Hooked by the WWW: A Study of Social Networking

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Authors’ contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author NPS designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author AESJ edited the study, managed the literature searchers and enriched the results and discussion. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

ABSTRACT

Aims: This study was conducted to determine the participants’ experiences and perceptions on the use of SNS. It also looked into how SNS use affects their jobs, personal activities, and studies.

Study Design: This study used the qualitative method. Open-ended questions were constructed to gather participants’ experiences.

Place and Duration of Study: This study was conducted among the Information Technology faculty and students University of Mindanao- Digos College. The study was conducted for one semester.

Methodology: The open-ended questions were distributed among pre-selected participants online. The responses were analyzed into themes; discussions were provided.

Results: SNS use does not affect the jobs, tasks, personal activities, and studies of the participants. It is also revealed that SNS use provides happiness and satisfactions to the participants. The participants’ continuous connection with their family members, friends and relatives makes them closer because of SNS. Moreover, participants also build confidence when friends appreciate and affirm their status in the SNS. Further, SNS serves as someone’s blueprint

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the birth of internet, the huge world unknown to human before has now become reachable though a click of a mouse. Collection of information becomes easily available in a click of a button. However, despite this interesting phenomenon, individuals become hooked to the internet that they can’t get out of it. Goldberg [1] notices that internet addiction among users has exponentially increasing. Young [2] mentions that many on-line users hooked in internet have similar case with that of drug addiction. It results to social and interpersonal withdrawals [3]; psychiatric disorder [4]; social phobia and hostility [5]; and academic, social, and occupational impairment [2].

In the era of new technology, everyone is benefited through communication and updates. With the use of internet, according to Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe [6], individuals attract possibilities of employment; increases academic performance [7]; enhances the teaching and learning experiences [8]; and promotes product to the consumers [9].

In recent time, social networks have become increasingly popular, as a matter of fact the rise and popularity of web sites such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and etc become inevitable [10]. In an instant, internet users can create profiles and personal web sites in online communities. This gives them personal self-satisfaction to be known; to connect and communicate with old and new friends virtually; to obtain and spread information at high speed; and find individuals with similar interests. According to Kuss and Griffiths [11], Social Networking Sites (SNS) are predominantly used for social purposes, mostly related to the maintenance of established offline networks. Interestingly, Correa, Hinsley, and De Zuniga [12] find that extraverts individuals appear to use social networking sites for social enhancement, whereas introverts use it for social compensation.

The use of internet website is commonly observed among the youth, young at heart and children. These individuals know very well the prevailing effects of internet; however, they don’t entertain the idea because the society does not explore the social and personal dangers either. According to Labuschagne and Veerasamy [13], social networking sites are dangerous because they attached malware that might have great effect to the personal belongings and might corrupt the individuals’ perceptions on the importance and benefit of the application.

Technology is now used in every field of studies, including education. But at some point, does the use technology help students? Most of the students are too hooked with these social networking sites. As a matter of fact, they are attracted and enticed to use it at any place and time. Compare before, students copied diligently board tasks; now, students just take pictures of the board and everything is done in seconds.

Several investigations had been done relate to internet addiction; however, those studies focused on the quantitative aspects. This study focused on internet addiction using the qualitative method, thus, it culled out the different personal and anecdotal experiences. It also looked into the insights gained by the participants on the phenomenon. These reasons made this study noble and different from the others.

1.1 Relevant Literature and Studies

This study is anchored on Turel [14] proposition which states that the increase in hedonic Information System (IS) activity means an experience of those types of behaviors that engage only in pleasure-oriented in IS. The proposed model implies that the fast increase in Facebook use influences future use and builds
addiction. The proposition focused on the use of Social Networking Sites; however, does not deeply explain the effects of the phenomenon to other factors that lead to addiction.

