



## Exploring Social Networking Sites usage in University: A Study in North East India

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**ABSTRACT:** In this paper, we examine the level of usage of social networking sites by undergraduate and postgraduate students of Martin Luther Christian University. A survey questionnaire was conducted comprised of twenty (20) questions with 484 students from August 2018 to December 2018. The questionnaire were target to gather student's demographic variables (age, gender-based, course and discipline of study) preferred choice of social networking sites by students, mode of access, reasons and frequency of visit per day; impact on lifestyle; use of social networking sites for education and challenges faced on social networking sites. The results from the survey study showed that the learners were already using social networking sites in the university frequently at an average of 1-4 hrs per day. The popular social networking sites ranked by students were WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram.

**Keywords:** Social networking sites, Facebook, WhatsApp, Education, Higher education.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites refers to an online platform and make use of Web 2.0 applications that aid social connection and communication, make possible collaboration, and enable discussion across stakeholders. These online platforms include blogs, wikis, media (audio, photo, video, text) sharing tools, networking platforms. According to Ahn (2011) [1] he defines Social Networking Sites (SNSs) as media platform and makes use of Web 2.0 standards that enable people to make connection and communication with each other within their bounded network. It is a platform to encourage information sharing, communication, and social interaction among students and instructors [2- 5].

The original social networking sites Classmates.com was founded in 1995. It was mainly created for associating with classmates and fellow workers from college, school, workplaces and the U.S. military [6]. The sites did not have features for the users to create profile or list Friends until years later. SixDegrees.com established in 1997, was the first social networking site to have features to create profile, friends lists [7]. The sites operate for a short period of time and closed its service in 2000. Friendster was launched in 2002 and it is popular amongst teenagers in Asian countries [7]. My Space was started in 2003 and it is a replica of Friendster [7]. Hi5 was launched in 2003; LinkedIn was established in 2003 and was first accepted and used by professional networking. Orkut was launched in 2004 owned and run by Google's network, Facebook was established in 2004. Facebook sites which is based in North America, is the specifically popular social in India. YouTube was launched in 2005. Twitter was created in 2006 and rapidly gained worldwide popularity during 2007, Bharat student was launched in 2007 and is India's largest free websites, Academia.edu launched in

2008, is world's popular academic site for researchers to communicate and share research papers through. Instagram (also known as IG or insta) launched in 2010 is a photo and video sharing site owned by Facebook, Inc. Google+ pronounced as Google Plus was established in 2011 owned and operated by Google. Nowadays more than 100 Social Networking Sites exist and a list with timeline can be found in alphabetical order in Wikipedia [8].

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A. Social Networking Sites use in higher education

Social networking sites have gain good interest in educational sector. Singh and Gill (2015) [9] study shows that a maximum number of students were acquainted with the using social networks for academics purpose. It was revealed that Facebook is the most popular social networks among the students and they used it for social connection and entertainment. It has perceived that long time consuming and concern of improper use of profile are the prime barrier for using such websites. It is also noted that social networks may be employed for applying for further benefits in libraries system and in recent happening updates.

Manjunatha (2013) [10] presented a use practice of social networks by the college students. The researcher used a survey procedure for data collection from 500 respondents from different higher education institutes throughout India. The result revealed that 80 percent of students use social networks, majority of students spent up to 10 hours per week regularly, 48% reportedly use social networks to maintain contact with friends, over 95% responses were in favorable view that social networking sites provide a platform for re-establish contact with lost friends, retaining current networks and exchange of knowledge, notions and viewpoints. Exchange of messages (38%) and chatting (36%) were

the key objective of usage of social networking sites by students. Meanwhile, it is also believed that such sites had to be treated with caution respecting others privacy. Students were already aware about the risk involved in these sites is a good sign that college students not just techno-savvy and socially active through social networking sites but they also hold social consciousness.

Parvathy and Suchithra (2015) [11] presented an overview into implications of social networks usage on the youth consciousness. The authors had a comprehensive study on the beneficial impact and its support to the community also its influence in sharing of expertise, facts and way that help students academically and in their research work. It further boosts creativity of an individual. On the flip side of Social network, the youth must be aware of the different bullying forms and lack of concentration in normal activities that transform the person's behavior or manner. They recommended that individuals have to be more careful when using Social networking sites as every technology has both its pros and cons.

