



IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ON DAILY ACTIVITIES OF MEDICAL UNDERGRADUATES IN HIMALAYAN REGION OF UTTARAKHAND

Medical Science

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ABSTRACT

Today, we are living in digital era surrounded by internet, gadgets like smartphones, tablet, laptops, smartwatches etc. The usage of Social networking sites is probably making us creative and independent but lonely too due to lack of face-to-face interaction, lack of spending time with kith and kin. Our expressions have become Emoji and our words have been replaced by texts. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Facebook messenger, Twitter, Instagram and Whatsapp, YouTube etc have occupied new generation of our society. On one hand these sites have positive effects but their negative consequences cannot be ignored. We conducted a questionnaire based study to investigate the impact of these social sites on lifestyle of 400 medical students.

KEYWORDS

Facebook, Instagram, Social networking sites, Social media, Twitter, Whatsapp

Introduction

Use of social networking sites (SNS) / social media among students has achieved dramatic increase in the last few years and data on their effects on students' academic performance are unsatisfactory.^[1] Social sites like Facebook (FB), Twitter, and Whatsapp have occupied new generation of our society to foster user-generated content, social interaction, and real-time collaboration.^[2] Some other issues like insomnia, lack of concentration, anxiety, privacy concern, lack of face to face interaction, lack of outdoor activities have been reported among students.^[3] Overall, the tone and content of existing guidelines are favourable to the risks rather than advantages of SNS.^[4]

Aim of study

To analyse the academic performance, face-to-face communication, privacy issues, if any and health status of students affected by usage of SNS

Material and Methods

An exploratory study was conducted among 400 medical undergraduates (240 male and 160 female) in VCSGGIMS&R, Srinagar, Uttarakhand. A random sampling technique was used to collect the data. The respondents differ from first semester to final year. A questionnaire in English language based on Likert scale was designed for the current study to solicit data and students were allowed to fill the questionnaire. A clearance from Institutional ethics committee and an informed consent from participants were obtained for the present study.

Statistical analysis

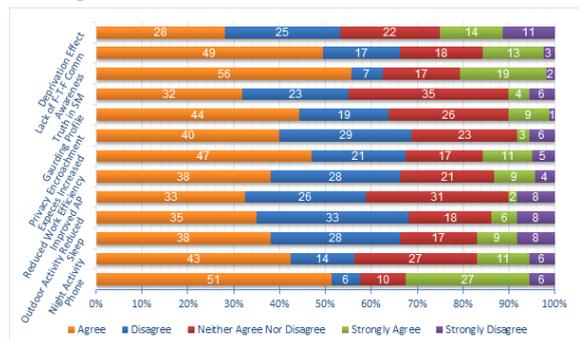
Descriptive statistical analysis of the data was done on the basis of different parameters and group of parameters. Gender based descriptive analysis was also done for the assessment of gender variability.

Results (Figure:1)

31% of total participants were unable to analyze if their academic performance is improved or not. 28.50% of total participants agreed to positive impact of these sites on their academic performance. 28.25% of total participants admitted to the negative impact of SNS on their academic performance. 60% of total students (38% female and 22% male) agreed to the fact that the SNS is a good platform for awareness and information. Most of the volunteers were agreeing that the SNS can cause lack of face to face communication (49%), increase in expenses (47%) and reduction in outdoor activity (35%). More than 20% female volunteers of total population were dissatisfied with the privacy in SNS while only 13% of male volunteers were agree to that.

On the contrary, a larger group of male volunteers (20%) were agreed that SNS has enough privacy functions and it is necessary to guard the personal information. 44% students agree on their activity in social media in higher in night as compared to day.

Figure1: An integrated Bar diagram showing effects of SNS on various parameters in terms of Likert scale:



Discussion

A study conducted on 100 students of Iraq noticed that FB was the favourite SNS site in 61.5% of males and 54% of female students followed by Twitter and Youtube.^[29] Mean time spent on FB was 5.07±2.93 hours and on FB messenger was 1.80±1.45 hours / day. But the proportion of students who stated that SNS have positive effect on their academic performance was greater than those who reported negative influence or no influence (42%, 33% and 25% respectively). Those who reported positive effect attributed this effect to the ability to browse more academic pages along with social interaction. On contrary, students with negative influence of SNS spend their excessive time to visit non academic sites while those who stated no influence for SNS on grades maintained a balance between surfing and their study time.^[32] Out of 120 students, 68% and 32% students were found using Whatsapp messenger at least half an hr and > 1 hr respectively and did not face any disturbance in their studies. A negative correlation was found between time spent on messenger and academics results.^[35] A research on 550 students of territory institutions of Ghana to find out the Impact of Whatsapp messenger on academic performance of youth stated a negative impact on the studies. They observed the students with spellings error and grammatical construction of sentences. It was concluded that it is difficult to perform texting and studies simultaneously.^[61] Out of 201 medical students 52.2% students admitted that their studies were hampered due

