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Addiction to social networking sites in healthcare students of a selected institution in Mangalore, Karnataka, India: A questionnaire study

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Abstract

Background: Online social networks are rapidly changing the way human beings interact. Of the more than 2.5 billion active internet users worldwide, some 1.8 billion were estimated to use social networking sites in 2014, representing approximately 25% of the world's total population. Excessive use or an addiction to internet activities, including social network sites (SNSs) and online games has been negatively associated with conscientiousness, honesty/humility and agreeableness and positively associated with neuroticism, narcissism, and aggression.

Materials & Methods: A questionnaire which was developed by the author which consists of 41 questions which can document the demographic details as well as other information regarding the use of social networking sites such as Facebook was given to 750 health care students to fill in irrespective of age and gender.

Results: The results of the current study revealed that health care students majorly use social network sites for relief and they do not neglect their studies or their day to day chores due to these sites.

Conclusion: To conclude, there are some groups of individuals (Like health care students in our study) who do not get addicted to social network sites such as Facebook, rather they give importance to their personal and professional life.

Keywords: Facebook, medical students, addiction, social network sites

1. Introduction

Online social networks are rapidly changing the way human beings interact. Of the more than 2.5 billion active internet users worldwide, some 1.8 billion were estimated to use social networking sites in 2014, representing approximately 25% of the world's total population. In 1995, the psychiatrist Ivan Goldberg satirically introduced the term "Internet addiction disorder" (IAD). The characteristics of internet addiction is same as any other addiction involving excessive mental preoccupation with the internet, coupled with repetitive thoughts of limiting or controlling this use and a subsequent failure to prevent access (Cam *et al*, 2012) [1]. Individuals with this condition continue to use the internet despite a significant impact upon their day to day functionality at various levels, spending ever increasing amounts of time online and craving access when it is not available. Facebook is a social networking service launched in February 2004, owned and operated by Facebook, Inc. As of June 2012, Facebook reports more than 1 billion active users. It is particularly attractive to young adults and over half of member being in the age group of 18-34 (Debatin *et al*, 2009) [2]. University life without Facebook is almost unthinkable and since its inception in 2004, it has quickly become both a basic tool and a mirror for social interaction, personality identity and network building amongst students (West *et al*, 2009) [3]. Besides its huge advantages it has now become a hot topic of debate that either it is a useful invention or an invention with full of hazards. Most of the users don't realize the negative impact of social media on their life because they are already addicted to it. It has been notified in studies that excessive use of Facebook will make a person to take less interest in his or her surroundings.

Addiction can be disruptive to many aspects of life for students; it may hinder their studies and impact their long term career goals. Excessive use of an addiction to internet activities, including social network sites (SNSs) and online games has been negatively associated with conscientiousness, honesty/humility and agreeableness and positively associated with neuroticism, narcissism, and aggression (Andreassen *et al.*, 2012) [4]. For health care students aiming to develop into caring health professionals, the implications of this addiction can have wide and detrimental consequences for society as a whole. So the current study aims to understand the attitude and addiction of health care students from an urban area towards the use of social networking sites like Facebook.

2. Materials & Methods

This is a single centered study conducted in one of the private medical colleges in Mangalore, Karnataka. Initially, a questionnaire was developed by the principal investigator which consists of 41 questions which can document the demographic details as well as various other information regarding the use of social networking sites such as Facebook as shown in Appendix 1. The study consisted of 750 health care students (300 males (40%) and 450 females (60%) with a mean age of 19.50 ± 2.45 years. All the participants were briefed about the need and purpose of the current study and the developed questionnaire was given to all the participants to read and fill. The participants were given full rights to withdraw from the study at any point of time if they don't wish to participate in it. All the completed questionnaires were collected back and the data was taken for statistical analysis to find out the frequency and association.

