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**ARTICLE**

**Educational Use of Social Networking**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Social Networking services have become very popular during the past few decades, and play an important role in our daily life nowadays. Social networking services are also called social networking sites as well as social media. It is an electronic tool that serves to connect people remotely at their convenience. It is an online platform which people use to build social networks or social relations with other people who share similar personal or career interests, activities, backgrounds or real-life connections. Just like other technology, for example mobile phones, social media is a very effective tool for connecting with people. It is a fact that social media has tremendously changed the way people interact and carry on with their everyday lives. It helps us in many fields of life such as entertainment, marketing, business and educational field. This paper summarizes some of the challenges and opportunities used in social networking as educational tools.*

**Introduction**

Social networking has become an inseparable part of our life. Not even a single day passes away without our checking pages of sites like Facebook, Twitter, etc. Social networking is built on the idea of how people should know and interact with each other. It gives people the power to share, making the world more open and connected. Nowadays, social networking has a vital influence on our lives as it helps a lot in every field of life, such as entertainment, marketing, business and educational and employment fields. Students and educators of new digital literacy, are confident that social networking encourages the development of transferable, technical, and social skills of value in formal and informal learning. In a formal learning environment, goals or objectives are determined by an outside department or agency. Tweeting, instant messaging or blogging enhances student involvement. Students, who would not normally participate in classes, learn more through social network services. Networking provides participants the opportunity for just-in-time learning and higher levels of engagement. The use of social networking services (SNS) allows educators to cover up the prescribed curriculum. When learning experiences are infused into a website, students utilize

every-day for fun, they realize that learning can and should be a part of everyday life. It does not have to be separate and unattached. Informal learning consists of the learner setting the goals and objectives. It has been claimed that media no longer just influences human culture; it is in fact human culture. With such a high number of users between the ages of 13–18, a number of skills are developed. Participants improve technical skills in choosing to navigate through social networking services. This includes elementary items such as sending an instant message or updating a status. The developments of new media skills are paramount in helping youth navigate the digital world with confidence.

Social networking services foster learning through what Jenkins (2006) describes as a "participatory culture." A participatory culture consists of a space that allows engagement, sharing, mentoring, and an opportunity for social interaction. Participants of social network services avail of this opportunity. Informal learning, in the forms of participatory and social learning online, is an excellent tool for teachers to sneak in material and ideas that students identify with and therefore, in a secondary manner, students learn skills that would normally be taught in a formal setting in the more interesting and engaging environment of social learning. Sites like Twitter provide students with the opportunity to converse and collaborate with others in real time. Social networking services provide a "virtual space" for learners. James Gee (2004) suggests that affinity spaces instantiate participation, collaboration, distribution, dispersion of expertise, and relatedness. Registered users can share and search knowledge which contributes to informal learning. Here tries to highlight on the educational use of social networking.

### **What is Social Networking?**

Social networking is a virtual communication process that mainly comprises user interaction with various other users, especially people with similar interests. However, this is a very crisp definition of social networking, but it clearly describes the reason of popularity for various social networking sites and social networking apps. *Kaplan and Haenlein (2010)* classified social media into six different types: collaborative projects, blogs and microblogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds.

Social Networking is an online service that enables its users to create virtual networks with likeminded people akin to social networks in real life. It often offers the facilities such as chat, instant messaging, photo sharing, updates, etc. Currently, social networking sites are the most prominent version of social media. A few Indian government departments and agencies are using Facebook including, Prime Minister's Office, NITI Aayog, Ministry of External Affairs and a few Municipal Corporations and Police Departments etc.

## Usage of Social Networking Sites in India

Social networks has been so well established, that there are now a core 'top 5' social networks, which don't change much from year to year. But the most popular social media sites vary a lot by level of usage in different countries and demographics as well. In India, there are over 462 Million internet users and 200 Million are active social media. In 2016, 24.33% of Indian Population accessed Internet via Mobile phones and the trend is predicted to grow at 37.36% by 2021. According to Digital media facts, reviewed by active account usage in January 2017, there are top social networking services with great number of active users in India. India has world's largest number of Facebook Users with over 1950 million people, WhatsApp-1200 million, Twitter-the micro blogging site, 317 million Monthly Active Users. There are over 300 Million LinkedIn Users in India, YouTube, the video-sharing site has more than 600 million unique users with users spending over 48 hours a monthly viewing video content. There are 160 Million Instagram users, facebook messenger-1000 million, WeChat-846 million and Skypay-300 million users in India.

