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Social networking sites: A tool for boosting academic accomplishments during pandemic

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***Abstract*---**With the rapid development of technology and emerging trends in the social media platform, the education sector has also adopted a wide range of digital media technologies. In addition to the traditional media the dependency over the social media platform either to promote the academic events or increasing academic partnerships or collaborations have been increased tremendously. Also, during the past two years due to the pandemic situation all around the world the adoption of social networking sites by the academicians has also increased many folds, which clearly determines that there is a change in the adoption behaviour of social networking sites by the academicians which is supplemented by improved internet speed with affordable cost. It remains unclear the motivation and primary reasons behind joining the various social networking sites by the academicians. In this context the major purpose of this study is to investigate the various academic factors responsible for joining the social networking sites by the faculties and to identify the true potential of these sites in increasing and promoting the academic initiatives & events.

***Keywords*---**digital platform, social network, internet speed, academics, pandemic.

Introduction

Social networking sites in academics is described as platform which is used for improving the overall knowledge and awareness of teaching learning process. The literature describes social networking sites as a unit of Internet based tools that is established on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 which permits the formation and conversation of user-generated content. (Kaplan and Haenlein,

2010). Over a period of decade human have witnessed a lot of technological advancements and a seamless integration of internet and mobile technologies which have also changed the lifestyle of people. With the increased internet penetration and affordable broadband services, the rise of social media platform has also gained a huge momentum. This has also changed the way people used to perform tasks in their profession. In this regard almost all the professional and personal streams are found to be affected and transformed in some or the other way (Bernad & Mut, 2002;1433). Overwhelming availability of various academic events have attracted many academicians to participate and perform but it also brought a serious challenge to verify its originality and authenticity over a huge network of social media platform. During the 1990's the internet was considered majority as publishing medium but during 2000s due to the emergence of social network platform it became communication medium (Manovich,2008;24). The authenticity and authority of any webpage can be determined as how many weblinks it can attract. A webpage having lot of incoming links has a strong authority over those having one or two. Thus, to increase the frequency of incoming links these social networking sites has a huge role to play. The same rule stands for academia being cited by a research paper which itself has a good citation is much recognised as compared to cited by a paper which has a lesser citation (Carr,2010:85). A study on the analysis of the present usage and future intentions of usage of social networking sites through mobile (Frazier, 2013) indicates that the use of social media platform have improved the sharing of educational resources, including other tools like gaming/simulation, text messaging etc.

Literature Review

Rambabu, Lavur and Durgaprasad, Navulla and Pakala, Yamini (2019) in paper titled as effect of social media networks on academic performance of Indian students a study was conducted on 389 students from seven Universities of Telangana state of India. The research indicated that social media networking sites have both positive and negative impact on students as far as academic performance is concerned. Students used YouTube, WhatsApp as preferred social media platform. Positives relate to surfing networks by students for enhancing their academic overall performance; they shared academic assignments and discussed over them and also have been conversating regarding the class lectures discussions and other problems related to academics, thus making students confident and helping towards career development. The flip side is that Indian students are becoming addicted to social media platforms spending more time with social networks, are becoming frustrated and depressed due to lack of physical social meetings and bonding, which ultimately is adversely affecting the academic performance as well. Abrenica, Jurena and De Torres, Marife and Vargas, Danilo (2021) in their paper titled effects of social media on academic performance of high school students under pandemic (COVID-19) situations studied Don Ramon E. Costales Memorial National High School in Villasis, Pangasinan, Philippines to find out most preferred social networking site and the purpose for its use along with having an insight to what extent social networking sites are used for academic purpose. The study also took into consideration various parameters like age, sex, number of hours the social networking site used on an average daily for academic purpose and the type of social networking site