3. Results

Among the 750 distributed questionnaires, 351 questionnaires were obtained back with a response rate of 50%. Among the 351 participants [Males (50.7%); Females (49.3%)], 68.7% of them were from the Christian religion, 20.2% were from the Hindu religion and the remaining 11.1% were from the Muslim religion. Around 70.7% of the participants had a personal computer or laptop. Approximately 55.3% of the participants had a mobile that has the ability to connect to the internet. Nearly 87.7% of the participants were members of some social network sites which include Facebook (65.5%), Orkut (20.2%), Twitter (8.5%), Ibibo (2.9%) and my space (2.9%) (Figure 1). Almost 88.3% of the participants were using the social network sites from less than 1 year, 7.7% of them were using it from last 1-2 years, 3.1% from 2-3 years and the remaining 0.9% were using from more than 3 years. In a day, approximately 21.3% of the participants use social network sites for about less than 30 minutes, 15.3% for 30 minutes to 1 hour, 19.9% for about 1-2 hours, 21.9% for about 2-3 hours and only 21.3% of the participants use it for more than 3 hours.

Only 2.6% of the total participants update their social network site status few times a day and 54.7% of the participants never update their status only. Majority of the participants (42.2%) check their social network sites only few times a week and 4.3% of the participants check few times a day. Nearly 35.5% of the participants have 500-1000 friends in their social network sites and only 7.1% of the participants have 1-100 friends. Nearly 34.5% of the

participants were tagged in around 50-75 photos and only 5.7% of participants were tagged in more than 100 photos. Approximately 31.1% of the participants have 1-3 applications in social network sites other than photos and pages and 13.7% only had more than 10 other applications other than photos and pages. Approximately 51.6% of the participants met a new friend in social networking sites and only 42.2% of them got reconnected with their old classmates with social network sites.

Nearly 45.6% of the participants chose option Yes for the question will you be hurt, if social network sites shut down one day? And 54.4% of the participants said no. Around 75.5% of the participants think that their grades are not affected because of the time they spent on social network sites. Approximately 58.1% of the participants do not try to cut down the time they spent on social network sites. Nearly 55% of the participants find social network sites as a relief measure. Only 6% of the participants neglect studies or daily chores always to spend more time on social network site and 34.5% of the participants never neglect studies or other chores to spend more time on social network sites. Nearly 46.4% of the participants reported that they don't become secretive when someone asks what he/she does on social network sites and 4.8% become secretive always. Nearly 18.2% of the participants fear that life without social network sites is going to be empty few times and 10% of them fear about it always. Approximately 4% of the participants lose sleep due to late night logins and 56.4% of them never lose sleep.

Approximately 28.2% of the participants reported that 25% of the time, the negative comments that they make on social network sites affects other person's life and 16% of the participants reported 75 percentage of the time, it affects other person's life. The negative comments in social network sites never hurts nearly 36.8% of the participants and it always hurts in 6% of the participants. Nearly 0.9% of the participants reported that the people they meet on social network sites are 100% honest and 15.4% of them reported that all are dishonest.

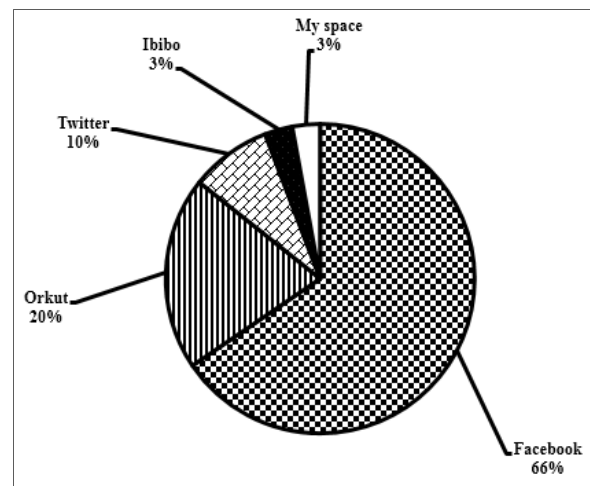


Fig 1: Graphical representation of the social network sites used by healthcare students in the study

Table 1: The frequency and percentage of social network site usage among the healthcare students