There is also a social networking website like Facebook for Indians in India like China. It's a product made in India and made for India. **CLORIK** is an interest-based content platform. It's just a 2.5 MB android app, which starts within a second and also streams videos smoothly on 2G connection. This app. is custom tailored for India. It also has a mode called 'lite' mode within the app. through which one can stop all media loading if one is running out of one's data pack. **Clorik** is the smallest Indian app to find best news, facts, stories, posters for all your interests in one place. **Clorik** provides content in one's native Indian language (currently in English & Hindi) ranging from news, interesting stories, entertainment, poetry, audios/videos and much more interesting stuff from around the world. In a nutshell, there is something for everyone from arts to dance, thoughts to greetings, spiritual songs to stories, cooking to fitness, inspiration to interesting, technology to startups, news to humor, business to job offerings, style to crafts. **Clorik** makes content discovery and sharing very easy, compact and beautiful.

Social Networking sites in India generate a huge amount of traffic compared with other countries, but it's not just population density that equates for this traffic. India is without a doubt becoming one of the most technologically active countries in the world, producing talented graduates in the fields of IT, Engineering, Programming, Data Analysis, among others. Many developers, start-ups and technical companies have started expanding into this country due to their technological advancements. This early-development of technology is the major reason India is known for being most active on social media. The number of users in India is growing exponentially as the internet becomes more accessible in both urban and rural areas.

### **Social Networking and Education (eEducation)**

It has been proved in the field of psychology and linguistics that process of storing information or vocabulary in human mind, is determined by the nature of the psychological state of the recipient. We also find that this idea is supported by the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, when he emphasized in his theory of knowledge on the need to use some form of entertainment during the process of giving lessons. Therefore, these sites will be useful tools that can generate a revolution in the field of education if we have the ability to control them to suit the requirements of knowledge.

Overall, the social network sites focus heavily on building online communities bound to together with common interests or activities. Thereby provide them with tools that help them to do so. In the field of eLearning, the social network sites handled the big problem raised by educators in the recent period. For example, a lack of humanitarian aspect and described it as teaching, lacks spirit. However, Social networks have helped to resolve some of these problems, by adding interactive side with a human, and make the participation of the human element in the educational process something important. That led to an increase to attract people toward e-learning. Some of researchers in the field of social sciences have carried out studies to examine this phenomenon and to clarify the reason behind the attraction about social networking sites.

**Firpo & Actham (2011)** and **Jiang and Tang (2010)** studied on "Using Social Networking Technology to Enhance Learning in Higher Education: A Case Study using Facebook ". This study explores possibility of using social networking technology to enhance learning in a graduate-level introductory MIS course thorough Facebook. Researchers examined the potential of using communities of practice and different Web 2.0 technologies within the realm of education. In addition used the social networking to improve learning in a graduate-level introductory MIS course. The researchers used the Facebook to be designed and implemented to enhance teaching pedagogy as well as creating an engaging learning environment. Social networking technologies allow members to participate in a learning environment where the learning process can occur interchangeably from both, inside and outside of the classroom. The results showed that there were benefits for successful use of social networking in education for both students and teachers. For students: some degree of informal learning through informal communication, support for collaboration, feedback on thoughts and collaborating independent of space and time. For teachers: gaining feedback from students and constant communication with students and producing an effective instructional technology for their customers. So, networking technology can be used effectively to foster a culture of learning, as a learning tool for both students and teachers. Furthermore, in the future, the social-networking sites will have the significant potential to expand teaching and learning out of classroom.

In the other study on "Web-based Learning Platforms integrating Social Networking for Design Education at High Schools in China", the researchers addressed how to use the social networking to

support education to build pedagogical model by using social networking. The study tried to identify the balance between developing individual creativity with group activity of collaboration. This model is created based on a traditional instructional model and gains the characteristic of design education. The social networking sites have become the main means of communication between the students and teachers. However, this model predicted to enhance learning efficiency. We can see from previous studies that the social-networking sites will have a major role in improving and developing education, both at the level of the students and teachers.

### **Educational use of Social Networking Sites in India**

#### ❖ **WhatsApp**

Today's educators have to learn how to insert themselves into a student's life. A messaging solution such as **WhatsApp is a perfect means of doing that because it utilizes a medium and a technology that students use every day.** WhatsApp is a [freeware](#) and [cross-platform for instant messaging](#) services for [smartphones](#). It uses the [Internet](#) to make voice calls, one to one video calls; send [text messages](#), images, [GIF](#), videos, documents, user location, audio files, phone contacts and voice notes to other users, using standard [cellular mobile numbers](#). It was released in January, 2009. By using WhatsApp, a teacher can integrate the classroom and the real world and make education part of the students' lives. Here are some basic strategies that educators can utilize to take advantage of the core abilities of:

- Use the [Group Chats](#) feature to create learning and study groups
- Create audio lessons that can be sent directly to students
- Stay in contact with students outside the classroom
- Send out problems or assignments to students even when they are not in class
- Stay in contact with parents
- Send videos to students
- Send graphics such as pictures or charts directly to students
- Send report cards directly to the parents' phones
- Facilitate real-time communication between students and teachers.
- Facilitate real-time communication between teachers and parents.
- Teachers can also maintain communication with students.

