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Why and How Do University Students Use Facebook in Everyday Life?

Ali SIMSEK¹, Fahme DABAJ², Eylem SIMSEK³

Abstract

The use of Facebook in everyday life has become widespread all around the world regardless of countries and cultures. The largest group of Facebook users consists of young people, particularly university students. This study investigated the attitudes of university students toward Facebook, their major reasons for using this social media application in everyday life, and the factors affecting the types of desired relationships with Facebook friends. A survey consisting of 63 items about demographics of participants and their preferences for the use of Facebook was administered to collect data. The sample of the study included 924 undergraduate students from a large public university in North Cyprus. A number of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed to analyze data in relation to the research questions. Results suggested that the students generally had positive attitudes toward Facebook, although there were certain differences in terms of demographics. The primary reason for using Facebook was interpersonal communications with close friends. The most powerful factor affecting the types of relationships in Facebook was perceived quality of communication and/or socialization. Along with the other findings, implications of the results for future research were discussed.

Keywords: Facebook, social media, virtual relationships, social networking sites, university students, everyday life.

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Introduction

The concept of social media generally refers to web-based applications and mobile technologies that allow users to produce and share user-generated contents for communications through interactive dialogues (Safko, 2012; Simsek, 2012). The content can be either unimodal or multimedia-based. Enabled by interactively and directly accessible communication technologies, social media has substantially changed the way communities, groups, and individuals interact with each other (Kietzmann et al, 2011; Vahedi & Zannella, 2019).

Social media may take on different forms including Internet forums, e-mail exchanges, blogs, discussion groups, wikis, virtual games, wall-postings, instant messaging, video-sharing, digital collaboration, podcasts, social bookmarking and the like. Each of these communication forms has its own electronic technologies or applications with assumed social characteristics (Seo & Ray, 2019). It is also possible that many of these social media services can easily be integrated via social network aggregation platforms using certain multimedia tools (Simsek, 2012).

Social media has become an inevitable part of everybody's life in recent years. The number of users for various social media applications has been burgeoning. Users from all segments of the contemporary society use at least several tools, platforms or applications of social media for their everyday communications. Facebook, WhatsApp, Tumblr, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube are among the most commonly preferred tools. Because these tools or applications connect people with each other and let them form their own web of ties, they are also called social networking sites.

Social networking sites enable effective ways for knowledge sharing, collaboration and professional networking (Koranteng & Wiafe, 2019). Due to the popularity of these innovations, almost all types of organizations, including public schools, have increasingly adopted them as a part of their activities and services. University students have been identified as the most dominant user group of social networking sites. They frequently interact, collaborate and share knowledge using these media. This makes social networking sites an innovative alternative in enhancing students' engagement and learning outcomes along with many other functions for socializing. On the other hand, they have also created new challenges for peer communication. Specifically, interactions on these platforms are mostly technology-mediated and thus limit interpersonal relationships based on face-to-face communication (Koranteng, Wiafe, Katsriku, & Apau, 2019).

According to the current statistics, Facebook is the most preferred social media application around the world. According to April 2018 statistics, there are over 2.20 billion monthly active Facebook users worldwide with an increase rate of 13% per year. Of this number, 1.45 billion (66%) people are considered daily active users. There are 1.74 billion (79% of the total number of users) mobile active users and this number increases with a rate of 21% year-over-year. Highest

traffic occurs mid-week between 1-3 pm. Average time-spent per Facebook visit is about 20 minutes. Approximately 30% of these users are between ages 25-34, and this is the most common age demographic. Moreover, 50% of 18-24 year-olds go on Facebook immediately when they wake up (<https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>).

Facebook is used for various purposes. The users can form a personal profile for themselves, share information in multiple modalities, post photographs, make comments on the information sent by others, like or dislike content of the exchanged messages, find friends, build and maintain relationships, update personal information when they wish, post announcements of important events etc. All these features are important for everyday life among the users particularly young people (Blachnio, Przepiorka, & Pantic, 2015) since they tend to communicate with their friends more frequently than other segments of the population (Hayes, van Stolk-Cooke, & Muench, 2015).

