

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (IJLIS)

ISSN : 2277 – 3533 (Print)
ISSN : 2277 – 3584 (Online)

Volume 4, Issue 1, January - April (2015), pp. 78-87
© IAEME: www.iaeme.com/ijlis.html

Journal Impact Factor (2015): 7.8550 (Calculated by GISI),
www.jifactor.com



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**OPINION OF THE ACADEMICS ON THE APPLICATION OF SOCIAL
MEDIA IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH: A CASE STUDY OF
PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the feasibility of using social networking sites for teaching and research purposes based on the opinion of faculty and research scholars of various departments that belong to science and technology schools in Pondicherry University. The data were collected through questionnaire using simple random sampling from 22 faculty members and 76 research scholars. The result revealed that majority of the respondents was in favour of using social networking sites for academic purposes. 77.65% of them used Research Gate and Academia.edu was used by 64.89% of the respondents. More than 50% of the respondents opined that privacy policies of SNS are effective and 55.31% of the respondents are satisfied with the use of Social networking sites.

Keywords: social networking, social media, Pondicherry University, faculty and research scholars, SNS

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the basic needs of human being and essential for our day-to-day life. Sharing of information has become comparatively easier due to the availability of modern technologies

and devices. It is true that without the existence of this virtual world, today's information society may struggle to ensure its stability. The existence of Internet has paved the way for two-way communication and particularly the social media provides a new dimension to share any kind of information among the people in this environment. The concept of social media, however, includes a wider range of activities. Social networking has evolved and attached to modern life than ever. It has been doing different roles in life like communication, teaching, promoting etc. So the significance of social networking sites in academic field has been observed by many studies. Use of social media for sharing scholarly information is on the increase. There are some new tools/ indicators such as Altmetrics to measure the impact of research output of a researcher in any field. So, the Faculties and Research Scholars of Pondicherry University are not exceptional. In view of the above, it was intended to carry out this study seeking opinion of faculty and research scholars from science and technology departments of Pondicherry University on the application of social networking sites in academic related activities.

RELATED STUDIES

Gentile et al (2012) conducted a study on the effect of social networking websites to find out the positive aspects of social net working based on experimental investigation comprising two phases. The study proved that spending time on SNSs increased in positive self-views such as narcissism and self-esteem. Contrastingly, a pilot study recently conducted witnessed that use of social networks by academicians in a university has a negative impact on them in terms of their academic performance, health threat and privacy, and security issues. The study suggested the university to restrict the access to social network sites such as Facebook and may be allowed during lunch break, which is piloted for most students from 12 to 2 (Abdulahi et al, 2014). Glass et al (2014) shared his views based on his study that Chinese students strongly felt that the use of SNS would influence their academic performance. Similarly Hall et al (2013) conducted based on the opinion of medical students towards this direction proved that students devote too much of time on social networking sites and it greatly influences academic performance of the students negatively. It was also quite surprising that the use of SNS was found to be higher among Females than the Males comparatively.

A few studies (Stanciu et al, 2012; Veletsianos et al, 2012; and Adika, 2003) conducted in India and abroad particularly on students and faculty reported that the stakeholders of higher educational institutions have started using social networking sites for various purposes in teaching, learning, and research. The emergence of SNS has enabled the academicians to share their academic related information instantly.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was carried out with the following research questions:

- What are the popular Social Networking Sites used by Faculty and Research scholars for the purpose of teaching and research?
- For what purposes are the SNSs used?
- What are the implications of Social Networking Sites in teaching and research?
- Are there any Academic related SNS that influence the respondents?
- To what extent are the respondents satisfied with the Social Networking Sites, privacy policies, and security of information shared?

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

In view of the stated objectives of the study, a questionnaire tool was used to collect data. It included questions on the use of social networking sites, its influence, implications in academic activities, and the level of satisfaction. The target population comprised faculty and research scholars from 7 departments that belong to three Science and Technology schools of Pondicherry University. Simple random sampling was adopted to identify sample size. A total of 147 questionnaires were distributed among faculty and research scholars. Out of which, 22 were received back from the faculty and 76 from the research scholars. The questionnaires were personally had delivered and received back from the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile of the respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the Faculty respondents. A total of 22 Faculty was considered for the study. Out of which, 72.72% of them was found to be Assistant Professors and 27.28% of them was Associate Professors. Gender wise distribution of respondents indicates that 17 (77.27%) are male and 5(22.73%) are female. An opinion on the use of social networking sites by Faculty revealed that 81.82% of them use SNS while the remaining 19.18% does not.

