

# Knowledge, attitude, behavior, and practice of study on assessment of social networking among students and its impact on them

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## Abstract

**Background:** Social media networks offer a straight forward way to converse among people and sustain relationships among them. The use of Internet for Web-based medical education is still lacking in the current scenario.

**Objective:** The purpose of the study was to examine the usage of social media among college students, that is, how they use it for their medical education and how it affects their communication with others and their self-concept.

**Materials and Methods:** This cross-sectional study was carried out on 200 undergraduate medical students, in a tertiary care teaching hospital, Tamil Nadu. A self-administered questionnaire designed for the study was distributed among the students.

**Results:** Of the 200 students, nearly 84 (42%) students have started on social networking site during their I MBBS. Regarding the average time spent on social networking sites, 143 (71.5%) students spend more than 2 h and share social issues, personal issues, share jokes, etc. One hundred thirty (65%) students have installed medical apps, while 70 (35%) students have not installed any medical apps. The frequently accessed sites include Medscape, PGMED, USMLE, and others. Thus, this study highlighted the importance of utilizing the social media for the education and training.

**Conclusion:** The geographical scope of the study was limited to a single teaching-based center. Responses of the respondents are biased and so they may not reveal the true state in some conditions. Social network is a vast subject and hence, there is lack of in-depth analysis in this study.

**KEY WORDS:** Awareness, assessment, social networking, students, medical education

## Introduction

Online social networking and Internet communication is becoming wildly popular with adolescents and young adults.<sup>[1-5]</sup> New developments in the technological world have made the Internet an innovative way for individuals and families to communicate. Social media networks have created a phenomenon on the Internet that has gained popularity over the last decade.<sup>[2,6]</sup> People use social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to create and sustain relationships with others.<sup>[7]</sup> These social media sites let those who use them create personal

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profiles, while connecting with other users of the sites. Users can upload photographs, post what they are doing at any given time, and send personal or public messages to whomever they choose.<sup>[7]</sup> In this “information age,” social media sites seem to be growing in popularity rapidly, especially among young adults.<sup>[8]</sup>

Social media networks offer a straightforward way to converse with peers and get peer feedback, as well, which may influence a young adult’s self-esteem.<sup>[8]</sup> Facebook makes it simpler to communicate with multiple people at one time. Social media may also make it easier for users to monitor activities of people they have not seen in a while as well as reconnecting with new and old friends.

One of the major goals of medical education is to encourage students to maintain their knowledge of medical science by becoming lifelong learners. Adequate skills in information seeking and regular use of original scientific sources are key elements in this process. Additionally, it is believed that medical students need training to learn how to use Web-based search tools and techniques in order to find high-quality information resources. The purpose of the study was to examine social media use among college students, that is, how they use it for their medical education and how it affects their communication with others and their self-concept.

## Materials and Methods

### Study Area

This cross-sectional study was carried out in a tertiary care teaching hospital, Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, India.

### Subjects

Study population comprised of 200 undergraduate medical college students and interns. The study was carried out after obtaining institutional ethical clearance. A self-administered questionnaire designed for the study was distributed among the students who were present at the time of administration of questionnaire.

Questions regarding single/multiple account in social networking sites, name of their accounts, activity in social networking media—status updates, time line updates, average time spent on Internet, any usage of medical apps, their frequency, purpose of use of medical apps, etc were enquired. Verbal consent was taken before administering the questionnaire. They were told that the data being collected were anonymous, confidential, and for research purpose only and that their participation was voluntary. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS v.16. Group mean and standard deviation (SD), frequency distributions, and percentages were computed.

## Results

Of the 200 students, nearly 56 (28%) students have started on social networking site during their schooling, while 60 (30%) students have started during school to college transition

and majority of them have started during their college period. Among them, 124 (62%) students have only single account, while 76 (38%) students have multiple accounts. In this study, 4 (2%) students have responded that they have no account on social networking sites. The daily updation of time line was observed among 70 (35%) students, 29 (19.5%) students do it weekly, while 101 (55.5%) students update rarely. Status updates are done once or twice daily by 63 (31.5%) students, multiple times daily by 36 (18%) students, while 101 (50.5%) students do not update their status daily.

Of the total 200 participants, 126 (63%) students engage themselves in social networking sites any time, while 22(11%) students, 38(19%) students, and 14 (7%) students engage themselves during college hours, late evening, and late night, respectively. Regarding the average time spent in social networking sites, 143 (71.5%) students spend more than 2 h, while 51 (21.5%) students spend 30 min to 2 h daily and only 6 (3%) students spend less than 30 min per day on Internet sites. Nearly half (42%) of the students just read and keep quiet, while 58 (29%), 42(21%), 16(8%) students share social issues, personal issues, jokes, respectively on social networking sites. Among the subjects included, 93 (46.5%) students have deactivated their accounts once while 107 (53.5%) students have not deactivated their account.

Of the 200 students, 130 (65%) students have installed medical apps while 70(35%) have not installed any medical apps. The frequently accessed sites include Medscape, PGMED, USMLE, Skyscape, Oxford Handbooks, and so on. Majority of them use Medscape for reference. Of the 200 participants, 56 (43.1%) students use medical apps daily, while 14 (10.7%) and 4(3.1%) students access it only once weekly and once a month, respectively. Fifty-six (43.1%) students use medical apps very rarely. The purpose of use of medical apps includes looking into medical information (66.8%), drug references (14%), treatment purposes (11.5%), preparation of presentation (7.7%), and many more.