#### ❖ **Facebook**

Facebook is an American [for-profit corporation](#) and an online [social media](#) and [social networking service](#) based in [Menlo Park, California](#). The Facebook website was launched on 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2004, by [Mark Zuckerberg](#). Facebook may be accessed by a large range of [desktops](#), [laptops](#), [tablet computers](#), and [smartphones](#) over the [Internet](#) and [mobile networks](#). The educational uses of Facebook are as under:

- Develop collaborative environment
- Making groups for discussion
- Create as virtual learning platform
- Use as learning resources
- Making projects and assignment
- Sharing videos, photos etc.
- Using classroom management and organization

#### ❖ **Instagram**

Instagram is a [mobile](#), [desktop](#), and [Internet-based photo-sharing](#) application and service that allows users to share pictures and videos either publicly or privately. It was created by [Kevin Systrom](#) and [Mike Krieger](#), and launched in October 2010. The educational uses of Instagram are as under:

- Showcase students work
- Feature a student of the week
- Capture field trip memories
- Imagine how a historical figure would use
- Imagine what a favorite character would post
- Share reading recommendations
- Record steps in a science experiments
- Discover ideas for writing
- Documents students' progress

#### ❖ **LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is a business- and employment-oriented social networking service that operates via websites and mobile apps. Founded on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2002, it is mainly used for [professional networking](#), including employers posting jobs and job seekers posting their [CVs](#). Educational uses of LinkedIn are as under:

- \* Learn about the different career options that are out there.
- \* Read up about institutions operating in their field of study, potential of employers, their infrastructure, facilities, background.
- \* For graduates, put themselves out there by completing their Profile page on LinkedIn as this will act as your resume.
- \* Students find the job they want by setting up job alerts.
- \* Connect with others in their field of study, network and ask the right questions to find out more about working for certain companies

- \* Access the Student portal for college student internship and jobs for graduates, according to LinkedIn, over 2, 00,000 college students sign up to their network every month.
- \* Students connect with their friends after leaving school, college or university and continue to keep in touch.
- \* Look for mentors on LinkedIn especially in their field to help them with their career.
- \* Connect with their teachers or lecturers and get them to endorse and recommend for students, they can be called upon to give a reference later when students are considered for employment.
- \* Give themselves more exposure by participating in groups and posting questions.
- \* Opportunity to work abroad with multi-national companies hiring on LinkedIn.

#### ❖ **WeChat**

WeChat is a cross-platform of instant messaging service developed by Tencent in China, first released in January 2011. It is one of the largest standalone messaging apps by monthly active users. The educational uses of WeChat are as under:

- \* Multimedia courseware uploaded to WeChat public platform.
- \* Some top qualified courses which are taught by expert and experienced professors can be uploaded on WeChat public platform.
- \* Online question answer and homework correcting.

#### ❖ **Google Plus**

Google Plus (stylized as Google+) is an interest-based [social network](#) that is owned and operated by [Google](#). It was launched on 28 June, 2011. Google Plus has been slowly increasing and upgrading its features in the year November, 2015. The positive thing about the social networking site is that it allows to customize and organize people and interests into “circles”. The educational use of its are as under:

- \* Teachers can organize their group by creating circles. Circles help to organize everyone according to real life connections.
- \* Can work with students on other campuses or those at distance.
- \* Share pictures, video chat and cross posting updates.
- \* Can search latest information for use in class.
- \* Engage with students before they start school.
- \* Conduct helpdesk sessions or tutorials.
- \* Use hangouts for teaching.
- \* Keep parents updates.

## ❖ Twitter

Twitter is an online news and social networking service where users post and interact with messages, "tweets", restricted to 140 characters. Registered users can post tweets, but those who are unregistered can only read them. Twitter was created by Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams and launched in 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2006. Twitter is a micro blogging portal that provides extremely useful across academic applications. Teachers, students, and parents can benefit greatly of the advantages offered by using Twitter in education. The short tweets can be used to inform students about any changes and to collaboratively work as a great team. Other uses of it in education are as under:

- \* Teachers can use Twitter to connect with experts around town or around the globe to get perspectives that will enrich lessons.
- \* Students can contact other students in foreign countries to enhance their understanding of how other people live, what they value, and what their challenges are.
- \* Students can use Twitter for research, by searching for specific terms and following up on the findings.
- \* Teachers can deepen their professional knowledge by connecting with experts in the field.
- \* Using Twitter provides another tool for communication between teachers and students and can increase interaction and engagement in the classroom.

