

SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT ON SOCIAL COHESION AND STUDIES A STUDY CONDUCTED AMONG RAJARATA UNIVERSITY MEDICAL STUDENTS

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Introduction

Use of social media, social networking through internet and smart phones have become a global trend in human civilization despite the demographical boundaries. It has also become a new tool for social cohesion as well due to the huge impact on political and socio economic development of both the micro and international societies. Some fear that social media and addiction to social networking may replace the use of books, monthly periodicals, news papers, Scientific & Social Sciences journals and even the mass media such as radio and television. In the positive side it is assumed to improve the person to person interactions despite demographical barriers, gender, cultural and religious based issues together with positive impact on personality of the individual. Recently internationally as well as

locally the use of social media such as Youtube, Facebook, Skype and Twitter has received negative publicity followed by certain incidents due to over exposure of under-aged adolescents and physiologically disturbed individuals who seek asylum as a source of psychological motivation in unknown social media due to ignorance.

However majority of internet based studies conducted in USA indicate that people find these networking sites strengthen their personal relationships with partners, relatives, peers as well as senior academics, advisors, while developing professional aura and opportunities, provide chances for globalization as well as physiological recreation for retreat from the day to day life stress surpassing the need for drug, alcoholism and other adverse addictions. Also social media also

play a role improving awareness against abuse and spam among the internet users. During an initial observational study it was revealed that social media networks such as Google+, Academic blog sites, LinkedIn as well as commonly used Youtube and Facebook are widely used by the academics and students for professional means.

Research Approach

It is generally believed that Pre-clinical (first and second years) medical students' curriculum demands highest no of dedication for attending lectures, dissections, experiment class, tutorial classes, peer integration, team work, mentor and academic member interaction. These students tend go through a psychological stress during psychological adaptation and transformation of their personality for the career they are trained in. This study was designed to assess the impact of social media on their self and recreational time, communication

between colleagues, academics/lecturers and general community within the weekly time schedules.

Methodology

Study was conducted using a semi-structured questioner for the undergraduate medical students who study basic Sciences at the Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Medicine & Allied Sciences, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. Students were given the free will for either to join the study or to withdraw before conducting the study and assurance was given for not disclosing their identity as individuals. Authors declare no conflict of interest with the participants who are above 18 years of age (20-24 years). The study was mainly conducted as a social science and educational study. Students took 15 min for answering the questionnaire. Out of 175 participants representing 99% of the batch data set was used for evaluation.

Experimental Results & Discussion

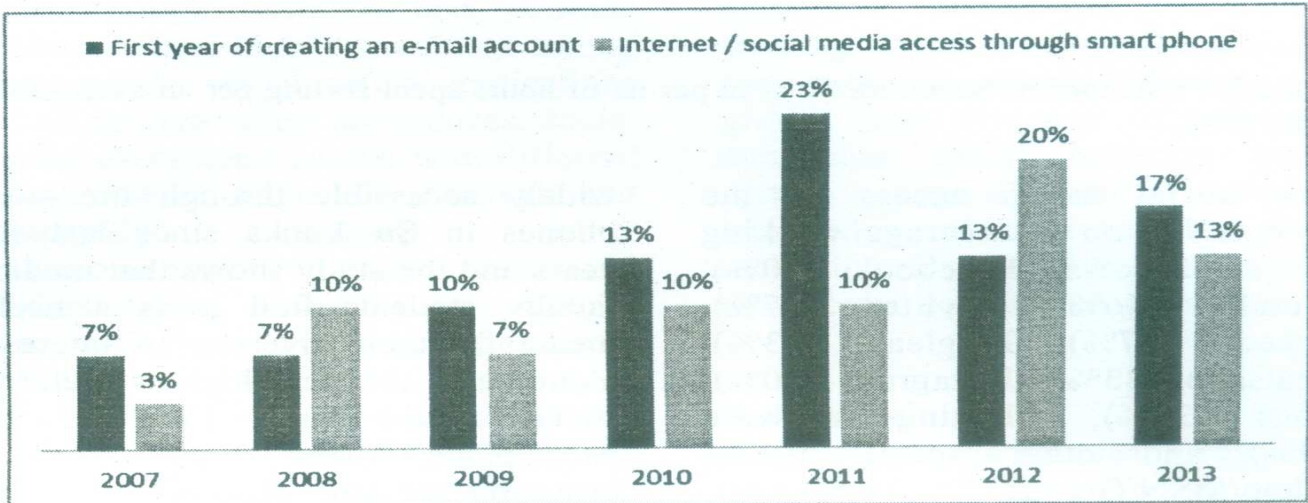


Figure 1. Year of entry to networking through e-mail and social media.

Study group consist within the age range of 20- 23 years. Fig. 1 shows that 5% of them have created their first e-mail account using a personal computer in 2007 (age 18 to 20 years). Most of the others have created their very first e-mail addresses in 2011 after getting selected to the medical faculty. This

indicates their access to the internet based search and networking. Also after entering University more no of students have created social media accounts and stated using smart phones with social media facilities such as with Facebook and Youtube.