Table 1: Profile of the respondents (Faculty)

Department	Designation		Gender		SNS	
	Assoc. Prof.	Asst. Prof.	Male	Female	Use	Non-Use
Mathematics	3	2	3	2	1	4
Earth Sciences	1	3	3	1	4	-
Nanotechnology	1	-	1	-	1	-
Food Science & Technology	-	2	1	1	2	-
Chemistry	1	3	4	-	4	-
Physics	-	3	2	1	3	-
Computer Science	-	3	3	-	3	-
Total	6 (27.28%)	16 (72.72%)	17 (77.27%)	5 (22.73%)	18 (81.82%)	4 (19.18%)

Table 2 highlights the demographic profile of research scholars. A total of 76 research scholars were considered for the study. The department wise distribution of research scholars by Gender indicates that 57 (75%) are male and the remaining 19 (25%) are female.

Table 2: Status of respondents (Research Scholars)

Sl. No.	Department	Male	Female
1.	Bio Technology	5	2
2.	Chemistry	7	3
3.	Computer Science	5	2
4.	Earth Science	5	1
5.	Ecology	3	-
6.	Food Science & Technology	6	-
7.	Green-Technology	3	-
8.	Mathematics	7	3
9.	Micro Biology	4	3
10.	Nanotechnology	5	1
11.	Physics	7	4
Total		57 (75%)	19 (25%)

Popular Sites

Table 3 visualizes the percentage of popular social networking sites used by the respondents. The result presents that majority (91.48%) of the respondents has account in Facebook. 79.78% has account in YouTube. 70.21 have on Whatsapp. 65.95% of respondents have profile on Google+. 61.70% of respondents have personal account on twitter. 52.12% of people are using LinkedIn and 45.74% has profile on My Space.

Table 3: Profile of Social Networking Sites

Social Networking Site	No of Users	Percentage
Facebook	86	91.48
Youtube	75	79.78
Whatsapp	66	70.21
Google+	62	65.95
Twitter	58	61.70
LinkedIn	49	52.12
My Space	43	45.74

Purpose of using SNS

A question was there as how respondents are using social networking sites in academic field. Table 4 indicates that majority of respondents (30.85%) answered they are discussing academic doubts with others through social networking sites. 25.53% of them replied that they used it to seek opinions from friends. 22.34% respondents used it to clarify something related to academic and some people (21. 27%) used it for posting their observations on the contents available through social media.

Table 4: Purpose of using SNS by respondents

Purpose	No of Respondents	Percentage
By discussing doubts with others	29	30.85
To seek opinions from friends	24	25.53
Asking for clarifications	21	22.34
For posting observations	20	21.27

Effect of using SNS

Table 5 depicts the result of the opinion on the effect of using social networking sites. The result indicates that out of 94, 21 respondents opined it does not make any effect on their lives. 37 people replied that use of SNS effected to some extent and 36 respondents were of the opinion of having tremendous effect.

Table 5: Opinion on the effect of using SNS

Effect	No of Respondents	Percentage
Does not have any effect	21	22.34
SNS has effects to some extent	37	39.36
SNS has a tremendous effect	36	38.29

Effective usage of time

Table 6 reveals the opinion of respondents whether the social networking sites consume their valuable time or not. There were four options which include Never, Rarely, Sometimes, and Often. The result shows that the majority (58.51%) of the respondents expressed that the wastage of time happens sometimes. 19.14% of the respondents felt that use of SNS never wastes their valuable time. A Very few of them opined as often (12.75% and rarely (9.57%).

Table 6: Opinion on whether use of SNS wastes time

Answer	No of respondent	Percentage
Sometimes	55	58.51
Never	18	19.14
Often	12	12.75
Rarely	9	9.57

Impact of SNS on personal life

Table 7 reveals that the opinion of the respondents whether social networking sites make rapid change in their lives or not. The result shows that the majority of them (40.42%) replied sometimes. 27.65% of them said often. 13.82% of them answered rarely. 10.63% of population think like always it can be and 7.44% of respondents opined that social media could never make any changes in their lives.

Table 7: Changing of lifestyle by SNS

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
Never	7	7.44
Rarely	13	13.82
Sometimes	38	40.42
Often	26	27.65
Always	10	10.63

Implications of SNS in Academic Field

Table 8 highlights the opinion of the respondents on the use of social networking sites for academic purpose. The result shows that out of 94 respondents, 49 people agreed to the support of use, 24 of them strongly agreed, 19 people opined the fair option and only 2 respondents disagreed to the use of social networking site in academic setting.

Table 8: Opinion on the use of SNS for academic purpose

Response	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	24	25.53
Agree	49	52.12
Fair	19	20.21
Disagree	2	2.12
Strongly Disagree	-	-

Use of Academic related SNS

Table 9 presents the result of academic related social networking sites which are used by respondents. The result shows that majority of them (77.65%) uses Research Gate followed by Academia.edu that accounts for 64.89%. A meager percentage of respondents used some other social networking sites such as BetterLesson (9.57%), edWeb (9.57%), Classroom 2.0 (8.51%), Blackboard xpLor(5.31%), and Faculty Row (3.19%).

