

# The Use and Implications of Online Social Networking to the Students: A Literature Review

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to review the current published researches focusing on the use of online social networking (OSN) particularly on Facebook by the students. The aim of the review is to explore the students' profile of OSN activities and the use implications of OSN to the students. The conducted review covers the previous empirical researches which is divided into the following themes: (a) Students' usage profile; (b) Students' attitudes towards OSN; and (c) Implications of OSN use to the student. The conclusions overall show that OSN thus far is use mainly by students for social reason and very little intention by students for formal learning. However, there are potential of OSN in helping students in informal learning by improving students' social abilities which will eventually increase their learning abilities particularly among the passive or quiet student. Despite being important to the students, few possibilities of risks of the OSN to the students are OSN obsessive usage which may affect their educational achievement. Other harmful effects reported due to the use of OSN among the students are immoral related behaviour.

*Keywords:* Online social networking; use, implications; facebook; students

## Abstrak

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menilai penyelidikan semasa yang menfokus kepada penggunaan rangkaian sosial dalam talian (OSN) terutamanya Facebook dalam kalangan para pelajar. Tujuan penilaian ini adalah untuk meninjau profil aktiviti penggunaan pelajar terhadap OSN dan kesan penggunaannya ke atas pelajar. Kajian empirikal yang lepas dibahagikan kepada tema-tema berikut: (a) Profil penggunaan pelajar; (b) Sikap pelajar terhadap OSN; dan (c) Implikasi penggunaan OSN kepada pelajar. Kesimpulan kajian mendapati tujuan utama pelajar menggunakan OSN adalah untuk bersosial dan sangat sedikit pelajar menggunakannya untuk pembelajaran formal. Namun begitu, OSN berpotensi membantu pelajar dalam pembelajaran tidak formal dengan menambahbaik kebolehan bersosial yang akhirnya akan meningkatkan kebolehan pembelajaran terutamanya dalam kalangan pelajar yang pasif atau pendiam. Di samping berfaedah kepada pelajar, beberapa kemungkinan risiko OSN terhadap pelajar adalah penggunaan berlebihan OSN yang boleh mempengaruhi pencapaian pendidikan. Kesan negatif lain penggunaan OSN adalah tingkah laku tidak bermoral.

*Kata kunci:* Rangkaian sosial dalam talian; penggunaan; implikasi; facebook; pelajar

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

At the present time, few different types of electronic devices such as personal computers, tablets as well as the mobile smart phones facilitate and make easy millions of modern Malaysian students use Online Social Networking (OSN). One type of the internet online applications that has grown rapidly in prevalence and popularity in recent years is OSN on the internet (Pempek *et al.*, 2009). OSN is the latest online communication tools that allow users to create public or semi-public profile, create and view their own as well as other users' OSN and interact with people in their networks (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). OSN websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace and You Tube are member-based internet communities that allow users to share their profile information, pictures and videos to communicate with other online members in innovative ways (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). While youngsters and teenagers relish the opportunities lived through the OSN, there are also possible problems related to OSN that may already exacerbate serious problems among the youngsters and teenagers. Hence, it is also crucial to look into this topic as one of an important area of studies in Malaysia.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this article is to review the current published research studies focusing on the students' use and implications of OSN. It is an exploratory research so that it is expected to facilitate in building foundation on the future empirical studies of OSN in Malaysia. Document analysis' which is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted is utilized in this review. A set of articles related to OSN which were search from the electronic databases using the keyword 'Online Social Networking', 'Facebook' and open-

ended search on the papers cited in some of the articles were carried out. The electronic databases used for the literature are Emerald, Science Direct, Ebsco Host and some articles are from the search in Google Scholar. The articles were collected and saved in the hard disc since August 2012. Reading and study of the articles took place since October 2012.

### ■3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this article is to review current published research studies focusing on the use of OSN particularly Facebook which is one of the most popular OSN. The literature is hoped to help in building foundation on future empirical studies of OSN in Malaysia.