Subramani (2015) [12] aimed to monitor the downloading manner of the students in university. Survey technique was used to collect data from 482 students. The results shows that Google is popularly accepted social networking sites among the students. The downloading manner of the students including the utilization of computer software, video and audio materials, online books, online journals, online dissertations, scientific articles and power point presentations is disoriented from academics. However result shows lack of knowledge and awareness on the use of social networking sites for academics by the university students. Researcher has further suggested the need to educate students and to introduce separate study program eliminating the anxiety and notion.

Bharucha (2018) [13] aimed to gather evidence on the effectiveness of social web on student's experience. Structured questionnaire via email was sent and 568 respondents received and an in depth interview and reflections of 250 students from 568 respondents. Research revealed the popularity of social media among students, frequency of visit at an average of two to three times a week and they use these sites mainly for profile and updates checking. Maximum number of students revealed that they use it basically to remain in contact with folks and relatives. Results also revealed as a useful tool in business education and as a learning media. The use of Facebook tool has enhanced interaction between students and teacher and students have gain benefits on material sharing and other related post. Further majority of students were already convinced with the power of social media as they are using it regularly. Besides connecting with families and communities it also encourages collaborative learning among peer to peer and increases job visibility. On the other side, the study revealed that continual partial attention, conflict with parents, superficial way, and reduction in grades are some of the pitfalls of using social media.

Narasimhamurthy (2014) [14] try to find a response on the effectiveness and efficiency of social networking sites on young adults in socialization, entertainment,

self-status seeking and information seeking. Based upon survey of 450 young adults, the present study examines the impact of culture and gender on why Indian individuals use the social networking sites. The present work noted that constantly interrelated self-construal can prefigure the four reasons for young adults to use social networking sites: socialization, entertainment, self-status seeking and information seeking. It is also observed that the gender gap in information seeking and self-status seeking; with adult male is higher in self-status seeing and with adult female being higher in information seeking.

#### *B. Purpose and benefits of Social networking sites*

According to Fernández & Gil-Rodríguez (2011) [15] they consider that social networks provide opportunities for the collective construction of knowledge, provide opportunities for carrying on with the discussion outside class, collaborative projects among group members [16]. For contributing and sharing of experiences, ideas, resources, course materials, discuss events and activities among students [18, 19], development skills for future employment [18], improve motivation and decrease drop-outs [19, 20], promote sharing of resources and knowledge acquisition [15, 21].

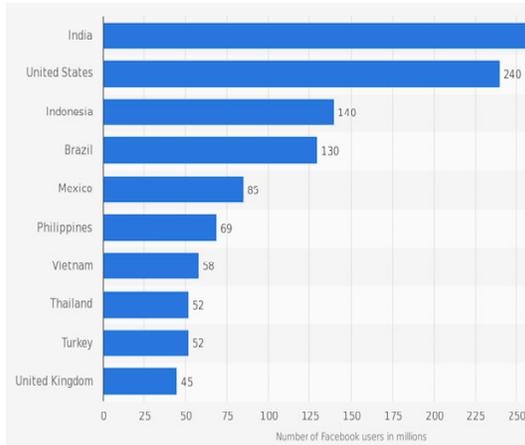
#### *C. Social networking sites amongst the youth in India*

In past few ten years Social networks have changed both local and global communication dramatically. Within these few ten years there has been significant increase in the use and applications of social networks in India. As a matter of fact, India ranked number 2 on the list of top 10 countries with the maximum number of internet users in the world and therefore India has the opportunity to quickly developing as technologies sector in Asian countries, as the Social network penetration is growing at a very high speed [22, 23].

In India, social network penetration was 122 million in 2011. It increased to 142.23 million in 2015. In 2016 it was 168 million and at present in 2017, number of user has increased to 296.3 million. According to estimates, in 2018 there were around 326 million social networking sites users in India. The most widespread social networking sites in India were YouTube and Facebook, pursued by social app WhatsApp. By 2021, Facebook is forecast to reach close to 319 million users in India [22, 23].