## Discussion

Social networking is important for college students for their future contacts among themselves. Nowadays, many social networking sites are available around the globe, mainly those sites that are focused on college students such as Facebook. com and MySpace. Many college students are now using different types of media according to their status of life to spend their time, such as mobile phones, television, and the Internet. Social networking sites, as well as email, instant messaging, blogging, and online journals have completely changed the way that adolescents interact and gather information.<sup>[9]</sup>

In this study, nearly 42% of the students have started on social networking sites after joining medical college. In a study conducted in the USA,<sup>[10]</sup> all the participants have responded that they have started on social networking after entering into university. The researchers matched this path of identity exploration and role experimentation with Erik Erikson’s development

**Table 1:** Pattern of use of social networking sites

Description	No. of subjects responded ( <i>n</i> = 200)
Starting on social networking site	
School	56 (28)
School to college transition	60 (30)
1 year of MBBS	84 (42)
Account in social networking site	
Single account	124 (62)
Multiple account	76 (38)
No account	4 (2)
Activity in social networking site time line updates	
Daily	70 (35)
Weekly	29 (19.5)
Rarely	101 (50.5)
Activity in social networking site—status updates	
Once/twice daily	63 (31.5)
Multiple times daily	36 (18)
Not every day	101 (50.5)
Time of activity in social networking site	
During college hours	22 (11)
Late evening	38 (19)
Late night	14 (7)
Any time	126 (63)
Time spent in social networking/day	
<30 min	6 (3)
30 min to 2 h	51 (25.5)
>2 h	143 (71.5)
Pattern of activity in social networking site	
Share social issues	58 (29)
Personal issues	42 (21)
Share jokes	16 (8)
Do not share anything—just read only	84 (42)
Account deactivation	
Yes	93 (46.5)
No	107 (53.5)

**Table 2:** Usage of medical apps among medical college students

Description	No. of subjects responded
Installed any medical apps ( <i>n</i> = 200)	
Yes	130 (65)
No	70 (35)
Frequently used medical apps ( <i>n</i> = 130)	
Medscape	80 (61.5)
Skyscape	3 (2.3)
Oxford clinical handbooks	7 (5.3)
Others—PGMED, USMLE, etc.	40 (30.7)
Frequency of use of medical apps ( <i>n</i> = 130)	
Daily	56 (43.1)
Weekly once	14 (10.7)
Once a month	4 (3.1)
Rare	56 (43.1)
Purpose of use of medical apps ( <i>n</i> = 130)	
Preparation of presentation	10 (7.7)
Look up medical information	87 (66.8)
Drug references	18 (14)
Treatment purpose	15 (11.5)

Figures in parenthesis denote percentages.

stages.<sup>[8,10,11]</sup> Erikson's theory suggests that adolescents between 13 and 18 years old will experience a period of psychosocial crisis—identity versus role confusion. While undergoing this development stage, adolescents become conscious about sexual identity, peer relationships, and other social interactions.<sup>[10,12]</sup> Most of the students used social networking site to maintain their contact with old friends, to find new friends, and for entertainment purpose. Apart from social networking, they access sites such as Google, Yahoo, Orkut and so on for entertainment purpose.

On social networking sites, 62% of the students have single account while 38% have multiple accounts. Most of the students use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and others. They share mainly photographs. A statistical data tells that more than 900 million objects that people interact with (pages, groups, and events). On average, more than 250 million photos are uploaded every day. Nearly 70% of the students spend more than 2 h on internet. Nearly 65% of the students access to social networking sites for more than 4 h a day in Northern Cyprus. In this study, 29% of them share social issues, 21% share personal issues, while the rest of them just read and keep quiet.

Only 35% of the participant students do time line updates every day, while the rest use occasionally. Status updates are done every day only by 30%, while 50% of the students update their status only once or twice a week. Most of our college students access to social networking sites at any time, while only a proportion (19%) of them access during late evening. This is in contrast with other study conducted in Mangalore.<sup>[7,10,13]</sup>

Social media sites empower users to take an active role in their own socialization process and in constructing their own self-identity.<sup>[14]</sup> A personal profile is the way users present themselves; they can include as much information as desired about themselves, including posting pictures. Due to digital technology, users can show considerable information about themselves and their friends. Self-disclosure is an identity challenge in emerging adulthood.<sup>[6,8]</sup> Self-disclosure helps by getting feedback from peers that helps develop a sense of self and strengthens existing relationships as well. The deactivation of the accounts was observed among 46% of the students. It is probably to the fact that social networking sites consume more time and affect academic performance. Among the subjects, 65% of the students have installed medical apps; the frequently used medical apps include Medscape, PGMED, USMLE, and others. The total of 66.8% students used for looking medical information, 14% used for referring drugs, while 11.5% used for treatment purpose.

Social networking sites have made it much easier for students to communicate with friends and family. The current study found that with so many people having busy lives or having friends and family that live far away, these sites have helped to maintain contact with those individuals that students rarely saw. It is believed that medical students need training to learn how to use Web-based search tools and techniques in order to find high-quality information resources.

## Conclusion

The geographical scope of the study was limited to a single teaching-based center. Responses of the respondents are biased and so they may not reveal the true state in some conditions. Social network is a vast subject and hence, there is lack of in-depth analysis in this study.

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