used for. The study came up with conclusion that the most preferred networking site is Facebook followed by Instagram. Somewhere between1-5 hours were spent on social networking sites on daily basis. Of all the variables Gender played the significant role in defining the purpose of use for these sites. Females were found two times more using social media than males, that too for general communication and sharing of personal information related to their personal life and to stay connected with family members, relatives, and friends. On the other hand, men used social networking site preferably Facebook for influential building and chatting with friend rather than for doing schoolwork or discussing academic issues. The study brings into light the fact that students of all genders prefer social networking sites preferably Facebook for chatting and general communications, enhancing bonding and friendship and strengthening social relationship rather than for academic purposes. Manjur, Kolhar and Raisa, Nazir Ahmed Kazi and Abdalla, Alameen (2021) in their paper Effect of social media use on learning, social interactions, and sleep duration among university students which was based on a study conducted on 300 women in the age group of 17-29 years at Prince Sattam bin Abdul Aziz University in Wadi Addawasir to find out the purpose for which social networking sites are being used and the effect of such sites on learning, social interaction and sleep duration of University students. The study came up with the result that 97 percent of the students were using social networking sites. The preferred most Snapchat (45 percent) followed by Instagram (22 percent) Twitter (18 percent) and lastly WhatsApp (7 percent). The purpose for use of social networking sites shows that most of the students (43 percent) used it for time pass, 35 percent used these platforms for chatting with others and only 1 percent of them used social sites and platforms for academic purposes. Most students reported using social networking sites for non-academic purposes. Martin, Rehm and Sara Moukarzel, Alan J. Daly and Miguel del Fresno (2021) in their research paper exploring online social networks of school leaders in times of COVID-19 which was a result of data collected from US nationwide sample of 15 twitter conversations and also included tweets from US public school at district level. The study was done with the objective of finding out what type of information is shared by school leaders. The survey reveals that most of the times social network was used for transmitting COVID -19 related hashtags rather than for transmitting and discussing academic issues.

Iqbal Javed, Qureshi Naima, Ashraf Muhammad Azeem, Rasool Samma Faiz and Asghar Muhammad Zaheer (2021) in their joint paper the effect of emotional intelligence and academic social networking sites on academic performance during the COVID-19 pandemic observed that during the times of this pandemic situation there has been a big push and use of digital platforms in the field of imparting education through dependence on smart phones and social media. The paper conducted a study through questionnaire comprising of 42 questions related to collection of data and information on emotional intelligence, academic social networking sites and academic performance front. The information was collected from 305 undergraduate students from developing nations specially from Pakistan. The survey analysis produced the result that two major components of emotional intelligence – self-regulation and self-awareness produced positive results on academic performance front. Likewise the academic social networking sites also contributed in enhancing emotional intelligence factors as well. The conclusion of the survey was that emotional intelligence has

contributed positively in increasing academic performance during COVID-19 pandemic.