#### 3.1 Background of Online Social Networking (OSN)

Internet is a powerful tool that changes the way people communicate with each other. One of the most revolutionary effects of the internet is as a mean of communication. One type of the online applications that has grown rapidly in prevalence and popularity in recent years is Online Social Networking (OSN) on the internet. Online Social Networking sites (ONSs) such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace and YouTube are member-based internet communities that allow users to share their profile information, pictures and videos to communicate with other online members in innovative ways. OSNs also allow users to share their profile information, pictures and to communicate with other in innovative ways such as sending their online status updates as well as conducting a public or private online chat (Pempek *et al.*, 2009). Social network sites has been defined as web-based services that allow users to construct a public or private profile within a system, a list of users' friends and a view of their list of connections and those made by others within that system (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). Popular social network sites in Malaysia are Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (Ng, 2013).

#### 3.2 Facebook

Facebook was found in February 2004 in Harvard University and only acting as the University OSNs before opened the site to general public in 2006 (Sheldon, 2008; Urista, Dong, and Day, 2009). Facebook functions by allowing users to select one or more "networks" to which they will belong, such as a specific high school or university, a geographical area or city, or a company. Individuals who wish to use Facebook have to register themselves online and create a profile by using a valid e-mail address (Cain, 2008). Each user maintains a "profile," which is the webpage containing basic information such as the individual's name or nick name, year of graduation and home town, as well as personal information, such as his or her name and relationship status. Users may inform others about what they are doing by changing the "current status" message that appears at the top of the profile (Pempek *et al.*, 2009). Once an individual has joined Facebook, he or she can search for friend or just anyone and view the other user's profiles. A Facebook user can send a message to any other individual to ask if he or she agrees to be Facebook friends. If the request accepted, each individual would be listed as a friend on the other user's Facebook profile in the form of a hyperlink Facebook's users can also join groups or become a follower of the pages of their favorite celebrity, company, associations or places. This allows users with common interest to get together to support the organization or the celebrity. Facebook can also serve as a source of leisure due to the availability of games and applications (Kolek and Saunders, 2008).

#### 3.3 Students' Facebook Usage Profile

Previous research found that students mainly spend between 10 minutes and 60 minutes on Facebook per day (Christofides, Muise, and Desmarais, 2009; Joinson, 2011; Lampe *et al.*, 2006; Pempek *et al.*, 2009; Ross *et al.*, 2009; Sheldon, 2008; Stern and Taylor, 2007). Most of the students (79% of 97 students) reported that they spent between 10 minutes and 60 minutes on Facebook daily (Ross *et al.*, 2009). About 96% of 364 students logged onto Facebook from less than 10 minutes to 60 minutes every day (Stern and Taylor, 2007). Participants reported spending an average of 38.93 minutes on Facebook each day, with female students appearing to spend significantly more time on the network site than male students (Muise *et al.*, 2009).

Past studies reported that students had between 150 and 350 friends on Facebook (Christofides *et al.*, 2009; Ellison *et al.*, 2007; Lewis and West, 2009; Muise *et al.*, 2009). Majority had between 200 and 350 friends (Sheldon, 2008a). Students reported having a mean of 297.07 Facebook friends (Christofides *et al.*, 2009). Most respondents reported having 100 to 200 Facebook friends (Lewis and West, 2009). Facebook friends were generally peers of a similar age (West *et al.*, 2009).

Subrahmanyam *et al.* (2008) cited that students spend most of their time on reading or responding to notes or messages, reading comments (posts) on their page or wall, browsing friends' page (profile or walls), writing comments on friends' page, posting other people's wall or tagging photos. Study of online teen bulletin boards found that many visitors spend considerable time "lurking" or reading others' posts without posting any reply (Suzuki and Calzo, 2004). Students use OSN frequently to network, but research shows that students are also using OSN for academic purpose (Madge *et al.*, 2009). Communication on OSN was seen by students as fun and not serious (Lewis and West, 2009). However, students perceived OSN was used most importantly for social reasons, although it is sometimes used informally for learning purposed (Madge *et al.*, 2009).

