

Use of Social Networking Site in the University of Swaziland by the Health Science Student: A Case Study.

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Abstract:

The present paper investigates the use of social networking sites by the students of Health Science in the University of Swaziland, Swaziland in Southern Africa in their day-to-day life and how it affects communication with others. The study is based on a survey of the students who visited the library. The survey was conducted in August-September 2013 when the new the students are enrolled. Students are to complete a questionnaire which assessed personal use of social media, communication skills with friends and family. The findings disclose that social networking site is gaining popularity among them and the students were using at least one form of social networking website. Facebook is the most popular and used social networking site followed by WhatsApp.

Keyword: *Social networking sites, Swaziland, Health Science, Social media, Facebook, WhatsApp.*

Introduction:

Social Networking is the way we communicate with each other. Social networking refers to a process of relationship building among a group of people who have a common interest. It groups the individuals into specific groups. It is one of the most popular online that allows users to share their idea, activities, events and interest within the networked. It also allows creating profile for them, uploading or downloading a picture. Some social networking sites have a "favorites" feature that does not need approval from the other user. Social networks usually have privacy controls that allow the user to choose who can view their profile or contact them, etc. This platform is used for social activities by organizations, academia and the general public specifically the youth.

The use of this platform has compelled modern day students to spend a lot of time at these sites. Today, Health Science colleges are playing an important role in imparting technical education. The Doctors, who are the outcomes of these colleges, require the latest and pinpointed information in their respective fields. The present study is an attempt to understand the use of social networking sites by the students of Health Science of the University of Swaziland. Health Science students actively interact and use social networking sites for different purposes. Thus it was felt to conduct a study on use of these websites by them. The study was conducted among the Health Science students in the University of Swaziland. Questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. 200 copies of the questionnaire were distributed randomly to the target audience who come to the library. A total number of 163 (82%) copies were returned and used for the study. The findings reveal that the respondents consist of all the four Academic departments of Health Science, while the most used social networking site is Facebook. The

benefit derived from using social networking site is exposure to the latest skills and knowledge in their career. Recommendations are also proffered to encourage effective use of social networking site and communication of research results among Health Science students in Swaziland.

Objectives:

The objectives of the study are:

- To know the awareness of social networking among the students of Health Science;
- To find out the usefulness of social networking sites;
- To know the purpose they use the social media;
- To know the specific uses, preferences, and specialized academic social networking sites;
- To find out the social networking that are mostly used;
- To find out the most visited social networking sites;
- To identify problems and risks associated with the use of social networking sites;
- To discover the problems they have been able to solve using social networking.

Review of Related Literature:

There have been a number of research studies on the use of social networking sites done in the developed countries but a thorough literature search did not find similar research done in Swaziland. This paper takes a unique approach based on the Health Science students of the University of Swaziland, Faculty of Health Science. Establishing a network in Health Science is important as the nation has the HIV affected people. The traditional method of transferring information through print and face-to-face meetings is now replaced by web and the use of social networking sites has increased considerably (Bian, 2008); Boyd and Ellison, 2007). In African countries social networking sites are becoming more widely spread than they have before (Olusegun...et al., 2009). The use of social networking site has been studied and discussed at different levels but there seems to be less research done on this field so this study will provide an insight into the perception and use of social networking site by the Health Science students in the University of Swaziland.

Research Methodology:

To meet the main aim and the specific objectives of the study a quantitative research methodology study along with a comprehensive literature review were employed. A structured questionnaire was prepared for collecting the data. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed randomly to all the students of the four academic departments who come to use the library. A total of 163 filled questionnaires were received back, which comes to an overall response rate of 82%. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Findings and Discussion:

Table 1. Gender Study:

Sl No.	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
1.	74	89	163	82%

Table 1 shows the gender of the respondent. Out of the 163 respondent it was found that 74 (44%) were male and 89 (55%) were female. The overall response rate is 82%.

Table 2.Name of the Departments:

Sl. No.	Departments	Total	Percentage
1.	Community Health Nursing Science	8	5%
2.	Environmental Health Science	47	29%
3.	General Nursing	103	63%
4.	Midwifery Science	5	3%

There are 4 Academic departments in the faculty of Health Science. They are i) Community Health Nursing Science, ii) Environmental Health Science, iii) General Nursing and iv) Midwifery Science. From the above analysis it is shown that the number of students taking part in the survey comprises all the four departments in the Faculty.