Over the years, an enormous body of research was completed on Facebook. Shiau, Dwivedi and Lai (2018) conducted a review of recent research on Facebook. They collected a total of 4429 academic papers from the Web of Science, and then adopted citation analysis and co-citation analysis to identify 50 highly-cited academic papers to form a co-citation matrix. They employed cluster analysis and multi-dimensional scaling analysis to determine the core knowledge of Facebook. The results showed that there are six points of core knowledge: (1) the behavior analysis of users; (2) the social impact of social networks; (3) the influence and application of Facebook in universities; (4) the evaluation of use motivation and theoretical models; (5) privacy risk and interpersonal impression; and (6) the strategies of social networks. These categories represent the general spectrum of the studies on Facebook.

Although Facebook has some distinct features to enhance everyday communication and motivate people for further use, its usage may sometimes become problematic. Marino, Gini, Vieno, and Spada (2018) conducted a meta-analysis (comprising of 56 independent samples with a total of 27,867 participants) on problematic use of Facebook with the aim of understanding the specific features of this phenomenon and the individual characteristics of the users. The results showed a small gender effect favoring females and a positive association between problematic Facebook use, time spent online and Internet addiction; whereas a negative association was found with self-esteem. The results also suggested that neuroticism and conscientiousness were the most clearly associated personality traits with problematic Facebook use. Moreover, although all types of motives were associated with problematic Facebook use, the strongest associations were observed with internal source and motives with negative valence. Some other studies have even found that the excessive use of Facebook was negatively associated with well-being of the individual users (Shakya & Cristakis, 2017) leading eventually to fatigue and depression.

Majority of university students in many countries are away from their home or family. They usually stay in dormitories or studio apartments with several roommates. They also have close friends in the school with whom they spend most of their time together. University students keep their ties with former friends such as those from the high school, while making new friends in the college. They generally consider that friendship is vital both for on-campus and off-campus activities. For example, they study together, complete instructional tasks in groups, prepare each other for exams, carry out collaborative projects, share common educational resources and so on. Similarly, they involve leisure time activities jointly, entertain together both inside and outside the campus, attend sports in teams, visit each other, chat about almost everything that generates mutual interests.

Social media, particularly social network sites, provide ample opportunities for communications for everyday life (Safko, 2012). Appropriate social media applications in this regard can be classified as messaging applications, conferencing applications, and sharing applications. *Messaging* has traditionally been one of the primary virtual communication applications between individuals. Electronic chat programs used between “buddies” can be given as examples of early applications for interpersonal communications in virtual environments. Because traditional messaging tools have become extremely popular among millions of users, their text-based features were integrated with audio-visual capacities of new media to make communication richer and better. Many *conferencing* applications started out as audio calling tools, using voice-over-IP (VoIP) technology to replace phone technology with free computer network connections. As network bandwidth and processing power have increased over the years, most of these applications have first evolved into more complete audio and video communication platforms and recently added group conferencing capability. Although *sharing* applications are developed mainly for team collaboration, most of them can also be used for interpersonal communication. They support sharing a variety of contents beyond just chat or video. Sharing applications range from simple scheduling tools to commenting platforms for sophisticated issues including corporate affairs so that some authors call these applications “social business” (Simsek, 2013).

Facebook is a social media application that has features in several of the categories mentioned above. For example, one can send messages to those in his/her list, share photographs, and generate dialogue among the users who have access to the content displayed in one’s page. Its unique array of distinct features makes Facebook as the most popular social networking site worldwide with an ever-increasing rate among university students (Lavanya & Karthikeyan, 2016) because it accommodates most of the communication needs that college students have. Research suggests that digital photo-sharing feature of Facebook appears to be particularly gratifying for affection, attention seeking, disclosure, habit, information sharing, and social influence (Malik, Dhir, & Nieminen, 2016). Needless to say that these gratifications are highly important for university students.

Cyprus is the third largest island in Mediterranean Sea after the Italian islands of Sicily and Sardinia. It is a divided island with Turkish Cypriots living in North and Greet Cypriots living in South. Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU), where the present study was conducted, is the largest university in North Cyprus. It has an international population over 20 thousand students coming from about 35 different countries mostly from Asia, Africa, and Europe. Therefore, it is assumed that the results of this study will reflect the attitudes and uses of Facebook among university students to considerable degree.