According to latest statistics India is by far the majority of Facebook users since April 2018 with 270 million active users followed by United States, Indonesia, Brazil, and Mexico. Territory wise, majority of users are from Asia-Pacific (947 million) next Europe (381 million) and US & Canada (242 million). Statistics reports present the lead countries appertaining to number of Facebook users since April 2018, in millions. India is also by far the highest number of WhatsApp users with over 50 million active users in May 2014, as well as the large country by the number of monthly active users, then 70 million in October 2014. India remains the biggest market for WhatsApp as it reached 200 million monthly active users as in February 2017. Statistics reports present the lead countries by number of Facebook users as of April 2018, in millions and the

number of WhatsApp members (millions) from 2013 – 2017 [22, 23].



**Fig. 1.** Number of Facebook users in millions since 2018.

**Table 1: The number of WhatsApp members.**

Date	Users (million)
2013	400
2014	600
2015	900
2016	1000
2017	1500

### III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Q1. What will be the level of usage of Social networking sites by university students?

Q2. What are the potential benefits of using Social networking sites for education?

Q3. What are the negative effects of Social networking sites?

Q4. What are the problems faced while using Social networking sites?

### IV. METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in this study is a quantitative design consisting of a survey questionnaire in hard copy comprised of twenty (20) questions with 484 respondents administered between Augusts - December 2018. The questionnaire was designed to collect student's demographic characteristics such as age, gender, course and department, preferred choice of social networking sites by students, mode of access, reasons, frequency of visit per day, impact on lifestyle, and use of social networking sites for education and challenges or problems faced on social networking sites. The data were collected from undergraduate and postgraduate students of Martin Luther Christian University which included students from department of Social Work, Psychology, Management of Commerce Studies, Music, Tourisms and Travel Management, Computer Sciences, Christian Studies and Peace Initiatives, Allied Health Sciences, Environment and Traditional Ecosystems, English and Communication.

### V. RESULTS

Q1. What will be the level of usage of Social networking sites by university students?

To answer the first research questions, Table 2-5 presents the results of the level of usage of Social networking sites by students.

Table 2 shows the demographics information of the respondents by age group and gender. According to Table 1 most of the respondents are between age group 18-24 (87.8%), 25-35 (9.7%), 36-45(2.3%) and 46+ (0.2%). Furthermore, mostly the respondents are female (61.4%), male (38 %) and others (0.6%).

Table 3 shows the demographics information of the respondents by course and department. According to Table 3 major part of the respondents are postgraduate students (59.7%). Furthermore, mostly the respondents are female (61.4%), male (38 %) and others (0.6%).

**Table 2: Distribution of student's demographic information by Age and Gender.**

N = 484	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group		
18-24	425	87.8
25-35	47	9.7
36-45	11	2.3
45+	1	0.2
Gender		
Female	297	61.4
Male	184	38.0
Others	3	0.6

**Table 3: Distribution of Social networking sites usage by Course and Department.**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Course		
Undergraduate	289	40.3
Postgraduate	195	59.7
Department		
Allied Health Sciences	114	23.6
Psychology	103	21.3

Management and Commerce Studies	66	13.6
Social Work	50	10.3
Computer Sciences	49	10.1
Environment and Traditional Ecosystems	25	5.2
Music	25	5.2
English and Communication	21	4.3
Tourism and Travel Management	16	3.3
Christian Studies and Peace Initiatives	15	3.1