In this study, the focus was on how the over indulgence to SNS affected the perception of the users regarding job and task performance, studies and personal activities. Various studies regarding the use of SNS offered interesting results. Satici, Saricali, Ahmet, and Capan [15] find positive correlation between Facebook addiction and psychological vulnerability and negative linked with social competence. Abdulahi, Samadi, and Gharleghi [16] claim that 47% of Malaysian spends so much time using Facebook. On the other hand, Jafarkarimi, Sim, Saadatdoost, and Hee [17]; Young [2] mention that great exposure to internet and Facebook leads to obsession. Further, Ledbetter, Mazer, DeGroot, Meyer, Mao, and Swafford [18] aver that individuals, who usually use Facebook, are those with strong social closeness including friends, romantic partners, and family members. Frampton and Child [19] observe that working professionals with high levels of co-worker communication use usually Facebook as means of communication. Likewise, Smock, Ellison, Lampe, and Wohn [20] say that family members who value communication consider Facebook as a tool for inter-change of ideas. Thus, Chen and Lee [21] believe that internet or Facebook use trade-off between time spending online and face-to-face with family and friends.

Other studies showed that SNS use negatively link with academic performance [22]; excessively use SNS hinders spending on other tasks [23]; too much time use on SNS interrupts individual’s concentration [24]. On the lighter side, individuals experience happiness and excitement when they SNS [25]; and life satisfaction, and psychological well-being [26]. However, exposure to SNS likely results to cyber bullying [27].

1.2 Research Assumption

The researchers believe that internet addiction is a specific phenomenon measured by the magnitude of a person’s usage based on his/her interests and needs. They are hooked to the social networking sites because they wanted to be connected with others, to be known to the community; to present or search ideas and opinions, to update on current events, to gather academic materials, and many more. As they indulged into these activities, they become addicted for they find doing these things pleasurable and rewarding. Thus, it was assumed that internet addition was a mindful action and not out of ignorance.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The general purpose of this research was to explore the participants’ experiences on social networking sites. In particular, it dug the significant reasons why the participants were hooked with social networking sites based on their perception towards their interest, usage, and needs. It also looked on how the obsession on social networking affected their work, studies and personal and inter-personal relationships that may have impact on their respective behavior.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was conducted to explore the addiction of faculty and students in Social Networking Sites among the Information Technology Education Department in University of Mindanao Digos College. Particularly, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1) What are the perceptions of the participants towards Social Networking Sites regarding interest, usage and personal needs?
2) How do these indicators affect the participants regarding work and class performances and personal aspects?
3) What is the prevailing factor of the respondents based on their respective perception towards Social Networking Sites that greatly affect their interest, usage, and needs for a personal aspiration?

1.5 Research Objectives

The objective of this investigation was to investigate the addiction of teachers and students in Social Networking Sites and to:

1) Evaluate the perception of the participants towards Social Networking Sites regarding work, studies and personal aspect and its effects to their productivity and efficiency;
2) Appraise the perceptions of the participants towards Social Networking Sites regarding interest, usage, and needs regarding personal satisfaction; and
3) Develop a map on the participants' occurrence in using the Social Networking Sites that would classify them to be addictive.

2. METHODOLOGY

This part shows the research participants, research instruments, and the research design and procedures.

2.1 Participants

The participants of this research were the selected Information Technology faculty and students of the University of Mindanao - Digos College. They were pre-selected using the online survey questionnaire in Facebook and Google apps.

Students who received the survey questionnaires forwarded the same to their list of friends online following the snow ball sampling or the chain referral sampling. One Hundred Fifty (150) participants responded to the deployed tool using Google and Facebook. Five (5) of those response came from the faculty, and one hundred forty-five (145) were from the Information Technology students.

