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RESEARCH ARTICLE

STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF USING FACEBOOK IN TERMS OF READINESS IN HAIL UNIVERSITY

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Manuscript Info	Abstract
	The study investigates the awareness of using Facebook in terms of readiness among students of primary education department in Hail University. In this study, Facebook as a tool for learning was the basis for the assessment of students' awareness and comparison in both genders. The sample consisted of 50 male and 50 female students from Primary Education department in Hail University. The results show the positive awareness of these students in terms of readiness. The male students' readiness does not correlate with the overall awareness. However, the female students' readiness was not correlated with overall awareness. It can be concluded that, students' awareness is not affected by the potential constraints and students in both genders have similar awareness. Findings also revealed students' concern about the availability and affordability of internet connection and the students-teacher online relationship which may cause real hindrance for social learning.

Introduction

The current global situation is repositioning the way everything including the learning is being done. Learning resources continues to be increasingly available on the internet, redefining the manner in which learning takes place. Focus is shifting from the classroom learning to life-long learning; and being educated is becoming more of an individual's ability to maneuver technological tools for interaction and communication (Mullen & Wedwick, 2008). Today's classroom is fast moving from inside the brick walls into 'wall-less' settings with neither boundaries of distance, geography or time (McLaughlin, 2005). Professionals, teachers, learners, etc from various parts of the world can collaborate together on projects or other forms of team work. Distance education has become far more commonplace than it ever was.

The human traffic on Facebook especially has generated an interest in its exploration for social learning, (Selwyn, 2009; Hung &Yuen, 2010) and especially as a tool to promote social learning considering the nature of the vast network of users (friends, friends of friends, the public, open and closed groups, etc) and a number of institutions across the world now use Facebook for supplementing classroom instructions. Research reports on its use are available from across the globe, especially in developed economies as well as developing nations (Tian et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2011; Hamann & Wilson, 2003; Fischman, 2008; Mazer et al., 2009; Coutts et al., 2007). Although, Facebook is used for social networking, especially among Saudi students in schools and collages (Aljasir, Woodcock & Harrison, 2013). There is no report yet on its use for purely social learning.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Facebook is the most popular Social Network Site (SNS) among college students (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009). Despite the popularity and extensive use of Facebook by students, its use has not made significant

inroads into classroom usage (Arteaga Sánchez, Cortijo & Javed, 2014). A major reason given by primary teachers for not using technology in the classroom apart from inaccessibility and cost is unfamiliarity and understand the advantages of its use over the challenges (Edwards, 2011). Many educators believe that social networking tools such as Facebook offer new educational affordances and avenues for students to interact with each other and with their teachers or tutors (Poellhuber & Anderson, 2011). However, little is known about their expertise with social networking or their interest in harnessing these tools for informal learning or collaborating with peers. This study aims to investigate the awareness of students from Primary Education department in Hail University of using Facebook.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions being considered in this study are:

1. What is the awareness of male students on using Facebook in terms of readiness?
2. What is the awareness of female students on using Facebook in terms of readiness?
3. Is there a relationship between the awareness of male students and female students on using Facebook in terms of readiness?

2. Background

Social Networking throughout the world has gained much importance and this is mainly due to the presence of the ICT. The SNS introduction has led to the vast usage of the PCs, tablets, laptops, etc. Information Communications Technology (ICT) hasn't experienced growth and development in Saudi Arabia since the global system of mobile (GSM) telecommunications was introduced (Sanou, 2013). There existed an era where only the upper class had access to a fixed telephone line in their homes.

The average undergraduate student is in possession of at least a mobile phone with facility to access the internet (Marshall, 2012; Amali et al., 2012). Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are among those most frequented (Lory, 2011; Coutts et al., 2007). SNSs are internet sites that provide subscribers with opportunity for networking with family, friends, colleagues and even strangers with whom they share common interests. Users can share ideas, exchange views, share audio or video contents, hold 'live' discussions online or 'chat', exchange photographs, etc. Sites including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc are accessed quite regularly by many young people (Amali et al., 2012; Lory, 2011; Coutts et al., 2007).

