EFFECTS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT:

The world is going through a constant technological change which has been brought about by young millennials. They are called digital natives, tech-savvy and what not, however the ground reality is that, yes they are born in the deep waters of the digital revolution paving their way into the new millennium. Digitalization is embedded into their systems not only physically but also psychologically. If their behavior is different from others it is because they have been born and reared in the light of a digital spectrum. They have gained electronic independence as quoted by Marshall McLuhan of the communication theory fame. However, this independence has made them dependent on the internet. These digital natives have mastered the art of social interactions so beautifully that they are almost addicted to such digital platforms. Facebook, Instagram, snapchat, twitter, tinder, linkedin are such platforms to name a few. Such platforms since their inception have undergone a dramatic change in their user base and user behavior pattern. Social networking sites help to create a social image through impression management and quick electronic word of mouth interaction (Shimpi 2018). Such interactions also lead to participative style of learning. The current study is an attempt to explore first and foremost the usage pattern of these students of these SNS, their behaviour pattern and the correlation of this behaviour on their academic performance.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites (SNSs), Millenials, Addiction, Digitalization.

INTRODUCTION

The world is going through a constant technological change which has been brought about by young millennial. They are called digital natives, tech-savvy and what not , however the ground reality is that, yes they are born in the deep waters of the digital revolution paving their way into the new millennium. Digitalization is embedded into their systems not only physically but also psychologically. If their behavior is different from others it is because they have been born and reared in the light of a digital spectrum.

The day dawns with the light of their mobile phones and ends when the battery gets exhausted. Their personalities get groomed with the help of the digital devices in the digital spaces. They are developing into twin identities of actual and virtual realities. They are evolving into capabilities which are surpassing the peripheries of the human mind, because it is not just the human minds at play but the digital world or the virtual reality which is now unfolding with them. They are much more capable and evolved than their ancestors as they beautifully articulate the actual and the virtual lives. They have gained electronic independence as quoted by Marshall McLuhan of the communication theory fame. However, this independence has made them dependent on the internet. They are able to manage themselves on ground as well as virtually. It will be more appropriate if we say that they are more comfortable communicating virtually. Access to technology through gadgets and internet has opened new horizons and further new frontiers to be conquered.

Education and knowledge become two faced swords. The vast arena of knowledge at their fingertips is tipping towards a new realm of a new universe to be explored by them. The use of this knowledge to educate themselves is the challenge that this generation will face or is rather facing. The way they think, communicate and behave is certainly a matter of concern, because the knowledge with which they feel liberated is like the widespread jungle fire which needs to be tamed. And are they capable enough to do that. In the use of this knowledge, not only their thought process, their learning outcomes, but their interactions have taken a 360-degree turn. They are able to maintain their identities, interactions and collaborations digitally in a unique manner only known to them. How to know new people, how to make friends with them, and how to exploit such relationships for their well being is the task of the so-called Social Networking Sites. The fabric of society allows you to weave your relationships in a manner which are mutually beneficial. However, these digital natives have mastered the art of social interactions so beautifully that they are almost addicted to such digital platforms. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Tinder, Linkedin are such platforms to name a few. Such platforms since their inception have gone a dramatic change in their user base and user behavior pattern. Social networking sites help to create a social

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image through impression management and quick electronic word of mouth interaction (Shimpi 2018). Such interactions also lead to participative style of learning.

However, such sites carry very interesting features to let the participants spend more and more time on them. Initially what started as an interaction is now becoming more of addiction for these knowledge-fed and education-starved breed of digital natives.

Through this study, we would like to highlight the usage pattern of such population who are also undergraduate students and are pursuing courses which are career oriented. We are trying to explore first and foremost the usage pattern of these students of these SNS, their behaviour pattern and the correlation of this behaviour on their academic performance. We will be doing so with the help of a structured questionnaire on a sample base of around 100 students pursuing an undergraduate program. Since we have the access to their academic grades, therefore we will then study the effects of their behaviour pattern on their academic performance. The study relies greatly on the premise that what started as a collaborative learning and improved learning motivation due to enhanced relationships might have taken a different tangent of exploiting the privacy and an addiction to the media resulting in a waste of the precious academic time of the students. Therefore the research holds a key role in exploring the effect of their behaviour pattern which will include their interactions on the types of the sites they access and the quality and quantity of time they spent on such sites, on their academic performance and concentration of their studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media today has acquired wider acceptance among students and is seen as an effective communication tool for learning and conducting interactive sessions simultaneously. Studies revealed that the impact of social media in enhancing education has been highly significant. Studies and opinions have brought forward four major advantages which social media has upon higher education. These include enhanced relationships, improved learning motivation, ability to get personalised course material, and developed collaborative abilities. Usman (2015), in his study, statistically revealed that students were eager to use social networking sites or SNS as a tool to support their educational activities. The study showed that SNSs had a positive impact on sharing knowledge among students through audio conferencing and web conferencing. Even some instructional games had an impact on sharing knowledge among them. His study showed that students fervent at sharing their ideas and views through online group discussions, instant messaging, and group chats. The findings of the study conducted by Timm and Perez (2010) showed that students relied on SNSs to a great extent for communicating and sharing information with online friends.