The purpose of the presentt study is to identify attitudes of university students toward Facebook, assess primary reasons for using Facebook, and discover the factors affecting the types of interpersonal relationships in Facebook. It appears that the interconnectedness of these dimensions need to be uncovered based on empirical evidence, considering that so much discussion is taking place on these issues in the current literature.

Methodology

Research Model

This descriptive study employed a survey model. Survey studies usually describe the current situation as it is and make no effort to change it. Through various techniques, they collect data about the present state of the things to determine the current status of things (Simsek, 2016). Questionnaires, scales, special forms, interviews, and observations are used in this respect. The present study employed a specifically-designed survey form (a mixture of a structured questionnaire and a Likert-type scale) for collecting data. Therefore, it was conducted as a descriptive study.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was defined as undergraduate students of Eastern Mediterranean University in the city of Gazimagusa in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The student body of EMU consists of students from about 35 different countries; mostly from Asia, Africa, and Europe. Native students are citizens of TRNC, which makes approximately 25% of the total number of students. Another 25% of students come from Turkey. The remaining 50% of students are usually from countries in the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and the Balkans. The language of instruction is English and the diploma of the university is recognized worldwide. All these characteristics make EMU a truly international university.

The sample of the study was chosen randomly from the population and it consisted of 924 undergraduate students from the Faculties of Education,

Engineering and Architecture, Communication, and Economic and Administrative Sciences. Education majors made the largest portion of the sample, whereas communication majors made the smallest portion. As far as gender distribution is concerned, 398 (43%) were male and 526 (57%) were female. Age distribution was as follows: 19 and less (n=133, 14%), 20-25 (n=699, 76%), 26 and older (n=92, 10%). Grade point average (GPA) of the students showed that 147 students (15%) had 2.00 or less, 455 students (49%) had 2.00-3.00, 141 students (15%) had 3.00-4.00, and 181 students (20%) were new comers so that their GPA was not calculated yet. Of the total number of students, 841 (91%) had personal computer and 796 (86%) had Internet connection.

Instruments

A survey form was used to collect data in the present study. The survey had two main sections. The first section, which was like a questionnaire, included 28 items about demographics of the participants as well as their reasons, habits, and uses of Facebook in everyday life. A sample item for the first part of the survey was: "How many friends do you have in your Facebook group?" The second part, which was like a Likert-type scale, included 35 items about attitudes of students toward Facebook. Each item in this part had a statement and the students indicated their level of agreement with the proposed statement. Possible responses ranged from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5), the midpoint being Undecided (3). A sample item for the second part of the survey was: "I prefer to use Facebook to share information about daily events."

The data gathering instrument was developed through a systematic process. First, the researchers reviewed the relevant literature and similar forms used in other studies. Although these instruments were useful to some extent, none of them appeared to be totally appropriate for the present study. Therefore, the researchers decided to design their own data gathering instrument. With the theoretical support of the current literature, the researchers wrote a number items of their own and adapted some items from the materials in similar studies. By combining them to create a single instrument, they prepared the draft of the survey form. Then, a five-member panel of experts, which included academics working in the field of educational technology and social media, reviewed the draft. By considering their comments and suggestions, the researchers revised the survey form. The panel approved the revised form after a second round of review. Then, it was pilot-tested with a small group of university students (n=25). Based on the results of the pilot-test, the final version of the data gathering instrument was produced. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the scale part of the survey was calculated as .81, which is considered satisfactory in the literature.

The survey form was distributed to the students during their regular classes. They responded to the survey under the supervision of one of the researchers. When they completed the survey, they returned it directly to the researcher. In

other words, the survey was administered face-to-face. Average completion time for the survey was about 30 minutes. Following the data gathering process, each completed form was checked whether there was any problem that might jeopardize data analysis. Research data were collected from 990 students but 66 cases were deleted because of missing or misleading data (56 returned incomplete surveys, 7 were univariate outliers and 3 were multivariate outliers). Eventually, data from 924 students were analyzed.