Facebook can be used for different purposed with different interest and reason. Facebook was used most likely to keep in touch with friends from high school, or find out more about someone with whom they had a previous connection, even if that connection is as weak as sharing a class (Lampe *et al.*, 2006). For example, 97% of 286 students reported that high school friends had seen their profile (Ellison *et al.*, 2007). Students reported significantly more Facebook use involving people with whom they shared an offline connection-either an existing friend, a classmate, someone living near them, or someone they met socially rather than meeting new people or strangers (Bosch, 2009; Ellison *et al.*, 2007; Pempek *et al.*, 2009). Facebook was not generally used as a tool to meet new people online.

### 3.4 Effects of Using Facebook

Students use social networking websites effectively to observe content, disseminate information, engage in social interaction, and to express their identity (Pempek *et al.*, 2009). As example is when the students putting their Facebook status which is an update feature which allows users to discuss their thoughts, whereabouts, or important information with their friends. The Facebook feature also allowed students to comment their friend's status. This action actually opens opportunity for students to display their identities that actually allowed them to learn presenting themselves and connect with others (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). In a way, students would learn to be more engaging which may help in increasing their social abilities that eventually that will also help them in their learning abilities particularly among the passive or quiet students. This has been cited by Wheeler *et al.* (2008) where OSN activities have potential to improve student engagement and increase their participation in classroom, in particular among quieter students.

Haythornthwaite (2005) also described that what make social network site unique is not that they allow individual to meet strangers, but rather that enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks. As in the context of learning, one of the positive outcomes of OSN towards the students is that OSN could become a venue for students to learn, which may not just via a formal learning but also via informal learning method. Although students perceived OSN was used most importantly for social reasons, it is sometimes used informally for learning purposed (Madge *et al.*, 2009). As also cited by Wheeler *et al.* (2008) and Rifkin *et al.* (2009) OSN use in education are improving engagement, enhancing learning motivation, offering personalized course material and developing collaborative course materials and developing collaborative skills. OSN has becoming prevalent in the educational context that many educators are already exploring ways in which the tools can be utilized for teaching and learning (Boyd and Ellison, 2008; Selwyn (2009).

Teachers or educators can utilize OSN as a medium to communicate with their students and to be more engaging with them especially after the classroom period. As example is when teachers can create a public page or smaller closed group in Facebook for their classes to distribute homework or permission slips and share photos or videos from classroom activities or field trips. Students can also e-mail all the members of a group or just the teacher should they have any question pertaining to their learning. This eventually will help the students be more engaging in their learning and eventually could improve their studies' performance. It is hard to ignore Facebook potential within the education when we consider that many middle school and most high school students are online participating in discussions and groups. Facebook seems to be a natural venue for collaborative, student-led learning (Bosch, 2009). This is also have supported by Lockyer and Patterson (2008) that suggested that by collaboratively socializing, students can establish and actively communicate with the contact online, with the main aim of working towards particular outcomes of producing deliverables, in both online and offline modes.

Afendi, Mohamed Amin and Haslinda (2011) also have found that the result of a survey on Malaysian university students' perception shows that respondents mainly use OSN for informal learning such as communicating with peers and arranging meeting. This survey result is similar with Selwyn (2009) whereby students use OSNs and services which are usually centered on the informal aspects of education. Four other major benefits of OSN use in higher education are improving engagement, enhancing learning motivation, offering personalized course material, and developing collaborative skills (Wheeler *et al.*, 2008; Rifkin *et al.*, 2009).