Social networking has actually brought a sense of collaboration and sharing among students to appraise and upgrade their educational quality. Social media has a profound impact on students of higher education. It has been widely used by the higher education institutes as it significantly contributes to their academic development through collaborative work, knowledge sharing and explored professional connections that enable them to seek job opportunities (Boateng & Amankwaa, 2016). Academic practitioners and management of various colleges have pushed education beyond the border. They have focused on the benefits of social media that helps student to emerge with new ideas, skills, and verdicts.

It enriches their educational efforts and result in higher level of engagement in learning (Srivastava, 2012). SNSs are an efficacious tool in reinforcing the education system among the students. They play an active role in socializing and networking along with providing a unique learning experience. They have also proven to be time-saving method to interact and participate with others. SNSs have been utilised by the students to form groups without any obstacle of time and space and help them to connect with each other, clear their doubts, think together on research activities, and become more integrated (Mhunpiew & Purayidathil, 2015). Social media has helped the students in knowledge creation (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2011). Research done by Goel and Singh (2016) showed that graduates were willing to use social networking sites that provided supplementary information for their curriculum and was of great utility. The research also highlighted that students had a positive approach towards social networking sites in improving academic performance.

Morollo(2014) showed that students admitted that SNSs had adequately helped them in their students, but there were other factors too on which their academic performance depended. A study conducted by Junco, Heibergert and Loken(2011) revealed a surprising conclusion that students of Twitter group secured greater GPAs and higher scores than the other group ofnon users. A research conducted on students and Universities by Amin, Mansoor, Hussain and Hashmat (2016) showed that they commonly used Facebook and Twitter to prepare their assignments, and it had become a routine work to access the sites which influenced their academic performance positively. Students reached out to more respondents by emailing the questionnaire while coordinating a research activity; communicated and shared information & materials on a

daily basis and augmented their learning skills. Moreover, communication pertaining to those of changing class schedule, academic events and notifications kept the students updated and connected. On the same line, the study found that social networking sites acted as a medium for networking among classmates, teachers, mentors and colleagues.

Online recruitment has emerged as a unique way for attracting potential candidates. SNSs provide a great opportunity for companies to get in touch with potential talents. SNSs act as an effective and time saving tool to approach employers. A survey showed that 94% of recruiters were currently using LinkedIn to find suitable candidates for their companies. Organisations progressively use YouTube for the purpose of sharing information about themselves, and mostly they upload videos showing off the personality of their workplaces. Users are a lot more prone to share a video than to share text. If companies persuade the sharing of their videos, they will reach even more potential hires (Hada& Gairola, 2015).

A significant change has been noted in teaching and learning activities in the modern era of strategic learning and practices. SNSs have become a prevalent medium for collaboration between students & a teacher not only within a defined time, but also beyond that defined time. Facebook and other SNSs are ubiquitous in everyday life, seeping into educational environments, and leaving educators little choice but to explore how it is best to incorporate SNS tools into teaching and learning (Madge, Meek, Wellens & Hooley, 2009). Sometimes, it was seen that teachers themselves participated in SNSs and groups to be a part of the learning culture and nourished and built the student group. The studies of researchers revealed that a sense of community in online

learning environment contributed to student motivation and increased learning (Rovai, 2002). A sense of community is also closely associated with interactions. Researchers have also shown that a sense of community helps to reduce feelings of isolation and facilitates learning by making more resources available in the form of other learners from whom learners can seek help. Although the social networking sites act as a means for collaboration, alliance and participation, they also restrict interactions. People having smartphones often prefer to interact with people online than to take a call or talk personally. The process seems to be easy, simple and effective and people also prefer it.

As the amount of time users spend on social networking sites continues to grow, their interactions with other offline content tends to decrease, which means that most of their socializing and socialization occurs within the glow of a computer or phone screen (Pew research internet Project, 2013). Chandra Johnson related it to the act of children exploring the world within their own eyes, compared to looking at the same things in a picture. The two can never be equalled. Since there is no face to face interaction, the real expression cannot be noted, and hence, after a time, expressions deaden. People start losing friends and families in due course of time. The growth of SNSs has showed significant changes in the personal lives of the users. SNSs have led to people expressing their emotions and verdicts through technological communication rather than expressing it in person (Wang, Chen & Liang, 2011).