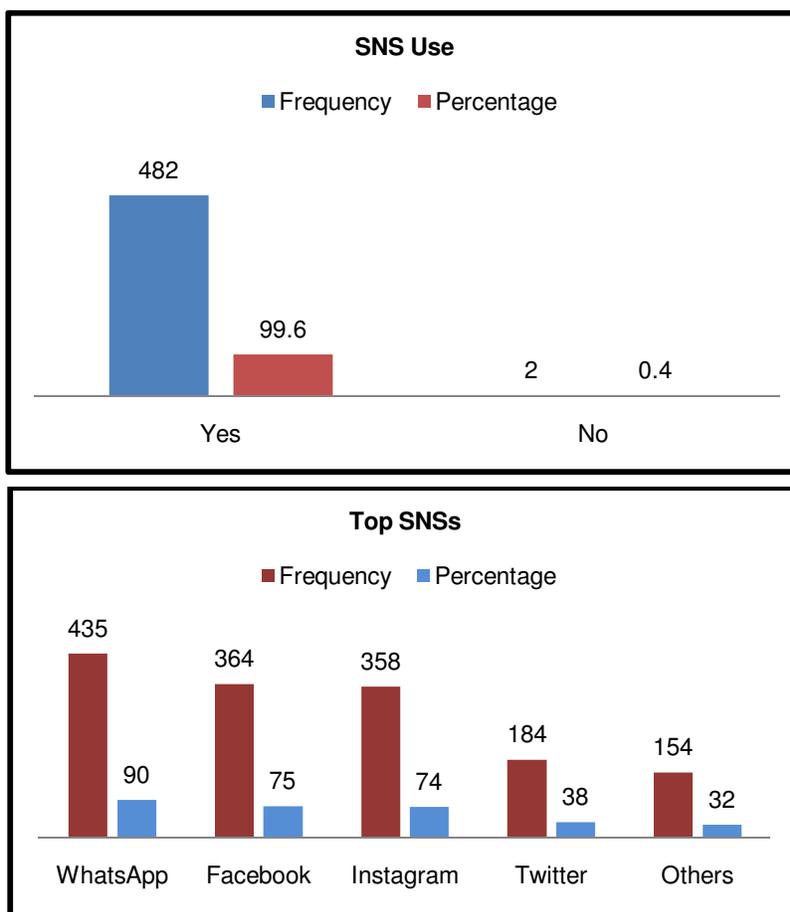


Fig. 2. Frequency distribution of Social networking sites Ranked by Students.

Fig. 2 shows that most of the students are using Social network websites (99.6%) and the top three social networking sites ranked by students were WhatsApp (90%), Facebook (75%) and Instagram (74%). Table 4 shows that maximum number of students claimed that they used these sites basically for keeping in touch with friends (86.6%), for education or

assignments (78.5%) and for entertainment (73.1%) purposes. Students preferred to use mobile phones (81.6%), laptop (25%) for accessing Social networking sites, and frequently students visit these sites at an average of 1-4 hrs per day (52.9%) and less than 1 hr (21.7%).

Table 4: Social networking sites used by University Students.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reasons for using Social networking sites		
Keeping in touch with friend	419	86.6
Entertainment	354	73.1
Time pass	336	69.4
Making new friends	324	66.9
Planning events	317	65.5

Others	101	20.9
Preferred mode of access		
Mobile Phones	395	81.6
Laptop	122	25
All of the Above	77	15.9
PC	21	4.3
Frequency of Visit per day		
Less than 1hr	105	21.7
1-4hrs	256	52.9
4-8hrs	82	16.9
8-10hrs	21	4.3
Above 10hrs	11	2.3

**Table 5: Distribution of Impact on Lifestyle.**

N = 484	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social networking sites influence on Lifestyle		
Communication	440	90.9
Travelling	398	82.2
Hobbies	390	80.6
Appearance	380	78.5
Games	374	77.3
Others	122	25.2
Features of Social networking sites		
Likes	394	81.4
Posts	365	75.4
Comments	360	74.4
Others	103	21.3

Result from Table 5 shows the influence of social networking sites on lifestyle of students with communication (90.9%), travelling (82.2%), hobbies (80.6) and appearance (78.5). The top three features of social networks frequently used by students were likes (81.4%), posts (75.4%) and comments (74.4%).

Q2. What are the potential benefits of using Social networking sites for education?

To answer the second research questions, Fig. 3 and Table 6 presents the results for the usage of social networking sites for studies its purpose and benefits of using social networking sites for studies.

Results from Table 6 shows the reason for using social networking sites for studies and they are for Collaborative learning (63.8%), for Resource and material sharing (63.8%) and for Multimedia resources and support (39.7%).