Mahapatra Ananya, Sharma Prerna (2020) in the paper education in times of COVID-19 pandemic: academic stress and its psychosocial impact on children and adolescents in India focussed upon how when the Pandemic related to Coronavirus hit the entire world in 2019 and subsequently in line with other nations of the world on 24th March 2020 to May 2020 India declared complete lockdown which in phased manner was lifted with caution after May 2020 the education sector faced a big challenge as school, colleges and other educational institutions continued to be closed with no clear idea or their reopening. This created a scenario wherein all connected such as students, teachers, parents all were to face many unanswered questions related to the way of imparting of education, assessment schemes and continuity to teaching learning process and handling psychological and emotional sentiments of students. The paper focussed on various issues basically psychological ones that have led to academic stress among children and adolescent students. The paper came up with certain observations that the closure of schools due to lockdown put added pressure on parents to take up the task of home-schooling and maintain continuity of education with continuous monitoring. This was seen as added pressure for them as they themselves were tackling issues related to work-from-home regime, financial pressures in some cases as salary been reduced to 50-70 percent and other aspects. Parents also faced problem on how to help students in terms of assignments and homework to be completed and submitted online because of inefficiency in terms of use of ICT enabled services on their part in an efficient manner. Apart from parents' aspect the teachers and the students also faced severe stress as they too were not fully equipped to the use of technology in terms of imparting education, conduct and manging online classes, students were also confused how to use online platforms. Since the system of online education has been new and has to be implemented unplanned and without formal training as it was the way learning by doing caused many problems to all associated with online learning through education platforms, social networking sites and resulted in emotional, psychological and mental stress specially to educators and the students. Though majority of schools and colleges claim that they have successfully implemented the online education system and the students need regarding quality education are now been met successfully the fact remains that in India still the internet penetration is around 73.3 percent of India's population is connected by mobile phones (Sood, 2019) but imparting education through digital mode required much more than interne connection alone. Other accessories such as laptops/computers for students remains a question to be answered as there is huge disparity among socio-economic strata with a big proportion belonging to low-income groups. The National Sample Survey, 2017-18 comes up with the fact that only 24 percent of households have internet facility and only 8 percent of all households with members aged between 5 – 24 years have both computer and an internet connection. Since students find themselves always under the stress situation of not only submission of assignments and completion of homework, but they also find themselves under more stress related to use of technology, uploading of assignments and homework and if they fail the pressure of lagging behind others further worsens the situation and stress levels of students and parents concerned. The news of suicides also started coming in

because the students have been finding difficult to cope up with online class pressure specially from rural and village areas. Parents have also committed suicide being not able to buy a smart mobile phone for daughter's online classes. Such incidents highlight the severity of the psychological ramifications of inability to access basic education because of socio-economic and geographic barriers

Objectives of the study

1. To investigate and identify the role of social networking sites as an educational instrument
2. To explore the primary purpose of the academicians for visiting social networking sites.
3. To examine the impact of social networking sites on academic initiatives and performance.
4. To understand the difference in the adoption & usage behaviour of male and female faculties of these social networking sites as an educational tool

Research Methodology

The present study is an exploratory study. The number of variables used in the study have been derived from the existing literature and the study also attempts to find the new variables which are added in due course of time because of the increase in the usage of social network by the academicians. The research is conducted to explore the contributory factors and uses a survey-based method to find the association among the variables. The present study comes under the category of exploratory research. The study focuses on finding the primary factors which are responsible of joining any social networking site by academicians and analyses its effect on the performance of various academic events and initiatives. The present study is based on a sample size of 50 academicians from different parts of the country who belong to management and engineering domains. The data has been collected by using a structured questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Results

Respondent's Profile

Statistics

		Gender	Age
N	Valid	50	50
	Missing	0	0

Age * Gender Crosstabulation

Count

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Age	25yrs-30yrs	2	2	4
	31yrs-35yrs	0	5	5

	36yrs-40yrs	9	7	16
	41yrs-45yrs	7	8	15
	46yrs-50yrs	9	0	9
	>50yrs	0	1	1
Total		27	23	50

Table 1
The above table clearly indicates the ratio of male and female respondents along with their age used in the study.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.848
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1842.463
	df	496
	Sig.	.000

Table 2
The KMO and Bartlett's shows a value of .848 which clearly indicates that the sample is adequate to perform factor analysis

Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	19.542	61.070	61.070	19.542	61.070	61.070	10.636	33.239	33.239
2	2.091	6.535	67.605	2.091	6.535	67.605	4.485	14.015	47.253
3	1.189	3.714	71.319	1.189	3.714	71.319	4.159	12.996	60.249
4	1.142	3.569	74.889	1.142	3.569	74.889	3.257	10.179	70.429
5	1.088	3.399	78.287	1.088	3.399	78.287	2.515	7.859	78.287
6	.917	2.864	81.151						
7	.843	2.636	83.787						
8	.711	2.221	86.008						
9	.567	1.771	87.779						
10	.503	1.570	89.349						
11	.440	1.375	90.724						
12	.373	1.165	91.889						
13	.313	.979	92.868						
14	.294	.918	93.786						
15	.273	.854	94.640						
16	.252	.788	95.427						
17	.233	.728	96.155						
18	.193	.604	96.759						
19	.177	.554	97.313						
20	.154	.480	97.793						
21	.148	.462	98.255						
22	.117	.365	98.620						
23	.102	.318	98.938						
24	.081	.254	99.192						
25	.067	.210	99.401						
26	.061	.190	99.591						
27	.035	.110	99.701						
28	.032	.099	99.801						
29	.021	.064	99.865						
30	.018	.056	99.921						
31	.014	.043	99.964						
32	.012	.036	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 3. The above table clearly indicates that to determine the factors responsible to join the social networking sites total 32 items were used which converged into five factors.

The description of five factors are given below:
Factor 1: Utilitarian Factor

Factors	Factor Loadings
F1 To get information of various events hosted by other institutes	.767
F2 Used for invitation to faculty development activities	.836
F3 Economical mode of communication	.869
F4 To explore new opportunities in academics	.894
F5 Help to develop better understanding of peer by visiting his/her profile	.843
F6 Useful for social activity organized at the institute	.937

F7 To identify own position (career/institute) vis-a-vis others	.694
F8 To get help of experts in research areas	.846
F9 No need to manually keep the track of peers / members	.825
F10 Useful in following career progress of interested and known persons	.838
F11 To keep updated in my subject area	.791

Factor 2: Networking Factor

Factors	Factor Loadings
G1 Networking with faculty colleagues	.780
G2 Networking with students	.761
G3 Used for inviting students to institute events	.686
G4 Helping others through networking to explore job opportunities	.827
G5 Easy way to get contact details of peers	.723
G6 Parallel communication is possible with large number of contacts	.719

Factor 3: Interaction Factor

Factors	Factor Loadings
H1 For conducting discussions on topics	.740
H2 Easy to approach people in peers' network	.884
H3 By this approach relationship is long-term	.672
H4 No additional cost to be paid for networking	.754
H5 There is no need to keep track of user, it is provided by social networking sites	.668
H6 Helps in getting research projects/consultancy	.743

Factor 4: Information Sharing Factor

Factors	Factor Loadings
I1 To share information such as hobbies, photographs etc.	.486
I2 For counselling students	.754
I3 Helps in keeping in touch with school and college time classmates	.729
I4 Useful for keeping in touch with family and relatives	.756
I5 Useful for Sharing teaching pedagogy with another institute faculty	.630

Factor 5: Relationship building Factor

Factors	Factor Loadings
J1 Networking with alumni	.575
J2 Networking with Industry personnel	.736
J3 Helps in increasing professional networking	.786
J4 Easy to keep in touch with ex-colleagues	.789

Table 4
Note: 1. Strongly Agree, 2. Agree, 3. Neutral, 4. Disagree, 5. Strongly Disagree

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
To_get_information_of_various_events_hosted_by_other_institutes	50	1.00	5.00	2.6459	1.14843
Used_for_invitation_to_faculty_development_activities	50	1.00	5.00	2.9000	1.37396
Economical_mode_of_communication	50	1.00	5.00	2.5000	1.58114
To_explore_new_opportunities_in_academics	50	1.00	5.00	2.6400	1.50861
Help_to_develop_better_understanding_of_peer_by_visiting_profile	50	1.00	5.00	2.5200	1.18218
Useful_for_social_activity_organized_at_the_institute	50	1.00	5.00	2.6000	1.26168
To_identify_own_position	50	1.00	5.00	2.8800	1.15423
To_get_help_of_experts_in_research_areas	50	1.00	5.00	2.7400	1.29063
No_need_to_manually_keep_the_track_of_peer	50	1.00	5.00	2.7400	1.29063
Useful_in_following_career_progress	50	1.00	5.00	2.6800	1.21957
To_keep_updated_in_my_subject_area	50	1.00	5.00	2.7200	1.52583
Valid N (listwise)	50				

The five-point Likert-Scale is considered an interval scale. The mean is very significant. From 4.21 to 5 it is strongly Agree. From 3.41 to 4.20 it is Agree. From 2.61 to 3.40 it is Neutral. From 1.81 to 2.60 it is Disagree. From 1 to 1.80 it is Strongly Disagree.