SNSs offer public sharing of thoughts and personal stuff, which may create some grave issues. A research study conducted by Gross & Acquisti in 2005 on 4000 Facebook profiles of Carnegie Mellon University students found threats arising from the personal

information which they shared on the sites. This information could be used to estimate a person's social security number and finding sensitive Information. With SNSs, it has become easy to target one another. Cyber bullying is one of such forms, and SNSs have made it worse for the victims. Such open access to private life has opened up risks of being attacked. The victims are vulnerable online, and the insults made towards them are deadlier because of the computer masked the faces and the majority of the insults, tweets and taunts go on without repercussions.

With the emergence of social networks, there is now a specific focus on social aspects of trust. Social networks have fostered individual connectivity and have helped people to personalize their own communities (Sherchan, Nepal, & Paris, 2013).Studies have revealed that people have developed substantial trust on SNSs. Trust is more likely to emerge among strong ties, presumably due to greater emotional bonds, better knowledge and understanding, and the development of common ways of thinking and communication (Levin &Cross,2004).Students in these cases have now become a cause of concern. SNSs provide young people with a space to work out identity and status, make sense of cultural cues, and negotiate public life. Free from adult regulation, young people's articulation and expression of various parts of their identity to their friends and others support critical peer based sociality(Boyd,2007).Such processes of socialization are essential for psycho social development at a time when many young people are consolidating their identities, pulling up roots from their family, striving for independence, and are developing new types of relationships(Cobb,1995). Livingstone(2008)in her study observed that the youth centered social networks that consist of self-constructed pages are one of the important segments of

managing their own identity, lifestyle, and social relationships. She also stated that such SNSs have helped in gaining confidence in an ego identity that is autonomous and socially valued (Livingstone, 2008). Studies have shown that people who are active online are likely to be active in group activities. The Pew Research Centre found that 80%of Internet users participated in groups, and students made an effective use of it. In crisis situations like the Haiti earthquake or Mumbai attacks, there were more broadcast based information sharing activities, where the users pushed information out to many users which was not directed towards one specific user (Hughes&Palen,2009).Revere and Kovach(2011)reflected in their study that social online networking sites provided a 'continuous stream of information' to the students. Social media helps out students to follow professional societies and organizations. These also facilitate students in contributing their opinions and verdicts on different issues of discussions and questions across a network. All of these activities enrich their learning experience and enable individual knowledge management.

Some studies have highlighted the disadvantages of SNSs. Kuppuswamy and Narayan (2010) stated that SNSs grabbed total attention and concentration of students and diverted their time towards non educational and inappropriate actions and time killing by random searching. Olowu and Seri (2012),in a study conducted on students of different universities, found that students' use of SNS even pointed towards obsession. They ranked this as their' top priority' and connected to it more in order to feel satisfied. A study conducted by Dau (2015) showed that students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria spent excessive time on SNSs, which affected their productivity. He concluded that the danger posed by exposing too much information online

cannot also be overemphasized and that students should be careful. Gok (2016) conducted a survey which highlighted that SNSs degraded socialization and habits of the students which diminished their personal productivity.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
The current research paper aims to accomplish the following objectives:
- To understand the general usage behaviour of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) of the NDIM students.
- To understand if there exists any relationship between the time spent on SNSs and its impact of students' academic scores.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Universe and Sample Size: For the purpose of the current paper, the students of NDIM constitute the universe from which a sample of 100 students was taken to fill a structured, multiple choice questionnaire having statements aiming at eliciting responses in relation to the above stated objectives.

Data Collection: For the purpose of the current paper, both primary and secondary data was collected. While the primary data has been collected with the help of a questionnaire oriented towards BBA students of NDIM, secondary data has been sourced from various web sources, research journals and other articles relevant to the topic of this study.

Statistical Tool used: The responses collected were analysed so as to establish a correlation between the independent factor, 'time spent on Social Networking Sites' and dependent variable, 'Academic scores' of the NDIM students. The research also focused on finding out the level of 'addiction' of SNSs of these students. While the numeric responses of the number of hours spent on the SNSs were put under series X and the academic scores were put under

the series Y and correlation between the both was calculated using Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation.

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS
The findings of the questionnaire responses are described as follows:

Age
We had taken an age cohort of 19, 20 and 21. Our major category of age falls in the age of 20 as 52.4% comprises of this age group.

Gender
Between males and females, around 59.5% were females and rest 40.5% were males constituting the total number of respondents.