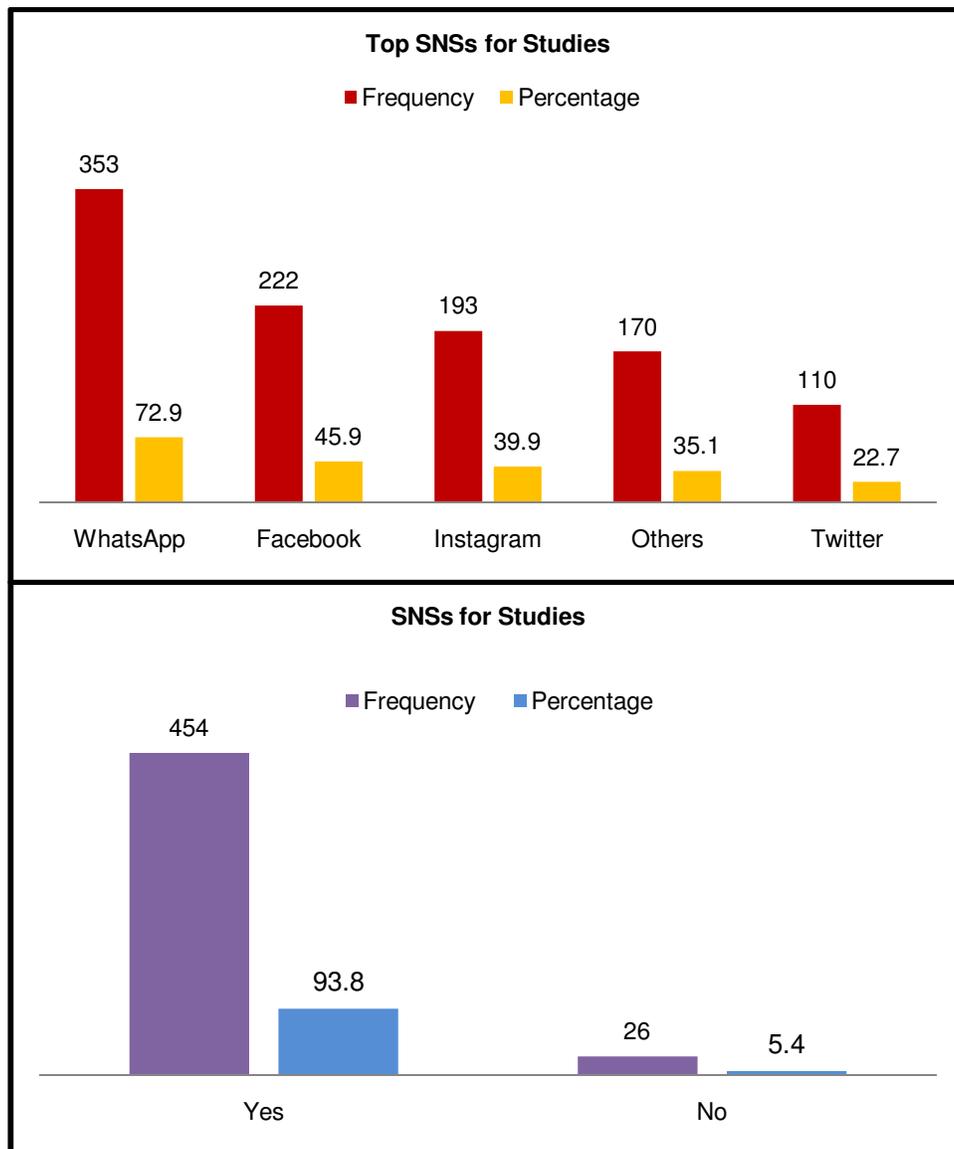
**Table 6: Purpose and Benefits of Using social networking sites for studies.**

Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Purpose of using social networking sites for studies		
Education/assignments	380	78.5
Collaborative learning	309	63.8
Resource and material sharing	309	63.8
Multimedia resources and support	192	39.7
Others	1	0.2
Benefits of using social networking sites in Studies		
Flexibility, learn anytime and anywhere	317	65.5
Skills in technology increase	261	53.9
Communication skills improved	248	51.2
Interaction with teacher/students	198	40.9
Encourage collaborative learning	197	40.7
Others	5	1

Fig. 3 shows maximum number of students use social networks for studies (93.8%) and top three social networks for studies ranked by students are WhatsApp (72.9%), Facebook (45.9%) and Instagram (39.9%).

Table 7 presents the advantages of using social networking sites such as opportunities for self –

development including Career (62.6%), Course (58.9%) and Community building (32%). Another advantage includes Information gathering such as general knowledge (76.9%), up to date with new ideas (69.2%) and up to date with science (25.2%).



**Fig. 3.** Frequency distribution on Social networking sites use for studies.

**Table 7: Opportunities and Information gathering.**

	Frequency	Percentage
Opportunities for self-development		
Career	301	62.6
Course	285	58.9
Community building	155	32
Digital marketing	130	26.9
Others	9	1.9
Information gathering		
General knowledge	372	76.9
Up to date with new ideas	335	69.2
Up to date with Science	122	25.2
Others	1	0.2

Q3. What are the negative effects of Social networking sites?