		Percentage (Frequency)
Gender	Male	50.7(178)
	Female	49.3(173)
Religion	Hindu	20.2(71)
	Muslim	11.1(39)
	Christian	68.7(241)
Do you have a personal Computer or a laptop	Yes	70.7(248)
	No	7.7(27)
	Unanswered	21.6 (76)
Do you have a mobile that has ability to connect to net	Yes	55.3(194)
	No	44.4(156)
	Unanswered	0.3 (1)
Are you a member of social network sites	Yes	87.7(308)
	No	12.3(43)
When did you start using social networking sites	<1 yr	88.3(310)
	1-2 yr	7.7(27)
	2-3 yr	3.1(11)
	> 3 yr	0.9(3)
How many years have you been a member in joined Social network site	<1 yr	17.1(60)
	1-2 yr	15.4(54)
	2-3 yr	24.2(85)
	> 3 yr	21.9(77)
	Unanswered	21.3 (75)
How many hours do you use Social network site per day	< 30 min	21.3 (75)
	30 min-1hr	15.3 (54)
	1-2hrs	19.9 (70)
	2-3 hrs	21.9 (77)
	> 3hs	21.3 (75)
How often do you update your Social network site status?	Never	54.7(192)
	Once a year	23.6(83)
	Few times a month	10 (35)
	Few times a week	9.1(32)
	Few times a day	2.6 (9)
How often do you check Social network site?	Never	11.4(40)
	Few year	18.8(66)
	Few times a month	42.2(148)
	Few times a week	23.4(82)
Number of Social network site friends you have?	Few times a day	4.3(15)
	1-100	7.1(25)
	101-200	13.7(48)
	200-500	22.8(80)
	500-1000	35.0(123)
Number of photos you are tagged in	>1000	21.4(75)
	< 50	14.8(52)
	25-50	19.4(68)
	50-75	34.5(121)
	75-100	25.6(90)
How many other applications other than photos and pages you have	> 100	5.7(20)
	1-3	31.1(109)
	4-6	15.4(54)
	7-10	16.2(57)
Do you list to organize friends into groups?	>10	13.7(48)
	Yes	25.6(90)
	No	37.6(132)
Have you met a new friend in Social network site	Unanswered	36.8 (129)
	Yes	51.6(181)
	No	46.7(164)
Do you use Social network site to organize events?	Unanswered	1.7 (6)
	Yes	64.4(226)
	No	35.3(124)
Have you reconnected with old classmates?	Unanswered	0.2 (1)
	Yes	42.2(148)
	No	57.3(201)
Do you encourage your family members to sign up?	Unanswered	0.5 (2)
	Yes	92.9(326)
Do you list to organize friends into groups	No	7.1(25)
	Yes	68.9(242)
	No	30.8(108)
Have you met a new friend in Social network site	Unanswered	0.2 (1)
	Yes	53.8(189)
	No	45.9(161)
Do you list to organize friends into groups	Unanswered	0.3 (1)
	Yes	63.8(224)
	No	36.2(127)
Will you be hurt, if Social network site shut down one	Yes	45.6(160)
	No	54.4(191)

