴ established that 76% of a sample of 909 American undergraduate students maintained Facebook profiles. Likewise, Smith and Caruso (2010) showed that 94.1% of their samples of university students in U.S institutions were regular users of social networking sites, and Facebook surpassed all other sites as the "favorite".

The literature review reveals that there is no study on the usage of Facebook by students in Bangladesh and hence the present study was undertaken.

Objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to identify the usage pattern of Facebook by the students of ISLM Department, in Dhaka University. Specific objectives are:

- To study the frequency of Facebook usage;
- To identify whether privacy settings of Facebook is used by the students or not;
- To investigate other social networking tools that are also being used by ISLM students; and
- To examine the use of Facebook groups and changing attitude of profile picture by students.

Methodology

One hundred and sixty Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) students of first year to fourth year of ISLM Department were selected as the sample for this study. Data for the study were obtained through a questionnaire survey. Out of the 160 responses, 139 were usable. Data were processed and analyzed using SPSS.

Analysis

Respondents profile

Out of the 139 responses it was found that 86 (61.87%) were males and 53 (38.13%) were females (Table 1). The largest group of students (105, 75.54%) was comprised of those in the age group of 21-25 years. The smallest group of students (34, 24.46%) was aged between 15-20 years.

Out of 139 students, 18 (12.95%) were in the first year, 21 (15.11%) were in the second year, 56 (40.29%) in the third year and 44 (31.65%) in the fourth year (Table 2).

Facebook account usage

Out of the 139 respondents, 123 (88.40%) had Facebook accounts (Table 3).

Levy⁵ et al. revealed that Facebook is one of the most well-liked social networking sites and is uniquely identified as a resource for locating persons. It began as an online student directory for students since 2004.

Table 4 shows that among 123 students 121 (98.37%) were Facebook users and only 2 (1.63%) were not Facebook users.

Frequency of Facebook use

The frequency of Facebook use varied among the students. Table 5 shows that the largest group i.e.

53.66% of students used Facebook on most days and 2.44% students used Facebook at least once a fortnight.

Privacy settings on Facebook

There are many features of Facebook but privacy settings on Facebook is now a vital issue. So, the students were also asked regarding the privacy settings on Facebook. About 70% of the respondents stated that they used the privacy settings in Facebook (see Table 6).

Facebook groups by gender

Among 123 students only 7 (5.69%) were not connected to any Facebook group. Thirty five students (28.46%) were connected to 1 to 5 Facebook groups, 30 (24.39%) students were connected with 6-10 Facebook groups, 21 (17.07%) students were connected with 11 to 15, 13 (10.57%) were connected with 16 to 20 and 8 (6.50%) students each were connected with 21 to 25, or more than 30 groups on Facebook (Table 7).

Table 1—Age group by gender

Age	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
15-20 years	18	12.95	16	11.51	34	24.46
21-25 years	68	48.92	37	26.62	105	75.54
Total	86	61.87	53	38.13	139	100

Table 2—Academic year by gender

Academic year	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1 st year	13	9.35	5	3.60	18	12.95
2 nd year	14	10.07	7	5.04	21	15.11
3 rd year	35	25.18	21	15.11	56	40.29
4 th year	24	17.27	20	14.39	44	31.65
Total	86	61.87	53	38.13	139	100

Table 3—Facebook account by gender

Facebook account	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	81	58.27	42	30.22	123	88.49
No	3	2.16	8	5.76	11	7.91
I plan on getting one	2	1.44	3	2.16	5	3.60
Total	86	61.87	53	38.13	139	100

Table 4—Use of Facebook by gender

Use Facebook	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	79	64.23	42	38.13	121	98.37
No	2	1.63	0	0.00	2	1.63
Total	81	65.85	42	34.15	123	100

Table 5—Frequency of Facebook use by gender

Frequency of Facebook use	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Most days	42	34.15	24	19.51	66	53.66
A few times every week	26	21.14	12	9.76	38	30.89
At least once a week	5	4.07	3	2.44	8	6.50
At least once a fortnight	3	2.44	0	0.00	3	2.44
At least once a month	5	4.07	3	2.44	8	6.50
Total	81	65.85	42	34.15	123	100

Table 6—Privacy settings on Facebook

Privacy settings on Facebook	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	52	42.28	34	27.64	86	69.92
No	29	23.58	8	6.50	37	30.08
Total	81	65.85	42	34.15	123	100