To answer the third research questions, Fig. 4 presents the results for the negative effects of Social networking sites and 44.6% expressed the negative effects of

Social networking sites while 31% not sure of its negative effects and 24% expressed no negative effects. Some of the major negative effects are time management (44.6%), studies (33.1%), sleep (31.6%), health (16.9%) and others (2.7%).

Q4. What are the problems faced while using Social networking sites?  
 To answer the second research questions, Table 8 presents the results for the problems faced by students on social networking sites.

Table 8 shows the results of the problems faced by students on social networking sites. Time concern (58.7%), security and privacy concerns (54.3%) are the main concerns mostly reported by students followed by lack of trust between members (31.4%), low academic performance (17.4%) and cyber bullying (17.4%).

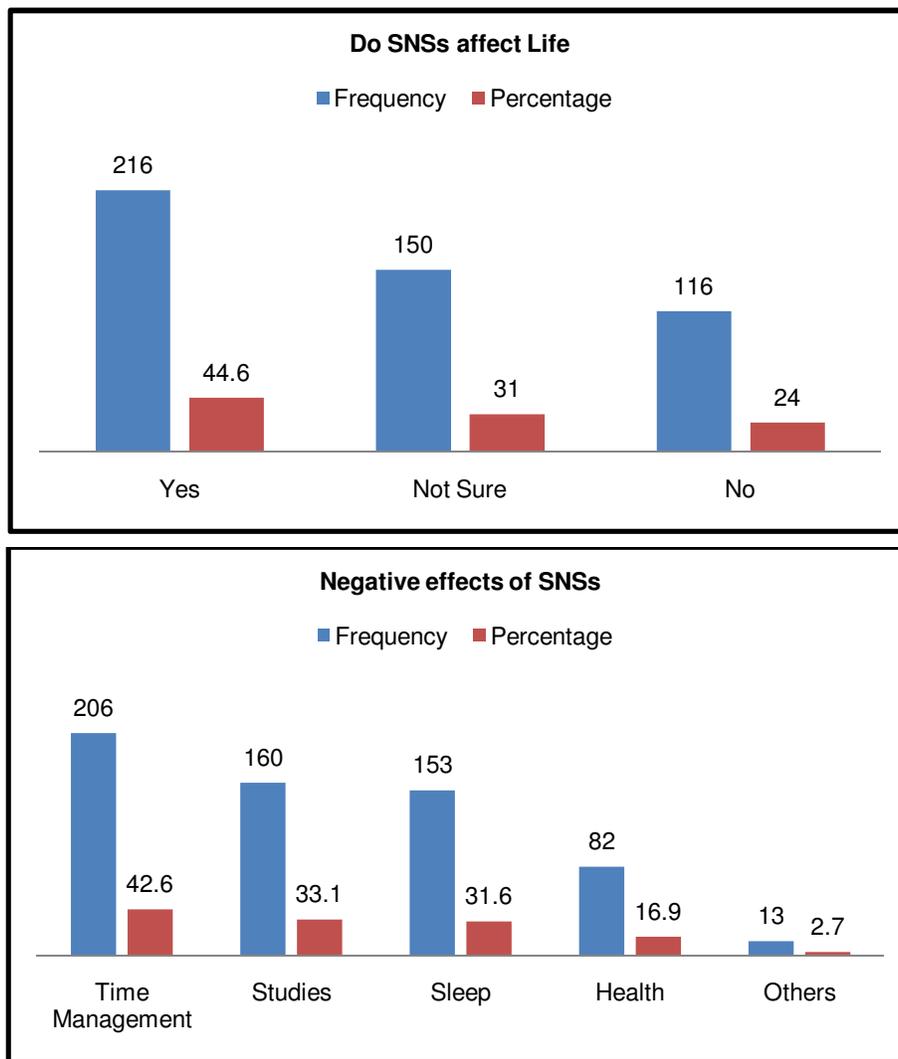


Fig. 4. Negative effects of social networking sites.

