Article

Exploring the Role of Social Networking Sites (SNS) in enhancing Student engagement among Degree College students across gender lines

Manzoor Hussain[*]
Fayaz Ahmad Loan†
Syed Uzma Kubravi‡

Abstract

This article investigates the role of social networking sites (SNS) in enhancing the student engagement of the degree college students in the Srinagar district of Kashmir, J&K, (India). Data was collected with the aid of a well-designed and structured questionnaire using Google forms. Responses from 770 students were analysed. The results provided empirical evidence which shows that students perceive social networking sites as an effective tool for enhancing student engagement. It was revealed that the majority of the students used social networking sites for engaging in group activities, course content, achievement of popular learning outcomes, learning beyond four walls of classroom and increasing their personal interaction with lecturers and students and making their interactions valuable. However, students have been cautioned to make judicious use of social networking sites.

Keywords
Social networking sites, student engagement, college, gender

1. Introduction
Social networking sites have procured an immense popularity among people all around the world, especially young college students. College students have embraced these sites as means to connect with their peers, disseminate information, build relationships and showcase their talents.

---
[*] Sr. Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, J&K
     Email: dr.manzoor_hussain@yahoo.co.in

†   Documentation Officer, Centre of central Asian Studies, University of
     Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K

‡   Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, J&K

They also use these virtual sites significantly in their academic life. In recent years, SNS have increasingly exposed the college students to a new way of communication and sharing of information. They have provided wonderful avenues and platforms where students can connect with their institutions, mentors, teachers and peers. These applications facilitate them to acquire knowledge and engage themselves with the research of the study to improve their knowledge base and develop their intellect. Hence, the growing role of SNS in the academic life of college students cannot be over-emphasized.

As social networking sites continue to influence the learning outcomes among college students, it raises an important question about its role in enhancing student performance. Nowadays, college students use these online sites to learn beyond four walls of classroom. More focus is given to self-learning activities rather than teaching. One important variable related to affect the learning outcome and academic performance is student engagement. Student engagement refers to the active participation in learning processes and course related activities in order to achieve desired outcomes. It is generally regarded to be among the best determinants of learning and personal development. The more students are engaged, the more they actively participate in learning processes, subsequently enhancing academic performance and higher levels of satisfaction. Since SNS have enormous potential for use to fulfil the learning goals and to facilitate aspects of student engagement by facilitating and maintaining social communications and interactions, many researchers have been conducted to explain the effective role played by social networking sites in enhancing student engagement. Yet, in Kashmir context, there is dearth of research on exploring the role of social networking sites (SNS) in enhancing student engagement among degree college students.

To this regard, this study contributes to knowledge by exploring the role of social networking sites in enhancing the student engagement. It starts with a discussion on existing relevant literature on social networking sites and student engagement in colleges. The statement of the problem, research design, data collection methods, findings and discussions were presented before conclusions were drawn.

2. Literature Review
2(a): Social Networking Sites
Social network sites can be defined as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share

a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). These sites allow people with common interests to create their communities online for exchanging and sharing ideas, data, information, knowledge and even wisdom through voice, text, images, videos and what not (Hussain, Loan & Yaseen, 2017). These sites are used to build personal blogs, personal websites, discussions forums, chat rooms and other social spaces in virtual environment accessible to users for communication and exchange of information. These sites indeed have changed the nature of interaction and collaboration among individuals and organizations.

Historically, social networking sites started with Six.Degrees.com in 1997, followed by others such as Live Journal, Friendster, LinkedIn, MySpace, Flickr, YouTube, and Facebook (Rohani & Hock, 2010). Hundreds of SNS are evolving since then but today, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram are by far the most popular social networking sites all around the world. They are playing a big and influential role decision making at the events of the global world economically, politically, socially and educationally (Zaidieh, 2012).

2(b): Student Engagement

Student engagement refers to the time and effort invested by students in achieving desired outcomes and participating in course-related activities (Kuh, 2009).It is the physical and psychological effort students devote to academic experience. It involves both in-class and out-of-class activities (Coates, 2007). It involves positive student behaviours, such as attendance, paying attention, and participation in class, as well as the psychological experience of identification with school and feeling that one is cared for, respected, and part of the learning environment (Olson & Peterson, 2015). Thus, student engagement is a multi-dimensional construct that can be measured with all the dimensions dynamically interrelated (Martin & Torres). Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004, 62-63), drawing on Bloom (1956), usefully identify three dimensions to student engagement: 1. Behavioural engagement: Students who are behaviourally engaged would typically comply with behavioural norms, such as attendance and involvement, and would demonstrate the absence of disruptive or negative behaviour. 2. Emotional engagement: Students who engage emotionally would experience affective reactions such as interest, enjoyment, or a sense of belonging. 3. Cognitive engagement: Cognitively engaged students would be invested in their learning, would seek to go beyond the requirements, and would relish challenge (Trowler, 2010).One can engage either positively or negatively along these

dimensions. Student engagement is vital as engaged students are more likely to perform well in exams and are less likely to drop out of institutions.