Statement 1: Definition of Addiction
The researchers wanted to understand the definition of 'addiction' on such sites from the perspective of the respondents. To avoid giving a biased view, the respondents' point of view was taken in terms of number of hours of usage of SNSs could be described as Addiction. Out of the four choices - 1hour, 2 hours, 3 hours or 4 hours, 50 % respondents feel that more than 4 hours could be described as Addiction. However, 23.9% feel more than 3 hours as addiction, 15.2% feel more than 2 hours is also Addiction. The most interesting part is that a small fraction, about 10.9% feels that even more than 1 hour is also considered Addiction.

Statement 2: Fear of losing out if not on digital space
A phenomenon of FOMO, described as Fear of Missing Out, is seen very prevalent among this age cohort. The researchers wanted to understand whether these students also feel that they are missing out some important part of their lives if they are not there on the digital space.

In this context, a strange phenomenon was seen with a majority of 45.7% respondents who have chosen

'MAYBE' as a response that shows that they are quite confused whether they experience this phenomenon or not. 31.3% feel that they do not feel the fear of missing out and responded 'NO', while rest 25% revealed that they feel strongly of this fear of missing out if they are not on the digital space.

Statement 3: Expenditure on mobile data

Expenditure on mobile data was a moderate ranging from Rs.150-200 /- for a majority of 56.3%. Another 20.8% spend Rs. 250-300, while 16.7% spend Rs. 450-500/- and only a minority of 6.3% spend more than Rs. 600/- on their mobile data.

This finding is not very conclusive as the respondents may be using the data of others or using internet through Wi-Fi.

Statement 4: Preference of SNSs

In the preference for various SNSs, Instagram has come out as the most popular among these millienials with a whopping 87.5%, while Facebook and Snapchat are almost of equal preference for 56.3% and 54.2% respectively. Twitter is also in their list but only a total of 8.2% prefer using it. Two interesting features in this context were surfaced: (i) they are not at all using Tinder as given in the options of responses and a considerable 28% is using Linkedin which is a professional site.

Statement 5: Hourly usage of SNSs

The usage of SNSs in terms of number of hours is more than 3 hours with the highest percentage of 36% respondents, while 26% use more than 4 hours and 24% use more than 3 hours and only 14% is using more than 2 hours.

This question was specifically placed in between in an effort to dodge the respondents and also not to create a biased response as far as addiction is concerned.

Therefore, through this analysis, we can also conclude that about 26% feel that they are addicted to the social networking sites.

Statement 6: Harmful effects of SNSs

The response rate of students was either a clear YES by a total of 50% of the respondents who feel that there are harmful effects of social networking sites on students while another 50% chose MAY BE as their response. This may mean that either they are not aware or they do not want to acknowledge the fact that there are harmful effects of using SNSs.

Statement 7: Effects of SNSs usage

Effect of SNS usage can have other effects on students have found the maximum response of keeping them connected with relevant people on digital space with 47.3%.

An interesting trend is the response to the same question is that "it wastes their productive time" giving a response of 41.8%. Therefore they do feel that they are wasting their productive time on these social networking sites. It can be authenticated with a though meagre 7.3% that it is making them vulnerable to the digital world.

And last but not the least is the encroachment of their privacy get a mere 3.6%.

Statement 8: Effect of SNSs usage on academic performance

Talking about their academic performance a whopping 47.3% feel that use of SNS does affect their academic performance, where as another 47.3% also is confused that maybe it affects their academic performance.

To study this in detail, the researchers have taken a correlation of their usage of SNS on their academic performance which will be discussed in detail further.

Statement 9: Miscellaneous help of SNSs

Any help of these SNS in their academic performance again saw a interesting trend where in 58.2% responded that such sites help them in (gathering course material 30.9%, understanding the concepts 16.4%, to help in examination 10.9%).

A 14.5% also feel that there is no such a help from such SNS is there.

Results of Karl Pearson's Correlation Summarised:

- The research proved that there is a string positive correlation between use of SNSs and academic performance.
- Also there is a positive correlation between SNSs' usage and remaining updated on social media space
- There is not so strong correlation between SNS usage and better performance in exams despite the fact that the respondents found these sites helpful in gathering content as notes
- There is a high correlation between usage of social networking sites and harmful effects for individuals.

CONCLUSION

After a thorough analysis of questionnaire responses, we can conclude that usage of social networking sites is considered to be an addiction which affects individual students in different ways. As far as the positive outcomes are concerned, these sites are a good source of updated information provided students use them like that. Also, these are somewhat helpful in rendering help to students in their academics by way of notes and ready reference material handily available during exam days. SNSs have been considered a negative element by some of the student respondents who feel that it acts as a distraction to them and they are tempted to watch videos

and content other than their relevant stuff. On the whole it can be therefore concluded that if used in right ways and for the right amount of time, SNSs can be beneficial and may lead to positive consequences.

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