Data Analysis

A number of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze data collected in the preset study. Nominal data (responses to items in the questionnaire part) were analyzed through descriptive techniques such as frequency distribution, percentages, measures of central tendency, and variability measures. Ordinal data (responses to items in the scale part) were analyzed through inferential techniques, mainly analysis of variance (ANOVA). The findings as outcomes of the statistical analyses were presented in the relevant tables and corresponding interpretations were presented right after the tables.

Results and discussion

Data collected through the survey form were analyzed through appropriate statistical techniques and the findings were presented under the related headings/subheadings.

Ownership of Facebook Accounts

The first finding is about ownership of Facebook accounts; both active and inactive accounts were considered to see whether accounts are really used (*Table 1*).

Table 1. Ownership of Facebook accounts

Number of accounts	f	%
1 account	764	82.7
2 and more accounts	73	7.9
Inactive accounts	87	9.4
Total	924	100.0

It appears that a great majority of the students (83%) owned one Facebook account, 8% of them owned at least two accounts, 9% had inactive accounts (either never used or deliberately made inactive). Students also indicated that 65% of them use their Facebook accounts once or twice a day, 50% of the students access their accounts for duration of 1-2 hours per day. These findings together provide a very good ground that the participants of this study were active users of Facebook.

Number of Facebook Friends

Table 2 exhibits the number of Facebook friends. It is interesting that 38% of the participants indicated that they have no Facebook friends. Approximately 31% had 1-25 friends, while 8% had more than 100 friends. The average number of Facebook friends as reported by the participants in this study seems to be less than the average number of friends in a typical Facebook account (approximately 130 friends), which is normal due to the limited environment of an international university campus on an island.

Table 2. Number of Facebook friends

Number of friends	f	%
No of friends	350	37.9
1-25	289	31.3
26-50	103	11.1
51-100	107	11.6
100+	75	8.1
Total	924	100.0

When asked about their profile names in Facebook, 92% of students indicated that they use their real names, 3% use fake names, and 5% use both real and fake names for different accounts. These findings clearly show that at least 9 out of 10 Facebook users in the present study prefer their real names in personal profiles.

Profile Information

Facebook users share certain information about themselves when they create a personal profile. They also make a decision about the people who are allowed to see such information. *Table 3* shows personal information used by the students when they have created their own personal profiles.

Table 3. Profile information shared

Information	Yes (f)	Yes (%)	No (f)	No (%)
Favorite songs	556	60.2	368	39.8
Areas of interest	509	55.1	415	44.9
Favorite proverbs	471	51.0	453	49.0
Hobbies	467	50.5	457	49.5
Favorite movies	415	44.9	509	55.1
Relationships	365	39.5	459	60.5
Favorite books	337	36.5	589	63.5
Favorite TV programs	324	35.1	600	64.9

It appears that more than 50% of the students share their favorite songs, areas of interests, favorite proverbs/sayings, and hobbies in their Facebook pages. The students sharing information about their favorite movies, relationships, favorite books and TV programs range between 35% and 45%. Favorite songs are at the top of the lists, while favorite TV programs are at the bottom. It should be noted, however, that all the percentages can be considered high. When asked for more details regarding personally-set filters and preferences for allowing those to see their messages, two-thirds of the students indicated that only friends can see their profile information and sharings.

Reasons for Using Facebook

People use Facebook for many reasons. University students may have distinct reasons for using Facebook compared to general audience of users. Table 4 presents participants' particular reasons for using Facebook.

Table 4. Reasons for using Facebook

Reasons	Yes (f)	Yes (%)	No (f)	No (%)
Communication with friends	605	65.5	318	34.5
Finding old friends	462	50.0	462	50.0
Leisure time activities	309	33.4	615	66.6
Following recent events	256	27.7	668	72.3
Curiosity	230	24.9	694	75.1
Being part of friendships	136	14.7	788	85.3
Making new friends	122	13.2	802	86.8
Environmental influence	120	13.0	804	87.0

Learning new things	110	11.9	814	88.1
Doing personal research	93	10.1	831	89.9

Approximately two-thirds of the students indicated that they use Facebook mainly for interpersonal communications with their friends, half of them use it for finding their old friends, one-third use it for leisure time activities, and approximately one-fourth of them use Facebook for curiosity and following recent events. All the other reasons ranged between 10% and 15%. It can be said from these findings that the students mostly use Facebook for reaching their old friends and communicating with their existing friends, rather than being a part of someone else's friendship networks or making unknown people their friends.