Facebook use in the classroom has been reported by researchers across the world. Schools in developed nations including America and the United Kingdom are already taking advantage of this tool. A number of developing nations including Japan, Hong Kong and China have also been reported to be leveraging on this tool (Morofushi &Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012; Lu &Churchill, 2012; Ham &Schnabel, 2011). However, Saudi Arabia and other developing nations seem not to have caught the 'bug' yet. The question then arise as to whether or not the same response achieved in the identified developed and developing nations can be duplicated in Saudi Arabia.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

The Simple random sampling method employed for sample selection. Since the Chi-square statistic is employed for correlation purpose in this study, the researcher employs the statistic rules of thumbs for sample size selection for chi-square. Therefore, the sample selected was 50 males & 50 females who are studying in Primary Education department from college of education, Hail University, Saudi Arabia.

3.2 Research Procedure

The procedure was used to collect data for the study is questionnaire. The Figure below shows the procedure that researcher follows to collect the data.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis will involve the use of both descriptive and inferential statistics. It focused on providing answers to the research questions and establishing the relationship between the dependent and independent variables involved in the research.

4. Findings

4.1 Awareness of male students on the use of Facebook

Male students were found to have a positive awareness of Facebook in terms of the variable examined in this study. They consider Facebook as a possible learning tool especially in relation to social learning.

No correlation was found between students' readiness and mean awareness, this observation is due to the concerns of students on the availability of required infrastructure for making Facebook a possible learning tool as expressed in their responses to the open-ended questions. Some of the issues raised include high cost of internet connectivity and affordability of ICT tools like computer systems, laptops and tablets; unstable power supply and the possibility that social networking will remove the teacher-student ethical gap and cause disrespect as well as the potential of social networking activities to distract students from academic work. There are mostly viewed from cultural perspectives owing to the form of relationship between younger and older persons among the people.

4.2 Awareness of female students on the use of Facebook

Correlation of students' mean awareness with awareness in terms of readiness shows no correlation for the variable of female students. In essence, the general positive awareness found from the descriptive data differs from the awareness based on the individual variable. They reported this as major constraints that constitute real hindrance to the educational utility of Facebook and in line with other findings of Bakia (2000), cost as a major factor in internet usage in higher institutions, in relation to campus use of technology. It's also in line with findings of (Ehrmann & Milam, 1999) reported that, using technology in the higher education typically represents additional costs, rather than cost reductions.

4.3 Relationship between the Awareness of male students and female students on using Facebook

There is a significant relationship between the awareness of male and female students on using Facebook in terms of readiness.

However, in spite of the higher number of respondents expressing concern over the use of Facebook, the responses to the questionnaire show students have a general positive awareness of Facebook in terms of readiness. The potential challenges identified obviously do not seem strong enough for Facebook to be discarded as an important tool.

5. Discussion

This study examined students' awareness of the use of Facebook. The awareness of male and female students were examined and compared. The findings of this study shows that the challenges of infrastructure in Hail city have no effect on the awareness of students on a learning tool as the results shows that in spite of the lack infrastructure, students perceive the use of Facebook positively in term of their readiness of the tool.

Furthermore, the findings show that internet access; the cost of ICT tools does not affect the awareness of students. The constraints experienced due to the nature of the tools students use for accessing Facebook do not affect their awareness. Male students are mostly restricted to the use of hand phone for accessing Facebook due to the cost of larger and more convenient gadgets; these places limitation on how much of the materials they can access and consequently, how useful the platform can be for social learning. Female students have access mostly to laptop and from their responses to the open-ended questions do not foresee any challenges with using Facebook. However, in spite of this difference, the awareness of both groups is the same.