Table 7—Facebook groups by gender

Facebook groups	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	5	4.07	2	1.63	7	5.69
1-5	20	16.26	15	12.20	35	28.46
6-10	17	13.82	13	10.57	30	24.39
11-15	17	13.82	4	3.25	21	17.07
16-20	8	6.50	5	4.07	13	10.57
21-25	8	6.50	0	0.00	8	6.50
30+	6	4.88	2	1.63	8	6.50
Total	81	65.85	42	34.15	123	100

Changing attitude of profile picture

Table 8 shows that 53.6% of the students change their profile picture once in a month. Following 8.94% of the students change their profile picture three or more times in a week. 26.83% of the students replied that they don't change their profile picture frequently.

Use of other social networking sites

Selwyn¹⁴ established that 76% of his sample of 909 American undergraduate students maintained Facebook profiles. Similarly, Smith and Caruso¹⁵ demonstrated that 94.1 per cent of their samples of university students in US institutions were regular users of social networking sites, and Facebook surpassed all other sites as the "favorite".

Table 9 reveals that students are also using other social media except Facebook. Such as 31.71% students also use Google plus, 0.81% use Orkut and 25.20% maintain other social networking media concurrently. It was also seen that 37.40% of the students are not using any other social networking site along with Facebook.

Discussion

This study found that a majority of ISLM students are overwhelmingly aware of, and moderately knowledgeable about Facebook. Some were interested in, and fascinated by Facebook. The frequency of internet use varies among the ISLM students of

University of Dhaka. The study shows that the largest group of students uses the internet most days. A significant proportion of male students use the internet than female. The findings also reveal that males spend more time on Facebook than females. These findings stand in contrast to the findings of Aharony⁹. One area of attention this study points to is a lack of concern among students toward the Internet and privacy issues. Among the students one-third is not aware about privacy settings. University students are very high users of Facebook¹⁶. This study also shows that most of the students use Facebook after entering the university. Some students feel that Facebook is unnecessary, given the large number of communication methods already available in most universities¹⁷. Similar results also found that some ISLM students have also negatively replied against Facebook. Although, it seems that the large majority of students do use social media such as Facebook¹⁵, however, its use is not universal. Importantly, Facebook can be a particularly good alternative for students who would otherwise have trouble participating in face-to-face class discussions, since it is simply less intimidating for these more introverted students¹⁸. The study found that students are also using other social media apart from Facebook. For example, 31.71% of students also use Google plus; 0.81% use Orkut, and 25.20% maintain other social networking media concurrently. Likewise, Smith and Caruso¹⁵ verified that maximum numbers of university students in US institutions were regular users of social networking sites, and Facebook was the favorite among the sites. In another survey question, students were asked to make comments about whether Facebook is time wasting or not? Among the respondents, 62.60% replied that using Facebook is not time wasting, while 37.40% of the students think that it is time wasting. Results of chi-square tests for gender also disclose that there was no significant difference between male and female students about their computer use. The data on residence of respondents indicate that the largest groups were from villages (88, 63.31%). The lowest responses were from town (51, 36.69%). Also, chi-square tests for gender reveal that there was no significant difference between male and female students regarding their residence.

Table 8—Changing profile picture

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
I don't change my profile picture	23	18.7	10	8.1	33	26.83
Change profile picture once a month	44	35.7	22	17.8	66	53.66
Change profile picture once a week	6	4.88	5	4.07	11	8.94
Change profile picture twice a week	1	0.81	1	0.81	2	1.63
Change profile picture three or more times a week	7	5.69	4	3.25	11	8.94
Total	81	65.85	42	34.15	123	100

Table 9— Other social networking account by gender

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	31	25.20	15	12.20	46	37.40
MySpace	4	3.25	1	0.81	5	4.07
Google plus	27	21.95	12	9.76	39	31.71
Orkut	1	0.81	0	0.00	1	0.81
Others	17	13.82	14	11.38	31	25.20
All above	1	0.81	0	0.00	1	0.81
Total	81	65.85	42	34.15	123	100

Conclusion

Facebook might prove to be a passing fad, it is one of the earliest and largest online social networking

communities geared specifically for students in higher education. It represents a new form of communication that connects students socially in an online environment. If online academics have evolved and continue to do so, then it is only natural that online academic social environments, such as Facebook, will continue to evolve as well. Finally, the authors suggested that future studies may comprise more personality characteristics and students from other departments too, in order to have a broader perception of students Facebook use.

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