2(c): Social Networking Sites and Students' Engagement

Social Networking Sites (SNS) have emerged as wonderful platforms for effective communication and information sharing. In education sector also, these sites are emerging as a new medium through which students learn, and these come with a variety of functions, such as communicating with others, creating and sharing new content, and strengthening interactions among users (Park, Song & Hong, 2018). However, there is a debate about the potential of SNS to enhance student engagement. Several researches have been conducted in this regard. While some studies show that SNS have a positive impact on student engagement, some have come up with contradictory results. Many studies have confirmed that majority of students who spend more time on SNS platforms believe that they are more connected to their friends and colleagues than those who do not. As a result, SNS significantly increases their collaboration and involvement in activities. Park et al. (2018)[1] carried out a study entitled "The use of social networking services for classroom engagement- The effects of Facebook usage and the moderating role of user motivation". The study revealed that that students with more active Facebook use achieved significantly higher scores on student engagement than those with less active Facebook use. Diraditsile and Samakabadi (2018)[2] in their study revealed that all the participants used social networking sites in interacting with friends, connecting to their classmates for online study and for discussions on issues of national interest. They affirmed that social media has an implication in student learning as they exchange information. Faizi and Fkihi's (2018)[3] conducted a study which revealed that nearly all the students were greatly immersed in the social networks and used these for different purposes. In this vein, it was found out that Facebook was not only used by the students for social connectivity, but also as an educational space. The study further demonstrated that most of the surveyed students acknowledged the positive impact that this online social network has on improving their learning experience. Azeta et al. (2014)[4] study shows that SNS enhance collaborative learning and involvement in class activities. Another study by Zakana and Fomsi (2019)[5] showed that social networking sites such as Edmodo and Facebook are supportive learning tools that could promote students' engagement and motivation. Tal and Salaimeh (2020)[6] in their study commented that students' achievement is

directly related to their level and their talents. SNS Internet participation has been associated with increased student engagement. They further revealed that SNSs can improve student engagement and their impact on achievement. However, the study carried out by Koranteng et al. (2018)[7] found that SNS had no significant impact on student engagement. The study provided the empirical evidence which contradicts the argument that students perceive social networking sites as an effective tool for learning. Also, contrary to the above studies which posit that knowledge sharing impacts engagement, it was observed that there is no relationship between the two. Thus, there is still an ongoing debate about the potential of SNS in enhancing student engagement. Nonetheless, the use of SNS tools for promoting students' collaboration that may facilitate engagement varies with different societies and is overshadowed by some challenges and concerns. Considering this, the use of SNS for student engagement varies can be limited and this calls for investigations in different educational institutions according to their geographical and socio-cultural settings.

3. Research Design
a) Statement of the problem
The online social networking platforms have the huge potential to make communication and interaction easier and faster, to create and exchange the content. This is due to this fact that there is a rapid growth of these sites and wider penetration of the internet in the country. These sites have attracted all people especially college student. They are using social networking sites for collaborating and engaging themselves on their academic content, knowledge and studies, Nowadays, in Kashmir also, college students are rapidly exposed to this technology than ever before. This rapid adoption of SNS among college students has raised a question about exploring the role of SNS in the student engagement as student engagement is very essential for academic excellence and performance. Thus, this study aimed to explore whether the use of social networking sites has a role in enhancing student engagement among degree college students or not.

b) Data Collection tools and techniques
The universe consists of students of nine degree colleges of the Srinagar district, Jammu & Kashmir, India. The study followed a stratified random sampling method. The colleges belong to the three different strata, (1) four were male colleges (2) four were female (2) and (1) was general colleges (general colleges admit students from both genders). A sample

of 900 was chosen as the number of colleges was nine (9), however, only 770 (85.55%) responded to the questionnaire. As the study sought to measure the engagement of students using social networking sites, it was ensured that all participants are literates and also actively use SNS. As such Google forms were used for designing and administering the questionnaire. The distribution was done using social media groups such as Facebook and WhatsApp of the colleges. Self-reporting approach was used for data collection and participants were asked to indicate their positions on a 5-point Likert-type scale on their agreement or disagreement on the themes regarding social networks use and its potential to keep them engaged in learning activities.