day		
Do you think that your grades suffer because of the time you spent on Social network site	Yes	24.2(85)
	No	75.5(265)
	Unanswered	0.3 (1)
Do you try to cut down the time you spent on Social network site	Yes	41.0(144)
	No	58.1(204)
	Unanswered	0.9 (3)
Do you prefer Social network site to going out with others	Yes	22.5(79)
	No	76.4(268)
	Unanswered	1.1 (4)
Do you find Social network site as a relief measure?	Yes	55.0(193)
	No	43.9(154)
	Unanswered	1.1 (4)
When you sit down on your computer what do you usually check first?	E-Mail	8.0(28)
	Facebook	91.2(320)
	Twitter	0.6(2)
How many additional applications other than photos and pages you have?	0	33.6(118)
	1-5	46.2(162)
	6-20	14.8(52)
	21-40	3.1(11)
	>40	2.3(8)
How often do you that you stay on Social network site longer than you intended	Always	5.7(20)
	Most time	23.1(81)
	Sometime	31.3(110)
	Few times	27.4(96)
	Never	12.5(44)
How often do you neglect studies or daily chores to spend more time on Social network site	Always	6.0(21)
	Most time	8.3(29)
	Sometime	23.6(83)
	Few times	27.6(97)
	Never	34.5(121)
How often do you prefer the excitement of the Social network site to face-to-face friends	Always	5.4(19)
	Most time	7.7(27)
	Sometime	20.2(71)
	Few times	21.7(76)
	Never	45.0(158)
How often do others in your life complain to you about the amount of time you spend on Social network site	Always	7.1(25)
	Most time	8.3(29)
	Sometime	16.8(59)
	Few times	25.1(88)
	Never	42.7(150)
How often your grades suffer because of the time you spent on Social network site	Always	4.6(16)
	Most time	5.1(18)
	Sometime	15.7(55)
	Few times	21(74)
	Never	53.6(188)
How often do you become secretive when someone asks what you do on Social network site	Always	4.8(17)
	Most time	12.8(45)
	Sometime	17.9(63)
	Few times	17.9(63)
	Never	46.4(163)
Do you fear that life without Social network site is going to be empty	Always	10.0(35)
	Most time	6.6(23)
	Sometime	10.8(38)
	Few times	18.2(64)
Do you lose sleep due to late night logins	Never	54.4(191)
	Always	4.0(14)
	Most time	5.1(18)
	Sometime	17.9(63)
Do you think the negative comments you make on Social network site affect other person's life	Few times	16.5(58)
	Never	56.4(198)
	Always affects	9.1(32)
	75% time affects	16.0(56)
	50% time affects	22.8(80)
Do negative comments in Social network site affect your mood?	25%time affects	28.2(99)
	Never affects	23.9(84)
	Always hurts	6.0(21)
	75% time hurts	11.7(41)
	50% time hurts	13.1(46)
Do you think that people you meet on Social network site are honest in what they say	25%time hurts	32.5(114)
	Never hurts	36.8(129)
	All are dishonest	15.4(54)
	25% honest	41.9(147)
Do you list to organize friends into groups	50% honest	31.9(112)
	75% honest	10.0 (35)
	100% honest	0.9 (3)

4. Discussion

Social network sites deeply penetrate its user's everyday life and now it has become a medium for change and expression in every aspect of life. Young adults, particularly teenagers tended to be unaware of just how much time they really spent on social networking sites, and the effect this might have on their academic performance and social interaction. From academic procrastination to social impairment as far as real physical interactions are concerned, diminished productivity at work and physical problems associated with a sedentary life-style; there seem to be enough problems related to internet and social network addictions. In the current study, even though majority of the participants have a personal computer or laptop, a mobile phone that has ability to connect to internet, and almost 88% of the participants were members of any social network sites mainly Facebook, majority of the participants do not found to be addicted to the social network sites or think that their grades are affected because of the involvement in any social network sites. Majority of the participants reported that, they don't neglect their studies or any other daily chores to spend more time on social network sites. Almost half of the participants do not become secretive about what they do in social network sites and do not fear that life without social network sites is going to be empty.

One of the important aspect that was observed in this study was unlike other reported studies, majority of the participants were not addicted to any of the social network sites or have any negative effects in their social and personal life because of the use of this sites even after having all the facilities like personal computers, laptops and mobile phones. The main reason what the authors think about this is the educational background of the participants. In this study we considered only health care students who are dedicated and motivated to serve the community who are in need. Since, health care profession is a noble profession and it requires hard work, dedication, sincerity and a pure mind to treat and understand the patients with any type of illnesses, majority of the students spend most of the time in visiting patients in wards, studying and updating their knowledge by doing researches and in discussions. They do not really find time in spending a lot of quality time in checking and updating their social network sites such as Facebook. This can be understood from the response of the students for the questions "How often do you update your social network status? And "Do you find social network sites as a relief measure? Almost 54.7% of the participants responded "Never" for the first question and 55% of the participants responded "Yes" for the latter one. From this we understand that, in the participants busy schedule and tension filled study period, they depend on social network sites just for a relief or to distract them from studies for a brief period of time, but they are not addicted to them or neglect their studies because of these sites.

5. Conclusion

From the results of the current study, it should be understood that not just health care students, any person which ever profession you are in, use the social network sites only as a distractor or a relief measure and do not become an addict of these sites by neglecting your studies or jobs which you are supposed to do. It can be concluded that, even though the number of users of social network sites are drastically increasing every day, there are some group of

people (like health care students in our study) who do not get addicted to these sites and they use it wisely as a relief measure and give more importance to their studies and other daily chores.

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