5.1 Conclusion

This study shows that students' overall awareness of Facebook is positive in spite of the possible challenges identified by the students. Issues including internet access, the cost of ICT tools are very important considerations while the place of culture/tradition is also emphasized by students. Students feel online relationship may cause the removal or violation of the students-teacher boundary and thus bring about conflicts that may not be positive for social learning.
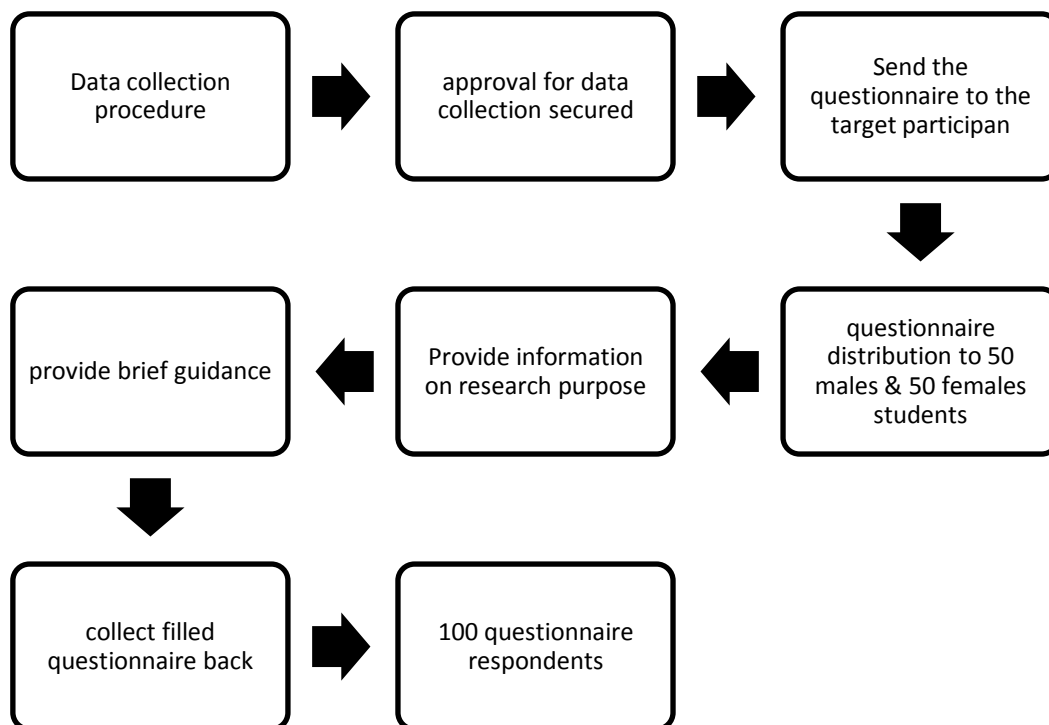

Figure 3.1 Research Procedure

Table 3.1: the data analysis methods employed in the study

Research question	instrument	Data analysis method
What is the awareness of male students' on using Facebook in terms of readiness?	Questionnaire	Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard deviation), inferential statistics (Pearson Chi-square)
What is the awareness of female students' on using Facebook in terms of readiness?	Questionnaire	Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard deviation), inferential statistics (Pearson Chi-square)
What is the relationship between the awareness of male and female students on using Facebook in terms of readiness?	Questionnaire	inferential statistics (Pearson Chi-square)

Table 4.1: the Chi-square statistics for male and female

	Pearson Chi-square	
	Readiness	Significance
Male	0.118	N.S
Female	0.197	N.S

S= Significant   NS=Not Significant

Table 4.2 Awareness of male & female students

Pearson Chi-square	
	Readiness
Male	.118
Female	.197
Overall awareness	.001

5.2   Recommendations

Future research should focus on areas not covered by this study, including the effect of differences in culture and traditions. This research involves only an awareness study other aspects for example, implementation, development, etc can be explored in future research. These are other important issues in relation to the use of a learning tool; that could bring to focus a critical issue that require attention and could constitute potential challenges for practical applications. Future studies can also focus on the awareness of teachers, school management, parents, etc.

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