In the above table the mean value of all the items is lying between 2.61 to 3.40 except the item number 3 & 5 which are 2.5 and 2.52. This means for the utilitarian factor all the respondent's responses are neutral for all the statements except for 3 & 5 which they disagree.

Table 5
The five-point Likert-Scale is considered an interval scale

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Networking_with_faculty_colleagues	50	1.00	5.00	2.8200	1.28873
Networking_with_students	50	1.00	5.00	2.7400	1.35240
Used_for_inviting_students_to_institute_events	50	1.00	5.00	2.9200	1.24278
Helping_others_through_networking_to_explore_job	50	1.00	5.00	2.9200	1.29110
Easy_way_to_get_contact_details_of_peers	50	1.00	5.00	2.5800	1.31071
Parallel_communication_is_possible_with_large_number_of_contacts	50	1.00	5.00	2.3800	1.29189
Valid N (listwise)	50				

The mean is very significant. From 4.21 to 5 it is strongly Agree. From 3.41 to 4.20 it is Agree. From 2.61 to 3.40 it is Neutral. From 1.81 to 2.60 it is Disagree. From 1 to 1.80 it is Strongly Disagree. In the above table the mean value of all the items is lying between 2.61 to 3.40 except the item number 5 & 6 which are 2.58 and 2.38. This means for the Networking Factor all the respondent's responses are neutral for all the statements except for 5 & 6 which they disagree.

Table 6
The five-point Likert-Scale is considered an interval scale

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
For_conducting_discussions_on_topics	50	1.00	5.00	2.8600	1.21235
Easy_to_approach_people_in_peers_network	50	1.00	5.00	2.6200	1.35360
By_this_approach_relationship_is_long_term	50	1.00	5.00	2.5000	1.26572
No_additional_cost_to_be_paid_for_networking	50	1.00	5.00	2.5000	1.52864
There_is_no_need_to_keep_track_of_user	50	1.00	5.00	2.8200	1.20695
Helps_in_getting_research_projects	50	1.00	5.00	2.9000	1.16496
Valid N (listwise)	50				

The mean is very significant. From 4.21 to 5 it is strongly Agree. From 3.41 to 4.20 it is Agree. From 2.61 to 3.40 it is Neutral. From 1.81 to 2.60 it is Disagree.

From 1 to 1.80 it is Strongly Disagree. In the above table the mean value of all the items is lying between 2.61 to 3.40 except the item number 3 & 4 which are 2.5 and 2.5. This means for the Interaction factor all the respondent's responses are neutral for all the statements except for 5 & 6 which they disagree.

Table 7
The five-point Likert-Scale is considered an interval scale

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
To_share_information_such_as_hobbies_photographs	50	1.00	5.00	2.8400	1.20136
For_counseling_students	50	1.00	5.00	3.0000	1.30931
Helps_in_keeping_in_touch_with_school	50	1.00	5.00	2.6600	1.50658
Useful_for_keeping_in_touch_with_family	50	1.00	5.00	2.4800	1.44618
Useful_for_Sharing_teaching_pedagogy	50	1.00	5.00	2.7600	1.31801
Valid N (listwise)	50				

The mean is very significant. From 4.21 to 5 it is strongly Agree. From 3.41 to 4.20 it is Agree. From 2.61 to 3.40 it is Neutral. From 1.81 to 2.60 it is Disagree. From 1 to 1.80 it is Strongly Disagree. In the above table the mean value of all the items is lying between 2.61 to 3.40 except the item number 4 which is 2.4. This means for the Information Sharing Factor all the respondent's responses are neutral for all the statements except for the item number 4 which they disagree.