c) Research limitations and future direction – Firstly, this study was conducted in the Srinagar district of Kashmir. Therefore, findings, conclusions and recommendations may not be applicable and reasonable to be generalized on whole Jammu and Kashmir. Secondly, this study was conducted on university students, ignoring the faculty members. Thus, future research could be possible towards faculty members in different degree colleges. To the authors' best reliance, this is the first and prime study to explore the role of social networking sites in enhancing student engagement among degree colleges in the Kashmiri context.

4. Findings of the Study
4.1: Respondents Demographics
After two months of administering the questionnaire, a total of 770 responses were received. Out of the total 770 responses used for the analysis, males were 362 (47.01 percent) and females were 408 (52.99percent). In terms of place of residence, 340 respondents (44.15 percent) belonged to rural areas and 430 (55.85 percent) to urban areas.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of respondents

Demographics	Value	Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	362	47.01
	Female	408	52.99
Place of Residence	Rural	340	44.15
	Urban	430	55.85
Stream	Science	243	31.60
	Arts	272	35.30
	Commerce	186	24.20
	Computer Science/IT	69	8.90

As far as the distribution of respondents by stream is concerned, 243 respondents (31.60 percent) were from the science discipline, 272 respondents (35.30 percent) were from the arts discipline accounting for the majority of the respondents who participated in the study. From the discipline of commerce, there were 186 respondents (24.20 percent). The discipline of computers and I.T had only 69 respondents representing 8.90 percent. Table 1 is a detailed representation of demographics of respondents.

4.2: Membership of respondents on SNS
To see the membership of social networking sites among degree college students across gender lines, the respondents were asked to reveal their responses.

Table 2: Membership on SNS

Member	Gender	
	Male	Female
Yes	362 (47.01)	408 (52.99)
No	0	0

The above table reveals that all 770 respondents were members of social networking sites. Out of 362 males, all 362 respondents reported to be members of SNS and out of 408 females, all 408 reported to be members of SNS.

4.3: Role of SNS in student engagement of respondents.
Social networking sites play a paramount role in the lives of degree college students. It could become an essential component of the educational environment if implemented effectively. With the help of social networking, learning is facilitated beyond classrooms. Engagement of students is one of the vital factors that propel students to succeed in learning activities and excel academically. Thus, it was imperative to see the role of social networking sites in the enhancement of student engagement among respondents. For this purpose, the researcher used five- point Likert scale classified as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree.

4.3.1: Engagement in a group
As per the data depicted in table 3, it is revealed that majority of the respondents; 451 respondents (58.60 percent) agree that SNS makes them feel engaged in a group, out of which 100 were female and 77 were male.

Table 3: Engagement with the group

SNS makes you feel engaged in a group			
Response	Male	Female	Total
Strongly Agree	77	100	177
Agree	172	279	451
Neutral	89	23	112
Disagree	24	4	28
Strongly Disagree	0	2	2
Total	362	408	770

Out of 177 respondents (22.98percent) who strongly agreed that SNS makes them feel engaged in a group, 279 were female in contrast to 172 males. Among 112(14.54percent) respondents who felt neutral, 89 were male and 23 were females. The table further reveals that only 28 respondents (3.63percent) disagreed; out of which 24 were male and only 4 were females. However, only 2 respondents (0.25 percent) strongly disagreed with the statement that "SNS makes you feel engaged in a group".

4.3.2: Engagement with the course content

Table 4: Engaged with the course content

SNS enables you to become more engaged with the course content			
Response	Male	Female	Total
Strongly Agree	99	89	188
Agree	169	244	413
Neutral	68	67	135
Disagree	25	7	32
Strongly Disagree	1	1	2
Total	362	408	770

Table 4 makes it evident that out of 188 respondents (24.41 percent) who strongly agreed with the statement that "SNS enables you to become more engaged with the course content", 99 were male and 89 were females. It is also found that the majority of the respondents i.e., 413 accounting for 53.66 percent agreed that SNS enables them to become more engaged with the course content, out of which maximum (244 respondents) were female in contrast to 169 males. While 135 respondents

(17.53 percent) with almost equal male-female ratio felt neutral, 32 respondents (4.15 percent) disagreed with the statement. Only 2 respondents (0.25 percent) strongly disagreed with the statement that "SNS enables you to become more engaged with the course content."