Types of Relationships

Relationships are important for Facebook users. In fact, the emergence of Facebook as a social media tool is all about interpersonal relationships of university students. However, types of relationships sought may vary for individual users. Table 5 presents information about intended types of relationships.

Table 5. Types of relationships sought

Type of relationship	Yes (f)	Yes (%)	No (f)	No (%)
Friendship	568	61.5	356	38.5
Leisure time partnership	344	37.2	580	62.8
Social companionship	152	16.5	772	83.5
Dating	57	6.2	867	93.8

The most preferred type of relationship of the university students using Facebook is friendship (62%), whereas the least preferred type of relationship is dating (6%). Leisure time partnership and social companionship are between these two categories. These findings make sense because campus life is mostly about friendships, although it also provides a plenty of opportunities for further relationships. It appears that very little is left for social networking sites after face-to-face communications.

It is worth to note that gender doesn't play an important role in relationships. Approximately 70% of the students indicated that they are interested in both genders or gender doesn't matter for them (The percentages were 62% for males and 38% for females). For the remaining 30% of the students, 24% were interested in women and 6% were interested in men. When gender was considered important in relationships, members of both genders showed greater tendency for women. This was particularly visible for females (134 seeking women, 17 seeking men) than males (89 seeking women, 35 seeking men).

How do the students communicate with their friends? Approximately 44% of them said that they communicate face-to-face, 42% mentioned other communication tools including Facebook, and 14% provided no answer preference. From these numbers, it can be assumed that the students use both physical and virtual communication tools to communicate with their friends.

Attitudes toward the Use of Facebook

By nature, the attitudes toward students' use of Facebook in everyday life represent a wide spectrum including both positive and negative ones. Attitudes may be important because they are usually considered driving forces behind actual behaviors of using or not using Facebook. Table 6 demonstrates the top and bottom 5 attitudes from both ends.

Table 6. Top 5 and Bottom 5 Attitudes

Attitudes	M	SD
Top 5 Attitudes		
I like to use Facebook to chat with friends	3.94	0.96
I prefer to use Facebook to find friends	3.81	1.06
I like to use Facebook to send messages	3.64	1.06
I enjoy Facebook as a communication tool	3.47	1.13
I like to use Facebook to learn what my friends do	3.42	1.11
Bottom 5 Attitudes		
I choose to contact my Facebook friends when I have a problem	2.31	1.27
I prefer to look at the profile photo when selecting a Facebook friend	2.33	1.26
I favor to use Facebook to form a group	2.45	1.20
I select Facebook to share personal information	2.47	1.25
I feel that the number of Facebook friends show one's sociality	2.58	1.27

As seen clearly in the table, the highest-rated statements are usually about finding, communicating and sustaining friendships within the context of interpersonal relationships. The students indicate that they enjoy Facebook to reach, chat, send messages, and learn about their friends. On the other hand, the lowest-rated statements are mostly about features, attributions and feelings about Facebook as a social media tool. The students appear to be reluctant to use Facebook to disclose personally sensitive information for themselves.

Comparisons by Demographic Variables

Table 7 exhibits descriptive statistics (minimum/maximum values, means, and standard deviations) about categories of attitudes as grouped in the present study. Category titles reflect students' attitudes toward Facebook regarding for possible areas of usage.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics about Categories of Attitudes

Category	Min	Max	M	SD
Quality of communication	1.00	5.00	2.69	0.73
Education	1.00	5.00	2.83	0.91
Socialization effects of Facebook	1.00	5.00	3.03	0.93
Communication tool	1.00	5.00	3.05	0.80
Leisure time activities	1.00	5.00	3.60	0.63
General attitudes toward Facebook	1.43	4.43	2.97	0.45

It is obvious that attitudes of the students toward Facebook are moderate because mean scores for categories range from 2.97 (59/100) to 3.60 (72/100). Considering the critical value as 3.41 (out of 5.00 or 68 out of 100) for a positive attitude on a five-point Likert-type scale, only one category (leisure time activities) produced high mean, all the rest were at the medium level and lower than the critical value.