However, despite being important to the students, there are also few possibilities of risks of the OSN posed to the students. Even though, there is no standard term for describing the OSN problems, in the internet-related problems however; a number of terms have been used including internet addiction, internet dependency, internet abuse, compulsive internet use and problematic internet use. Intensive use of OSN has been associated with neglect of other important areas of life such as sleep, educational and vocational achievement, a range of other interest and social relation. Users continue to use the computer despite spending too many hours on the machine and neglecting other priorities (Korkeila *et al.*, 2010). When students' priority is supposedly their studies and to excel in their studies, the obsession to OSN could be the deterrent as time which is supposed to be allocated for completing homework or doing their revision are utilized on OSN use. Few studies done in other countries have shown that the students' academic performance did affected due to the use of OSN. Research by Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) surveyed the undergraduate students in the USA found that OSN users (Facebook's user) had significantly lower GPAs compared to non-users. User also reported spending few hours studying per week than the non-users. In Malaysia, Ling *et al.* (2011) found that among impacts on the internet addiction among the internet users are insomnia, physical changes, inferiority, loss of concentration and loss of productivity. This finding is obviously showing alarming situation to teachers and parents as over-involvement or obsession with social networking by students can cause undesirable impacts on students' academic performance.

Another negative side of OSN use is which has been stated by Tavani (2002) is the online communities like Facebook and MySpace reveals the darker side of internet because users online communities can, under the shield of anonymity, engage in behavior that would not be tolerated in most physical communities. The behavior which is more incline towards the negative social impacts to the students like will cause more harms than good. These include online pornography, seen violent, racist content, bullying comments and gone to a meeting with someone first met online. These are among OSN risks that have been found by Livingstone, Bober, and Helsper (2005) in UK's children of 9 to 19 years old.

Even though most students generally did not encounter negative effects from Facebook use or any improper behavior (for example illegal drug use, nudity, and partial nudity). Stern and Taylor (2007) stated that the risks are still there for some students or teenagers to get involved in such behavior. Research by Boyd and Ellison (2008) discovered privacy concern of OSN include inadvertent disclosure of personal information, damaged reputation due to rumours and gossips, unwanted contact and harassment or stalking, surveillance-like structure due to backtracking function, use of personal data by third-parties, and hacking and identity theft still persist among the students. Other few negative effects typically include information that is revealed or misinterpreted, people trying to communicate with others who are not interested in doing so, and inappropriate messages or photos posted on walls or profiles (Stern and Taylor, 2007).

## 4.0 FINDINGS

Based on the literature review, there are adequately published empirical literature review on the use and effect of use of OSN among school students in other countries but only few studies found in Malaysia. The literature actually has facilitates in the understanding of general OSN practices, behavior and its implications to the students. Since this study reviews the available literature on the current studies

focusing on the students OSN practices with the aim to understand the general behavior of OSN usage among students and its implications to them, the literature review in fact has helps in building foundation on future empirical studies of OSN in Malaysia.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that OSN is undeniable acting as one of the most powerful tool on the internet use by millions of the students nowadays. Nowadays Facebook is one of the most popular OSN and the students spend on average of 60 minutes of their daily time with an average 350 friends generally peers of a similar age. Student perceived OSN use for most importantly for social reasons. However, OSN use opens up opportunity for students to increase their social abilities that eventually that will also help them in their learning abilities particularly among the passive or quiet students. OSN also could become a venue for students to learn, which may not just via a formal learning but via informal learning method. However, there are few possibilities of risks of the OSN to the students. Intensive use of OSN is associated with neglect of other important areas of life such as sleep, educational and vocational achievement, a range of other interest and social relation which will affect their studies. Other related risks recorded are social improper and immoral behaviour among student such as hacking and identity theft, unwanted contact and harassment or stalking, online pornography, seen violent, racist content and bullying comments and few more. Hence, from the literature, it is important to consider conducting more empirical studies on OSN among the students in Malaysia particularly among the Malaysian school students, in order to understand their OSN use behaviour and its implications to them since there are millions of them use OSN every day.

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