4.4: Achievement of popular learning outcomes

Table 5: Achievement of popular learning outcomes

SNS helps you to increases the achievement of popular learning outcomes			
Response	Male	Female	Total
Strongly Agree	91	76	167
Agree	163	238	401
Neutral	87	79	166
Disagree	20	13	33
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3
Total	362	408	770

The table 5 reveals that majority of the respondents i.e., 401 respondents (52.07 percent) agreed that SNS helps them to increase the achievement of popular learning outcomes, out of which majority comprised females i.e., 238 in contrast to 163 males. Among 167 respondents (21.68 percent) who strongly agreed with the statement, 91 respondents were male and 76 respondents were females. It is also found that a good number of respondents felt neutral about this statement, out of 166 respondents (21.59 percent), 87 were male and 79 were females. Regarding disagreement it was found that out of 33 respondents (4.28 percent) more males (20 respondents) disagreed than more females (13 respondents). The table further shows that only 3 respondents (0.38 percent) strongly disagreed with the statement that "SNS helps you to increases the achievement of popular learning outcomes".

4.5: Learning beyond four walls of the classroom
As per the table 6 it is clearly revealed that majority of the respondents i.e., 399 respondents (51.81 percent) agreed that SNS keeps them engaged in learning beyond four walls of the classroom, out of which maximum were female in contrast to males. Out of 212 respondents (27.53 percent) who strongly agreed, maximum were males as compared to female. 115 respondents (14.93 percent) were neutral, out of which more were males. While 32 respondents (4.15 percent) out of which 11 were male and 21 were females disagreed., only 12 respondents with 11 males and 1 female

strongly disagreed with the statement that "SNS keeps you engaged in learning beyond four walls of the classroom".

Table 6: Learning beyond four walls of the classroom

SNS keeps you engaged in learning beyond four walls of the classroom			
Response	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Strongly Agree	154	58	212
Agree	119	280	399
Neutral	67	48	115
Disagree	11	21	32
Strongly Disagree	11	1	12
Total	**362**	**408**	**770**

4.6: Interaction with lecturers and students

Table 7: Interaction with lecturers and students

SNS increases your personal interaction with lecturers and students and makes your interactions valuable			
Response	Male	Female	Total
Strongly Agree	83	78	161
Agree	214	230	444
Neutral	58	82	140
Disagree	7	17	24
Strongly Disagree	0	1	1
Total	362	408	770

From the above table 5, it is revealed that majority of the respondents i.e., out of 770 sample respondents, 444 respondents (57.68 percent) agreed that SNS increases their personal interaction with lecturers and students and makes their interactions valuable, out of which 214 respondents were male and 230 respondents were female. Out of 161 respondents (20.90 percent) who agreed to this statement, 83 respondents were male and 78 respondents were female. 140 respondents (18.18 percent) were neutral; 58 male and 82 females. As for the disagreement only 24 respondents (3.11 percent) disagreed to this statement. 1 respondent (0.13 percent) strongly disagreed with the statement that "SNS increases your personal

interaction with lecturers and students and makes your interactions valuable"

5. Discussions

- The study reveals that all degree college students were members of SNS. Social networking sites were reported to be used by both genders.

- As for the statement that "SNS makes you feel engaged in a group," the findings reveal that majority of the degree college students agreed that SNS makes them feel engaged in a group. It is also revealed that maximum number of degree college students also strongly agreed to this. Gender wise, more females in contrast to males affirmed that SNS makes them feel engaged in a group.

- The finding also reveals that majority of the degree college students agreed thatSNS enables them to become more engaged with the course content. Females are more likely to engage themselves with the course content on SNS. A good number of degree college students also strongly agreed with the statement that "SNS enables you to become more engaged with the course content".

- As for the response that "SNS helps you to increases the achievement of popular learning outcomes" the findings show that majority of the degree college students agreed. Gender wise, maximum females compared to males agreed that SNS helps them to increase the achievement of popular learning outcomes.

- The findings also reveal that majority of the degree college students agreed that SNS keeps them engaged in learning beyond four walls of the classroom. It also shows that gender wise maximum females in contrast to males agreed that SNS keeps them engaged in learning beyond four walls of the classroom.