Based on the scores for categories of attitudes, a number of statistical tests were run to examine whether the differences were significant for demographic variables of the study. The following are the findings:

Gender: Males ($M=2.88$, $SD=0.66$) had more positive attitudes than females ($M=2.55$, $SD=0.75$) on communication quality [$F(1,922)=49.7$, $p<.001$] and general attitudes toward Facebook [$F(1,922)=16.15$, $p<.001$]. There were no statistically significant differences in other comparisons by gender at the .05 level.

Age and School Year: Those who were younger than 19 had significantly more positive attitudes than 20-25 year-olds on the variables of communication quality [$F(2,921)=6.13$, $p<.002$] and leisure time activities [$F(2,921)=2.96$, $p<.05$]. In general, younger the students, more positive the attitudes; the students in the English preparatory school had more positive general attitudes toward Facebook than sophomores and juniors [$F(4,919)=2.87$, $p<.05$].

Major: Pre-school education majors had significantly less positive attitudes than economics and business majors on the variable of communication quality [$F(4,919)=3.04$, $p<.05$] and general attitudes toward Facebook [$F(4,919)=3.373$, $p<.01$]. Psychology majors had significantly less positive attitudes than economics and business majors on the variable of leisure time activities [$F(4,919)=2.56$, $p<.05$]. No other comparisons were significant by majors of students.

GPA: New students and those who had lower GPA (below 2.00) had significantly more positive attitudes than those with higher GPA on the variables of communication quality [$F(3,920)= 7.51, p<.001$] and leisure time activities [$F(3,920)= 8.07, p<.001$]. The students with higher GPA (above 2.00) had significantly more positive attitudes than new students and those with lower GPA (below 2.00) on socialization [$F(3,920)= 15.06, p<.001$].

Access: Those who access to Facebook through mobile phone have more positive attitudes on leisure time activities [$F(1,922)= 11.50, p<.001$] and general attitudes toward Facebook [$F(1,922)=5.95, p<.05$]. Those who have a personal computer and Internet connection have more positive attitudes on leisure time activities [$F(1,922)= 4.61, p<.05$] and communication tool [$F(1,922)=6.85, p<.01$] but ownership of personal computer and Internet connection did not affect general attitudes toward Facebook at the .05 alpha level.

Duration of Daily Use: Students whose daily use of Facebook is longer have more positive attitudes than those who use Facebook for shorter daily durations regarding communication quality [$F(5,918)= 3.53, p<.01$], leisure time activities [$F(5,918)= 6.26, p<.001$], communication tool [$F(5,918)= 3.61, p<.01$]. The difference is particularly visible between those who use Facebook less than one hour per day and those who use it more than five hours a day. Similarly, as the frequency of access to Facebook increases, the general attitudes toward Facebook also increases [$F(5,918)= 4.09, p<.001$].

Conclusion

The escalation of social networking sites usage has led to an ample body of research examining both the positive and negative implications (Ryding & Kuss, 2020). This particular study investigated why and how university students use Facebook in their everyday life. The study particularly focused on reasons for using Facebook, attitudes toward Facebook as a communication tool, personalized or preferred uses of Facebook, and interactions of demographics with all these variables. The data were collected through a survey form (including a questionnaire part and a scale part) from 924 undergraduate students at an international university in North Cyprus.

The results deserve particular attention because the students involved in the present study were active users of Facebook as a social media application in everyday life. They use their real names in Facebook communication and this is consistent with the result of Young and Quan-Haase (2009) reporting that “99% students used their real names in personal profiles. All the students had Facebook accounts, 90% of these accounts were active, and a great majority of the students use their accounts for several hours a day. This comes as no surprise based on the findings of other studies or surveys reporting that 85% to 95% of college students use Facebook on daily basis (Arington, 2005; Viner, 2014). However, the number of

friends as reported by the students in the present study (the average being less than 100) appears to be a little bit low compared to the number of friends mentioned in past studies (100-200 in Lewis & West, 2009 and 200-350 in Sheldon, 2008). This may be either due to the lessening popularity of Facebook among young people over the years or the characteristics of the students in the present study.