From the above table it can be noted that the highest response rate of 103 Students (63%) is from the department of General Nursing followed by 47 students (29%) Environmental Health Science, 8 students (5%) Community Health Nursing Science and 5 students (3%) from Midwifery Science. This shows that the study got response from all the four academic departments.

Table 3: How often do you usually log on to Social networking site?

Sl. No.	Frequency	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	I am constantly log on	17	10%
2.	Several times a day	65	40%
3.	Once in a few days	22	14%
4.	Once in a week	8	5%
5.	Occasionally(Less than once a week)	31	19%
6.	Once a day	13	8%
7.	No response	7	4%

From the above analysis the highest number of students in the survey 65 (40%) use to log on the Social networking site several times a day and 31 (19%) students use occasionally (less than once a week). This shows that all the students were aware of the social networking site and use it for some or the other reason.

Table 4:How much time (on average) do you spend on your favorite social networking site(s) per session?

Sl. No.	Time	No. of respondent	Percentage
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1.	Half an hour	79	49%
2.	1 hour	32	19%
3.	2 hour	21	13%
4.	More than 2 hour	15	9%
6.	No response	16	10%

From the above table it is seen 79 (49%) students spend half an hour on their favorite social networking site while 32 (19%) students spend 1 hour. Out of the 165 students responded 16 (10%) did not respond to the questionnaire. Thus we can conclude that the students use the social networking site for less time.

Table No. 5. Please rate how often you use Social Networking services:

Sl. No	Frequency	Do not use		Very rarely		Quite often		Very often		No response	
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1.	Find some information	18	11%	31	19%	47	29%	43	26%	8	5%
2.	Get opinion	18	11%	44	27%	54	33%	19	12%	12	7%
3.	Entertain yourself	10	6%	17	10%	54	33%	59	36%	7	4%
4.	Socialize	4	2%	18	11%	55	34%	64	39%	6	4%
5.	Stay up-to date	6	4%	35	21%	49	30%	46	28%	11	7%
6.	Share your experience	30	18%	55	34%	30	18%	21	13%	11	7%
7.	Get freebies	72	44%	33	20%	11	7%	7	4%	22	14%

The above table describes the rate of use of social networking site by the students. The response shows that the students use the social networking site for one purpose or another. They use quite often to find information, get opinion and stay up-to date and use very often to entertain and socialize themselves. They rarely use for sharing experience. Many of them do not use for freebies. The no response column shows that there are some students who did not rate a particular question. Out of the total 163 students 16 students did not respond at all.

Table 6. Which of the following social networking media you use? (Tick as many as it applied to you)

Sl. No.	Social Networking	No. of respondent	Percentage
1.	Facebook	127	78%
2.	Google Plus	44	27%
3.	WhatsApp	99	61%

5.	MySpace	6	4%
6.	Twitter	29	18%
7.	Any other	21	13%

As shown in Table 6, all the respondents claimed that they had accounts with at least one of the social networking sites. This shows that Health science Students of the University of Swaziland are aware of social media and use it. The result reveals that 127 (78%) students out of the total of 163 students are on Facebook, 99 (61%) students are on WhatsApp, 44 (27%) students on Google Plus. The least use is the Twitter 29 (18%) students. Facebook is the most popular social media platform used among Health Science students in Swaziland followed by WhatsApp. This is because Facebook provides an easy way of sharing information with friends, acquaintances and even strangers (Boyd, Ellison 2007). The result also confirms Facebook as the most used social media in the world (Christofides, Muise and Desmarais, 2008). However, Health Science students should be encouraged to open multiple accounts on the various social networking sites so that they can collaborate and network with a larger audience. Other social networking sites they used include Google mail, Bing, Blogs, My space, Mxit, My opera, Tumblr, Skype, Flickr and LinkedIn.