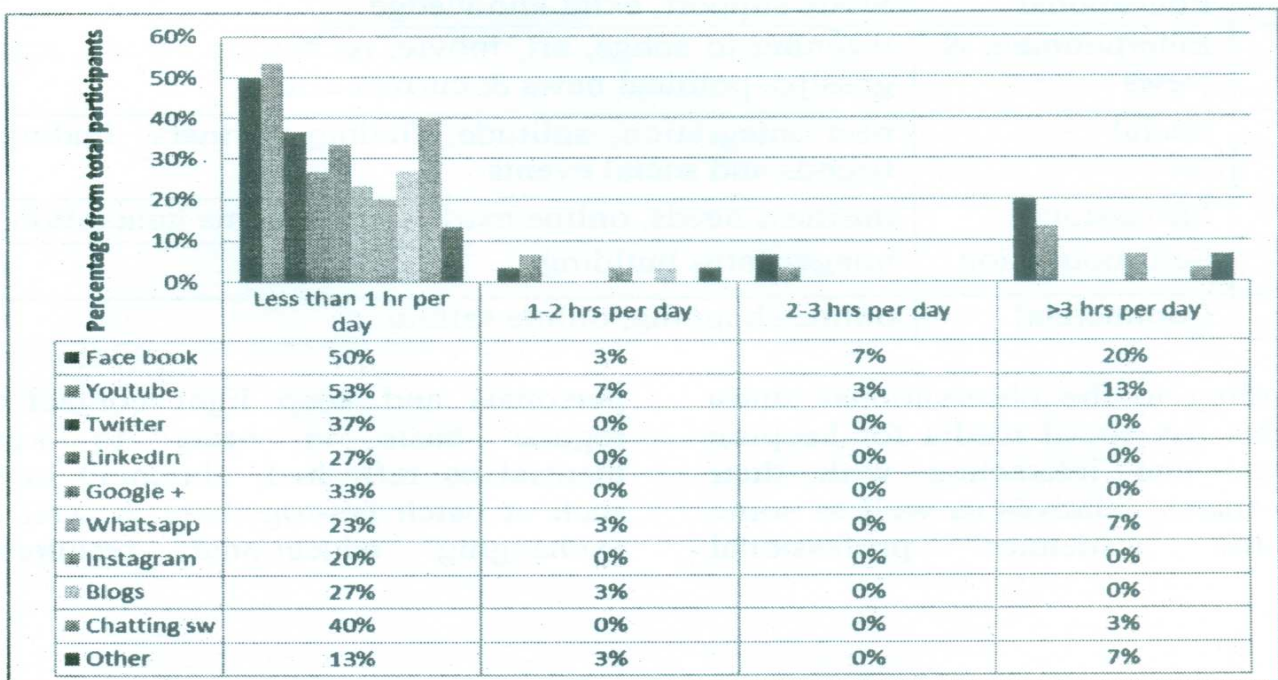


Figure 2. Preference of Social media type per no of hours spent surfing per an average day of the week.

Total social media access by the students for on an average working day as follows; Facebook (80%), Youtube (76%), Twitter (37%), LinkedIn (27%), Googleapp (33%), Whatsapp (33%), Instagram (20%), Blogs (30%), Chatting software (43%) and other social media; Yahoo/MSN/Google messenger, Skype etc. (13%).

According to the survey 80% of the students use Facebook and 20% of them spend more than 3 hours surfing the social media site. Facebook is

widely accessible through the smart phones in Sri Lanka since last few years and the study shows that medical faculty students find it as a useful media for their diversity of interests. Youtube is the next highest preferred social media and 13% of the participants spend over 3 hours browsing the site. Also 43% of them use chatting software on daily basis insisting social interaction of the students is at a higher level.

Reasons for using social media ratings from highest to the lowest were given as in Table 1.

Table 1. Priority order for using social media sites.

	Priority	Detailed intension
1	Educational	Study support, extra knowledge
2	Entertainment & News	listening to songs, art, movie, recreation, sports, star gossips, political news & current affairs
3	Social	peer integration, solitude, finding partners, finding friends and social events
4	Professional	business needs, online marketing, income generation
5	Self-motivation	image/status building
6	Commercial	online shopping, online selling

According to the observational study students use social media for keeping contacts and interaction with their batch mates, relatives as well as some of the academics/ professional

personals and keep light contact in regular basis in order to keep themselves refreshed, obtaining news such at batch get-togethers as well as exchanging educational resources.

Even though religious and political views are also highly circulated among some of the social media applications based on individual preferences, social media users keep people with different views connected in the network and frequently debating while compromising with mutual understanding. Therefore it could be concluded that today these social media

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sites have become preferred tools for creating social platform for discussion and cohesion among different social groups and diversity of individuals enhancing social harmony into a certain degree while enhancing knowledge, self-motivation and mental recreation for the University students as reflected by the survey results.

Reference

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