to time spent on Whatsapp. 51.2% of participants were not aware whether their academic performance was deteriorated or not. But 12.9% students admitted in downfall of their academic performance since they started using messenger.^[7] In our study, 31% of total participants were unable to analyze if their academic performance is improved or not with the time spent on SNS. 28.50% of total participants agreed to positive impact of these sites on their academic performance whereas 28.25% of total participants admitted to the negative impact of SNS on their academic performance. A study on medical students of Turkey found usage of SNS for professional purposes by 89.3% out of 93.4% students and 95.3% users of FB. This study did not find any negative influence of SNS on students with respect to ethical values, indicating that students are unaware of ethical issues. The students perceived these sites to initiate creativity, facilitate professional development, communication with colleagues, sharing knowledge and improving the quality of care.^[8] In current study, 60% of total students (38% female and 22% male) agreed to the fact that the SNS is a good platform for awareness and information and a majority of volunteers also believes that smartphones are the best and easily accessible mode to use SNS. This understanding might be a reason for the high daily usage of SNS among the students. A study has reported that almost all US medical schools have a FB access where majority of students are unaware of legal social networking policies and control.^[9] In one study, medical school deans reported that medical students were involved in posting the following content online: patient confidentiality violations, vulgar and discriminatory language, depictions of intoxication, and sexually suggestive material. Medical students were unaware of the negative effect of this on their career and medical professionalism in general.^[10] Paul and Baker have shown negatively correlation between time spent on SNS by medical students and their academic achievement. A small, but significant, negative relationship ($r = -0.119$, $P = 0.048$) between time spent on an SNS and academic performance as measured by course grades and cumulative GPA was observed.^[11] 45.8% students showed less concentration in studies while using Whatsapp and 33.3% users felt less of physical activities. At the same time participants also stated that the use of Whatsapp also leads to lesser face to face interactions.^[12] In our survey, most of the volunteers were in favour of lack of face to face communication (49%), increase in expenses (47%) and reduction in outdoor activity (35%) due to usage of SNS. A study of 100 random people like school, college students, employees and homemakers aged 17-30 years revealed that about 72% of youth joined Whatsapp. 63% users visited Whatsapp 50 times in a day and 67% admitted that they have become addicted of this messenger. 71% users confessed that Whatsapp made a serious interference in their privacy.^[13] In present study, more than 20% female students were dissatisfied with the privacy in SNS and they agree about guarding their profile on these sites while only 13% of male volunteers were agree to that. On the contrary, a larger group of male students (20%) were agreed that SNS provide enough privacy functions and it is necessary to guard the personal information. WhatsApp addiction may emerge as one of the important behavioural addictions with negative consequences like Borderline personality disorder (BPD) which is characterised by feeling of loneliness, getting bored easily^[14]. WhatsAppitis, a severe case of bilateral extensor pollicis longus tendinitis was detected in a 34-year-old with a history of rapid messaging on WhatsApp^[15]. Present study showed that 44% accepted their habit of visiting SNS is higher in night as compared to day. After association of this finding with the results of another section of present study which is based on sleep pattern it can be concluded that the use of social media reduces the sleep timing, in general.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the effect of SNS on the academic performance depends upon individual. Some users take the advantage of social media to gain scientific and social information which leads to better understanding and logical perception while some users are unable to use social media as a life style and social understanding improvement tool. We also conclude that the use of SNS reduces the sleep timing.. Reduced sleep time can lead to several health disorders i.e anxiety, depression etc. So it can be advised that the use of these sites should be restricted according to healthy life style. In a bigger picture, our data suggests that the female users have distrust on SNS and its privacy functions as compared to male users and most of the users believe in protecting their personal information. Most of the participants agree that the SNS can cause lack of face to face communication, increase in expenses and reduction in outdoor activity. These three factors are direct representative of quality of life

and from this study, it can be concluded that excessive and improper use of SNS might have negative impact on life. We suggest that the use of SNS and its impact on quality of our life should be self-analyzed and the limits should be set for an individual by an individual. Despite of compromised internet facility in hilly area, students are very much aware of SNS and using these sites adequately.

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