Table 7: What is the key reason(s) for you to join a community/group in a social networking service? (Tick as many as applied to you)

Sl No.	Purpose	No of respondent Total	Percentage
1.	It is relevant, active and interesting community	69	42%
2.	Stay up-to-date with the community news	90	55%
3.	Linking up with Health professionals	47	29%
4.	Communication of research output	21	13%
5.	Creating awareness on new products	19	12%
6.	Advertising Health products/ services	8	5%
7.	Sharing knowledge with others	94	58%
8.	Improving organizational visibility	16	10%
9.	Reaching out to people to gain valuable ideas	58	36%
10.	Asking questions from professional colleagues	66	40%

The students were asked their purpose to join the social networking sites. More than half the students response that their main purpose is to share knowledge and also to keep update with the community. 40-42% students indicate that it is an interesting community and use for asking questions from their professional colleagues. Thus we conclude that most of the students maintain accounts with social media not primarily for communicating their research output, but for all purpose.

Table 8. Do Social media help you? (Tick as many as applied to you)

Sl. No	Purpose	No of respondent	Percentage
1.	In finding a mentor	18	11%
2.	Published research work faster.	24	15%
3.	Gained more visibility in my area(s) of research	46	28%
4.	It has helped greatly in disseminating information between/among groups.	72	44%
5.	Connect with Medical researchers with similar research interest in/outside my country.	32	20%
6.	Exposed to latest knowledge, skills and technology.	120	74%
7.	Able to find location/ institution suitable for research	29	18%

From the above analysis it is seen that social media is helping in one way or the other. Out of the 163 students 120 (74%) students claimed that they help to exposed to latest knowledge, skills and technology. 72 (44%) students in the study indicates that it has helped greatly in disseminating information among different groups. Another problem solved by social media for them is that they gained more visibility in their area of research from all over the country. Out of 163 students 18 students did not respond to the questionnaire.

Discussion:

The students maintain at least one account with the social networking sites, Facebook and Whatsapp is the most popular social networking site used by Health Science students in Swaziland. This supports the opinion of Christofides et al (2009) that Facebook is a popular social networking site. Ellison, Steinfeld and Lampe (2007) also establish the fact that Facebook provides a unique research environment because of its heavy usage patterns and ability to bridge online and offline connections. This study shows that the students are aware and use at least one social networking site. But still we should encourage to maintain as many accounts as possible, as this will enhance the rate of networking among various groups and increase the rate of information flow for quality research. The study also shows that the purpose of joining a social networking site varies among the students however the purpose is to stay up-to-date with the community and also to share knowledge with others. All the respondents also acknowledged that social networking has been of benefit to them in one way or the other. Exposure to recent knowledge, skills and technology in their area of specialization came first, while dissemination of information among groups followed. This is in line with CIARD's (2009) statement that people may not want to waste their time surfing the web or any other resources unless someone they trust points them in that direction. Hence, with the use of social media researchers can seek for recommendations and suggestions from colleagues, peers and experts and thereby acquire the latest knowledge and skill in their area of specialization. With social networking you can liaise with millions of people to share first-hand information and experience.

Recommendation:

The following are recommended to enhance connections and networking among Health Science students of the University of Swaziland Faculty of Health Science:

- Every student should subscribe and maintain multiple accounts on social networking sites;
- They should be mandated to publish their result on the web;
- Students in Swaziland should be encouraged to network and collaborate with colleagues from institutes different from their own;
- Increase the infrastructure of ICT (Bandwidth and Computers);
- Extension of wireless networking;
- Students should use Social media to get mentors in order to keep their profession alive.

Conclusion:

Health Science is a key sector in most developing countries so there is a need to make researches available and accessible to people if Health research is to achieve real impact on livelihoods. The role of social media is to establish connections, create awareness and promote individual or organizational projects or research reports and feedback. Social media also help to create the kind of researchers' environment that pulls knowledge and expertise together, thereby contributing knowledge and experiences to establish network. Social media can also help researchers to establish their reputation as experts or consultants on research report. The result of the study shows that all the students are aware of social networking sites. However the students use these sites for different purposes. It should be noted that social networking sites can be used as an interactive platform for academic communication and can be a source of information, knowledge and help. Facebook is the most used social networking site by the students followed by WhatsApp. Training and awareness programmes should be availed to students to educate them about the applications, benefits and problems associated with social networking sites.

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