Table 8
The five-point Likert-Scale is considered an interval scale

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Networking_with_alumni	50	1.00	5.00	3.0200	1.30133
Networking_with_Industry_personnel	50	1.00	5.00	2.8600	1.37039
Helps_in_increasing_professional_networking	50	1.00	5.00	2.5200	1.23288
Easy_to_keep_in_touch_with_ex_colleagues	50	1.00	5.00	2.5000	1.32865
Valid N (listwise)	50				

The mean is very significant. From 4.21 to 5 it is strongly Agree. From 3.41 to 4.20 it is Agree. From 2.61 to 3.40 it is Neutral. From 1.81 to 2.60 it is Disagree. From 1 to 1.80 it is Strongly Disagree.

In the above table the mean value of all the items is lying between 2.61 to 3.40 except the item number 3 & 4 which are 2.5 & 2.5. This means for the Information Sharing Factor all the respondent's responses are neutral for all the statements except for the item number 3 & 4 which they disagree.

Hypothesis Testing

H0: There is no significant relation between the gender and the social media website membership.
H1: There is a significant relation between the gender and the social media website membership.

		Gender			
		Male		Female	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
$Membership	Youtube	15	55.6%	13	56.5%
	Watsapp	20	74.1%	20	87.0%
	Facebook	20	74.1%	19	82.6%
	Twitter	9	33.3%	5	21.7%
	LinkedIn	10	37.0%	12	52.2%
	Instagram	8	29.6%	13	56.5%

Pearson Chi-Square Tests

		Gender
$Membership	Chi-square	7.490
	df	6
	Sig.	.278

Results are based on nonempty rows and columns in each innermost subtable.

The test statistic shows the chi-square value 7.490 with the P value .278 which is higher than 0.05. Thus, we can conclude we cannot reject the null hypothesis as there is no significant relation between the gender and social media website membership.

H0: There is no statistically significant difference between the male and female regarding the access frequency of social media website.
H1: There is a statistically significant difference between the male and female regarding the access frequency of social media website.

Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Website_Access_Frequency	Male	27	1.3704	.68770	.13235
	Female	23	1.4783	.99405	.20727

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Website_Access_Frequency	Equal variances assumed	1.830	.182	-.452	48	.654	-.10789	.23894	-.58831	.37253
	Equal variances not assumed			-.439	38.220	.663	-.10789	.24592	-.60564	.38986

Equal variances assumed as .182>0.5
P-value (sig 2-tailed) = .654
.654>.05 So we cannot reject the null hypothesis and it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between the male and female regarding the access frequency of social media website.

Conclusion

During this pandemic situation social media which includes social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn etc have been prominent source of disseminating information. Before pandemic, these networking sites were basically used for chatting and discussing general matters, entertainment, sharing of jokes, personal information sharing and so on, but not more for academic purposes. The current COVID-19 situation took the entire world to horror scenario when almost every sector was put to lock down and the only way to get connected was through social media and networking platforms. Academics was no different and it also experienced the pressure of lockdown. To keep the wheels of teaching learning process rolling academics which comprises of both teacher and taught quickly and successfully shifted to online teaching mode through conduct of classes and sharing of academic processes through online meeting platforms such as MS Teams, Google Class, Webex etc. Apart from these meeting platforms to disseminate academic information and activities in real time manner based on 24*7 the networking sites acted as a connecting mode. The survey brought into light the fact that faculties irrespective of gender have been relying heavily on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp messages for the purpose of getting information of various events hosted by other institutes, networking with students, inviting students for University / College academic events, conducting discussions on topics, counselling students, keeping in touch with teachers and so on. To conclude it can be said that these networking sites have been instrumental in strengthening the bond between students and teachers and keeping them connected always.

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