Table 9: Use of Academic related SNS

Academic SNSs	No of Respondents	Percentage
ResearchGate	73	77.65
Academia.edu	61	64.89
BetterLesson	9	9.57
edWeb	9	9.57
Classroom 2.0	8	8.51
Blackboard xpLor	5	5.31
Faculty Row	3	3.19

Information diffusion through SNS

When asked about the promotional role of social networking site for the publication of recent peer reviewed article, the respondents expressed, as shown in Table 10, that 37.23% of them haven't published anything yet on social media. 29.78% of respondents posted their articles titles and links on social networks through their own profile. 23.4% of respondents replied they used to post the web link to the online article and a meager (9.57%) number of respondents said that they posted their articles and link in their research blog only.

Table 10: Diffusion of published information through SNS

Type of Promotion	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes, I used SNS to post the web link to the online article	22	23.40
Yes, I posted the article title and link on social networks	28	29.78
Yes, I posted the article title and link in my research blog	9	9.57
I haven't published anything yet	35	37.23

Sharing of Private Information

The result of analysis on the sharing of personal information through SNS is presented in Table 11. The result brings out that Email, being a reliable, fast and convenient medium, was found to be the most preferred personal information to share recording 93.61% followed by sharing Real Name (84.04%), Interests (68.08%), Date of Birth (56.38%), Hobbies (55.31%), Towns (41.48%), Contact Number (40.42%), and Religion (23.4%).

Table 11: Preferences of sharing the personal information

Information	No of Respondents	Percentage
E- mail	88	93.61
Real name	79	84.04
Interests	64	68.08
Date of birth	53	56.38
Hobbies	52	55.31
Towns	39	41.48
Contact number	38	40.42
Religion	22	23.40

Nature of Information Shared

Table 12 presents the information which respondents would like to share on their social networking accounts. The result revealed that majority (73.40%) of population opined of sharing their academic related contents followed by Ideas (70.21%), Photos (62.76%), Experience (56.38%), Current issues (50%), Feelings (40.42%) and Religious thoughts (12.76%).

Table 12: Preference of information nature shared through SNS

Information	No of respondent	Percentage
Academic things	69	73.40
Ideas	66	70.21
Photos	59	62.76
Experiences	53	56.38
Current issues	47	50.00
Feelings	38	40.42
Religious thoughts	12	12.76

Opinion on the privacy policies

Table 13 reveals that the opinion on the privacy policies of SNS whether it is effective or not. The result shows that majority of respondents (50%) agreed as it is effective. 30.85% of the study population disagreed with the effectiveness of private policy, 10.63% people strongly agreed and 8.51 of them strongly disagreed to the statement.

Table 13: Opinion on the private policies in sharing information

Opinion	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	10	10.63
Agree	47	50.00
Disagree	29	30.85
Strongly Disagree	8	8.51

Security of Information Shared

There was an important question on the opinion of respondents about the shared information that reaches securely or not. Table 14 projects the result stating that majority of the respondents (57.44) replied “No”.19.14% people said most of them are secured. Some people (14.89%) said that some of them are secured and very less people (8.51%) only said “Yes’ confidently. This scenario clearly indicates that the most of the information shared through SNS is not sent securely.

Table 14: Opinion on the secured way of sending information

Opinion	No of respondent	Percentage
Yes	8	8.51
No	54	57.44
Most of Them	18	19.14
Some of them	14	14.89

Level of Satisfaction

Table 15 highlights the level of satisfaction on the use of social networking sites by the respondents. The result presents that majority (55.31%) of the respondents are satisfied with the use of Social networking sites. 27.65% of respondents answered they are partially satisfied with that. 13.82% having opinion as highly satisfied and very less number (3.19%) of respondents only said they have no satisfaction on any social networking sites that they used.

Table 15: Level of satisfaction on the use of SNS

Level of Satisfaction	No of Respondents	Percentage
Highly Satisfied	13	13.82
Satisfied	52	55.31
Partially Satisfied	26	27.65
Not Satisfied	3	3.19

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

It was found that maximum number of respondents from various science and technology departments is using social networking sites. Majority of the respondents use social networking sites for their academic purposes. A good number people believe that social media is reliable to get accurate information rather than traditional media. The result evidentially proved that the research gate is the most widely used academic social networking site. As per the findings it was observed that the respondents are of the opinion that use of SNS in academic arena is most relevant and the academics should be encouraged to make use of SNS. To promote the use of social networking sites in an effective and efficient manner, it is necessary to make awareness and provide training about how to use social networking sites properly. The use of social

networking sites in an appropriate way in academic field will have its own implications in teaching, learning and research and in turn will refine the quality of teaching and research rapidly.

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