## ❖ Skype

Skype is an instant messaging app that provides online text message and video chat services. Users may transmit both text and video messages and may exchange digital documents such as images, text, and video. Skype allows video conference calls. First released in 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2003, Skype was created by the Swede Niklas Zennström and the Dane Janus Friis. Skype allows users to communicate over the Internet by voice using a microphone, by video using a webcam, and by instant messaging. Skype to Skype calls to other users are free of charge, while calls to landline telephones and mobile phones are charged via a debit-based user account system called Skype Credit. It is used at various occasions, such as:

- \* Use it to collaborate with other classrooms.
- \* Use it to conduct expert interviews.
- \* Enable participation for students outside of the classroom.
- \* Use it for tutorials.
- \* Host a virtual career exploration day.

\* Enable better collaboration for group projects and extracurricular activities.

### Advantages of Social Networking Sites in Education

Everything has its advantages and its disadvantages. Social networking sites are no exception. We live in times when technology has reached such heights that no aspect of life is complete without it. Here is a list of advantages of using the social networking websites:

- Social networking sites give students a platform to **express their thoughts** and share it with billions of people out there, know their views and interact with them. No matter how many miles apart, but it makes us feel close to the ones sitting on the other end of the screen. It makes distance look nothing but just a word.
- Social networking sites give students an opportunity to get the various information of the people or celebrities to whom they admire. It makes them **feel closer** to the ones they idolize. Often it makes them come in contact with the long lost friends.
- Social networking sites also are seen as a get away from the daily stressful monotonous life that many lead.
- Students can share the pictures through Social networking sites and feel a lot less sad about that. Social networking sites have been the place to **discuss** issues that are international, national, local and have time and again attracted attention of concerned authorities which is a great advantage.
- It helps students in interacting with one another and **share** ideas. This helps in improving student's creativity.
- The **social networking websites** can be accessed from any part of the globe. This helps the students to establish **communication with their teachers** and friends through which they can improve their **knowledge**.
- Through these sites students can establish contact with Government, Entrepreneurs, and Corporate people and can gain valuable and useful **information** from them.
- Social networking sites have taken a new dimension called **marketing**. Certain websites offer advertisements to its subscribers. Students can use it, purchase study materials and also use it to sell their creative or handmade products.

### Disadvantages of Social Networking Sites in Education

Every coin has two sides. Likewise with advantages, disadvantages also come obviously. These days the social networking sites are coming up with security settings, so we on a personal basis should be extremely careful. Some of the disadvantages are listed here under:

- Social networking sites make life so easy that it makes us lazy. Students these days prefer "chatting" over & play games. They are always glued to their phones and computers socializing. Sometimes **students get addicted** to it; even they forget that there is a world beyond. Outdoor games become secondary for these tech savvy students who try to cope up with this changing world. They lose their childhood to some gadgets. So in short, students are used to spend many hours in social networking sites which can obviously degrade their **academic performance**.
- Social networking sites give students platforms to express their views, but often they take a nasty turn and become a **controversy**. Not only that a student has to be extremely careful about what he/she shares and with whom he/she shares.
- It becomes very easy to access someone's personal information and use it to the person's disadvantage. Thus, it makes us question the safety of these social networking sites. Some students may provide detailed information, like phone numbers, address, **aadhar card** numbers or other personal information which is very dangerous because they can easily **tracked down by strangers**.
- Some students may tend to use these social networking sites till mid night or even later on which can obviously lead to **health related problems**.
- Some students may spend more time on Facebook, whatsapp etc. through which may lead to spend less time with their family members. After some time they feel **isolated**. This could be dangerous for students. Some suicide cases may happen because of all this.

### Conclusion

Social networking sites have innumerable pros and cons. What is needed is awareness among students about the cons while enjoying the pros of it. On the part of the social networking sites, students should be more responsible about security issues and protection of information of individual users. Although social networking sites are malfunctioning the people, there is lot of goodness in it. Government should take the responsibility to enhance good usage of social networking sites. Students must be given proper guidelines in the schools how to use these sites in the right manner so that the possibilities of iniquitous of people should be eliminated. Healthy environment should be imprinted in social networking sites.

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