- The study also shows that SNS increases the personal interaction with lecturers and students and makes their interactions valuable across both genders. However, in comparison to males, more females agreed that SNS increases their personal interaction with lecturers and students and makes their interactions more valuable.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The main objective of this study was to investigate the potential role of SNS in enhancing student engagement. In fact, based on the online survey we carried out amongst Degree College students, it was revealed that nearly all the respondents were members of social networking sites.

It was found that most of the surveyed students acknowledged that the online social network sites have a positive role in enhancing their engagement. Majority of the respondents agreed that SNS helps them in engaging in group activities, course content, achievement of popular learning outcomes, learning beyond four walls of classroom and increasing their personal interaction with lecturers and students and making their interactions valuable. However, some students are found that social networking sites haven't played a great role in enhancing student engagement. Social networking sites are here to stay and because the majority of college students use it, measures need to be implemented on how to address the negative consequences of SNS which tend to distract students and affect their academic performance effectively. The students must use social networking websites for beneficial purposes and take full advantage of the educational benefits that this online platform provides. Based on the findings of this study, following recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that faculty members of degree colleges should encourage students to use social sites academically (for e.g., maintaining close social relationships with their peers in their academic social networks, enabling them to participate more in academic work on these sites, etc).
- Proper strategy should always be followed by the instructors and their students so that they can plan and get the best out of the use of social networking in educational practices.

References

- Azeta, A. A., Eweoya, I. O., & Ojumah, S. (2014). Enhancing educational learning with social network platform. In 6th International Conference on Adaptive Science and Technology (pp. 1–4). Piscataway, NJ: IEEE.
- Boyd, D.M. & Ellison, N.B. (2007). Social Network Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13, 210-230.
- Coates, H. (2007). A model of online and general campus-based student engagement. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32(2), 121–141
- Diraditsile, K. & Samakabadi, G.G. (2018). THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION: THE USE OF FACEBOOK AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA. *Lonaka JoLT,* 9 (1)

- Faizi, R & Fkihi, S.E. (2018). INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCE: FACEBOOK AS A CASE STUDY. *International Conference e-Learning*. ISBN: 978-989-8533-78-4

- Hussain, M., Loan A.F. & Yaseen, G. (2017). The Use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) by the Post-Graduate Students. *International Journal of Digital Library Services*, 7(1), pp. 72-84. ISSN:2250-1142

- Koranteng, F. N., Wiafe, I & Kuada, E. (2018). An Empirical Study of the Relationship Between Social Networking Sites and Students' Engagement in Higher Education. *Journal of Educational Computing Research 0(0)* 1–29.

- Kuh, G.D. (2009) The National Survey of Student Engagement: Conceptual and empirical foundations. *New Directions for Institutional Research 2009* (141): 5–20.

- Martin, J. & Torres, A. (N.A). WHAT IS STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? Retrieved from https://www.nais.org./Articles/Documents/Member/2016

- Olson, A. L., & Peterson, R. L. (2015, April). Student Engagement, Strategy Brief. Lincoln, NE: Student Engagement Project, University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the Nebraska Department of Education. http://k12engagement.unl.edu/student-engagement.

- Park, E., Song, H.D. & Hong, A.J. (2018). The use of social networking services for classroom engagement? The effects of Facebook usage and the moderating role of user motivation. *Active Learning in Higher Education* 00(0), 1-15.

- Rohani, V.A & Hock, O.S. (2010) On Social Network Web Sites: Definition, Features, Architectures and Analysis Tools. *Journal of Advances in Computer Research*, 2, pp. 41-53

- Tal, S.A & Salaimeh, S.A. (2020). Effect of social media sites on student's engagements and achievements. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology,* 29 (7). pp. 12516 – 12520.

- Trowler, V. (2010). Student engagement literature review. *The Higher Education Academy*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322342119_Student_Engagement

- Veletsianos, G. & Kimmons, R. (2013). Scholars and faculty members 'lived experiences in online social networks. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 16(1), 43-50.

- Zaidieh, Y. J. A. (2012). The Use of Social Networking in Education: Challenges and Opportunities. *World of Computer Science and Information Technology Journal (WCSIT)*, 2(1), pp. 18-21. ISSN: 2221-0741.
- Zakana, M.E. & Fomsi F, E. (2019). Effect of Social Networking Sites on Students' Engagement and Motivation in Computer Science in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. European Scientific Journal, 15 (5). ISSN: 1857 – 7881