Table 8: Problems faced on social networking sites.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Time concerns	284	58.7
Security and privacy concerns	263	54.3
Lack of trust between members	152	31.4
Low academic performance	84	17.4
Cyber bullying	84	17.4
Others	13	2.7

## VI. DISCUSSION

The distribution of social networking sites usage among the post graduate and undergraduates students indicates that majority of the students (99.5%) are using Social networking sites and the top three SNS ranked

by students were WhatsApp (90%), Facebook (75%) and Instagram (74.2%). The students claimed that they used these sites mainly for communication (90.9%), for keeping in touch with friends (86.6%) and for entertainment (73.1%) purposes. Students preferred to use mobile phones (81.6%), laptop (25%) for accessing

Social networking sites, and frequently students visit these sites at an average of 1-4 hrs per day (52.9%) and less than 1hr (21.7%). Results also shows majority of the students use social networking sites for self development for self-development such as Career (62.6%), Course (58.9%) and Community building (32%). Findings for information gathering are general knowledge (76.9%), up to date with new ideas (69.2%) and up to date with Science (25.2%). Similar findings have been observed in various populations in India and across the country [9-14].

Results also revealed the preferences of students using WhatsApp (72.9%) and Facebook (45.9%) for studies. Similar findings have been observed the use of Social networking sites for studies [24- 28]. Results shows three reasons of using SNS for studies which included assignments (78.5%), collaborative learning (63.8%), resource and material sharing (63.8%), and collaborative learning (51.3%). The students have also identified three main advantages of using SNS for studies they are Flexibility, learn anytime and anywhere (65.5%),

Skills in technology increase (53.9%), Communication skills improved (51.2%), Interaction with teacher/students (40.9%) and Encourage collaborative learning (40.7%). Similar findings have been observed the use of Social networking sites for collaboration [29], as a platform of communication with other group members for collaborative project [15, 17, 21].

When look at some sensitive issues regarding the usage of SNS, the results revealed that 44.6% of students expressed the negative effects of SNS and they are time management (42.6%), studies (33.1%), sleep (31.6) and health (16.9). The problems on the other hand are time concern (58.7%), security and privacy issues (54.3%), Lack of trust between members (31.4%), Low academic performance (17.4%) and cyber bullying (17.4%). Similar findings have been observed in various populations in India and across the country [9, 13, 30]. Table 9 and 10 presents the comparison results by demographic, top choices of SNSs and frequency of SNSs usage.

**Table 9: Comparison Results of SNSs Usage by Demographic.**

Results	Year	Female	Male	PG	UG	Age
Singh & Gill	2013	52.2	47.7	60.4	73.45	25-20
Manjunatha	2013	29	71	—	—	18-26
Narasimhamurthy	2014	45.11	54	26.04	28.13	21-23
Bharucha	2017	46.65	49.65	62.5	37.5	21-23
<b>My Result</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>59.7</b>	<b>40.3</b>	<b>18-24</b>

**Table 10: Comparison Results of Top SNSs Choice and Frequency of usage.**

Results	Year	WhatsApp	Facebook	Other SNSs	Frequency of usage
Singh & Gill	2013	—	84.7	43.6	Less than 1hr
Manjunatha	2013	—	—	—	5-10 hrs
Parvathy & Suchithra	2015	40	36	—	9-10hrs
Khurana	2015	—	75	15	More than 2hrs
Bharucha	2017	—	81	70	Less than 1hr
<b>My Result</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>1-4 hrs</b>

## VII. CONCLUSION

The findings from the survey study showed that the university students were already using social networking sites frequently at an average of 1-4 hrs per day. The popular social networks ranked by students were WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram. However they claimed to use these sites mainly for keeping in touch with friends and socializing. Apart from socializing they also use these sites for education and majority of the students identified the reason for using social networking sites for education mainly for resource and material sharing, group projects and for collaborative learning. Students have also identified two main advantages for using social networking sites such as opportunities for self-development (career, course, job opportunities) and information gathering (general knowledge, up to date with new ideas and current affairs).

On the other side of Social networking sites has some limitations they are time concern, security and privacy issues, lack of trust between members are some of the challenges faced by the students.

## VIII. FUTURE SCOPE

Since the participants of the study were confined to one university, future studies may consider engaging and involving the students from various institutions and departments to assess the effectiveness of using Social networking sites by students. In the present work, the survey was conducted focusing on education and social usage only, future scope may consider on other aspects of social networking sites usage i.e. on health, business, politics and others.

**Conflict of interest.** The authors testify that there is no conflict of interest of any form over this research.

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