The students share their favorites as the profile information and allow only friends to see this information (Facebook options are friends, friends of friends, non-friend users of the same network, and non-friend users at a different network). To some extent, it may be due to profile fields provided as options by Facebook itself (Lewis, Kaufman & Chris, 2008). However, the results of previous studies regarding the level of privacy settings on Facebook appear to be mixed (Hew, 2011). Nevertheless, privacy has become a serious concern over the years and affected the profile information shared (Johnston, Chen & Hauman, 2013).

The students use Facebook mainly for communication with their friends and sharing information about leisure time activities as well as current events that they involve. They do not perceive Facebook as a learning or research tool. This proves that Facebook is a social networking site, not a learning technology. When they are required to use Facebook in learning, they prefer to use it for peer communication as a part of their group work (Donlan, 2014) and they are concerned that they don't want to mix social purposes with class work (Gettman & Cortijo, 2015). Based on a review of a number of empirical studies, Hew (2011) concludes that Facebook has very little educational use and it is mainly to keep in touch with known individuals.

The students do not try to attend networks of unknown people for making new friends; instead, they try to find their old friends and keep rapport with the current friends. This result is supported with the findings of other studies (Bosch, 2009; Elison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Lewis & West, 2009; Sheldon, 2008). The students assign high value to friendship as a mode of interpersonal relationship. They are not really interested in the opposite gender because they seek friends from both genders, although females tend to prefer members of their own gender in relationships more than males do. This result is partially supported by Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert (2009) reporting that female students have significantly more friends than male students as well as by Wang, Moon, Kwon, Evans, and Stefanone (2010) reporting that females do not differ in their willingness to initiate friendships with both genders but males prefer to initiate friendships with females. Considering its potential for establishing friendships, Facebook appears to play an important role in helping students form and maintain social capital (Hew, 2011). The differences in the results of the existing studies may partly be due to cultural differences sahping gender roles and behaviors.

The students have moderate attitudes toward Facebook. As many suggest, they do not perceive Facebook as the ultimate technology for social communication. They think that Facebook may be useful for finding friends and sharing information

with them in an interactive manner that allow instant exchange of messages. However, they see little value in Facebook for sharing personal problems or sensitive information with friends. This is consistent with the concern raised by Turkle (2012) and empirical evidence reported by Hew (2011). The users of Facebook (in fact users of all social networking sites) assume that more friends on Facebook does not mean that you are more social. What counts is the real friends that you know in the physical world because they feel that they should be able to communicate with their friends face-to-face when necessary. For the most part, communication in Facebook is seen by the students as fun and not serious (Lewis & West, 2009). This may explain why the students use Facebook for everyday communication with friends but are not really satisfied with the quality of communication.

As the differences in attitudes are examined by demographic variables, the present study produced a number of interesting results. Gender-based comparisons were significant in favor of males on communication quality and general attitudes toward Facebook but not on other categories. Younger students had more positive attitudes for communication quality and leisure time activities, this was more so for the students in English preparation school as new comers. Psychology and pre-school education majors had less positive attitudes than economics and business majors; no other comparisons were significant for majors. Surprisingly, the students with lower GPA had more positive attitudes on communication quality and leisure time activities but the students with higher GPA exhibited better attitudes on socialization though Facebook. Finally, the students who access to Facebook through mobile phones had more positive attitudes on leisure time activities and general attitudes toward Facebook. These results are in partial agreement with the results of Junco (2015) study reporting that seniors spent significantly less time on Facebook than students at other class ranks, and time spent on Facebook was negatively predictive of GPA for freshmen but not for other students. It should be noted that some of these results are unique so that it is not possible to compare with the results of previous studies, while the literature suggests mixed results for other comparisons.

Recommendations

Considering all these results and their possible implications, several recommendations for future research can be made. First, this study was about the use of Facebook only so that more research is needed on other social media applications. Secondly, comparisons of use by younger and older generations may be helpful to see the larger picture. Third, future research should investigate uses and gratifications of more-educated and less-educated audiences. Fourth, effects of capability and self-efficacy of users should be examined in more details. Finally, more research should be conducted on the role of braggadocian and preventative behaviors regarding the use of social media.

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