2.2 Research Instrument

The researchers created a questionnaire to capture the experiences of the SNS users. The questionnaire, Users' Feedback Questionnaire (UFQ) was validated and approved by a panel of experts. It consisted of eight open-ended questions which could be answered in essay. The first question dealt with the effects of using the SNS in work, studies and personal aspects. The second item looked into the satisfaction felt by the participants in connecting with family, friends, and relatives. The third item inquired on the personal intentions on gaining self-confidence. The fourth questions explored the productivity of the participants when using SNS at work or studies. Related to question four, question five delved on the importance of setting the tasks. On the other hand, question six dug into the efficiency of the participants towards the task. Question seven explored the aspirations of the participants by documenting their ambition in the presence of SNS and lastly, question eight scrutinized the effect of SNS to the participants' health. The questionnaire was developed using English and translated into the Cebuano for the participants to easily comprehend the meaning of the questions.

2.3 Research Design

The study used the qualitative research following the ethnographic design that explores the common knowledge of a group of people or culture. San Jose, Bahket and Ali Alsalhi [28] mention that qualitative method’s focus is to determine the importance of persons' experiences; while Brinkman [29] says it elaborates personal confessions, narratives, and reflections. In this study, researchers examined the Information Technology faculty and students' personal encounters with SNS. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the information gathered. The thematic analysis involved emphasizing, pinpointing, examining, and recording the patterns of themes. The themes were patterned across the information obtained. The identification of the core ideas of the statement was manually identified. In analyzing the information, the researchers used the free trial version of the QDA Miner Lite. QDA Miner Lite is a free and easy-to-use version of the popular computer assisted qualitative analysis software that can analyze textual data such as interview and news transcripts, open-ended responses, etc. as well as for the analysis of still images.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The following steps were undertaken by the researchers to gather the necessary information for the study.

Self-formulated (UFQ) questionnaires were distributed through Facebook to selected Information Technology faculty and students. The reference questionnaire sought to gather the perception of the participants on the usage of social networking sites.

After collecting the responses of the participants, the researchers reviewed all answers and determined the result of the participants' social networking usage. The results of the study were analyzed through thematic analysis using QDA Miner Lite.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part shows the results of the information gathered from the participant. The presentations of answers were in narratives. In particular, the results answer the three research questions: what are the perceptions of the respondents towards Social Networking Sites regarding work,
3.1 Work, Studies and Personal Aspects an SNS Use

Majority of the participants believed the use of SNS did not affect the performance of their jobs, completion of their tasks and studies, and personal relationships. One of the participants mentioned that the use of SNS did not affect him because of his ability to manage and balance his schedules. He set time for SNS, studying and even hanging with friends

“No, actually, because even with social media I can still manage to balance my time on studying and hanging out with my online friends. Studying (school; weekdays) - 5 hours in the morning plus 3 in the evening. Facebook and Instagram- usually 3 hours after noon break (cellphone).” Res10016

Another participant shared that the use of SNS did not have any effect by illustrating that there was always time for everything.

“No, because i have time for my work in house or in school works and i manage my time on using in a networking sites like Facebook and Instagram.” Res10025

Similarly, one respondent said that the use of SNS did not affect him at all as he seldom opened his account and he made it sure that he finished his tasks before opening the SNS.

“No. It does not affect in my time, because I seldom use social media. I always do my work before I visit my facebook.” Res10048

The answers of the participants insinuated that SNS use could have no effect on someone’s works, jobs, studies and relationship if he or she knew how to manage time. It implies that SNS users need to be conscientious in their actions. Kim and Chung [30] point out that being conscientious promote job performance. Moreover, the researchers believed that the nature of the participants’ jobs and tasks influenced them to think that the use of SNS didn’t affect them because exposure to the internet was inevitable for them as IT teachers and students. Variantly, few participants believed otherwise. One participant said that SNS use greatly affected the accomplishment of his tasks. Others believed that SNS use affected their studies.

“Yes it affects basically because those others task that I can do, I will not be accomplished because I Love using FACEBOOK almost every day and I cannot focus on my homework.” Res10057

Previous study shows that there is a significant negative association between SNS use and academic performance [22]. However, recent study reveals the contrary, that SNS use enhances someone’s job performance and achieve better marks [31,32].

In terms of the length of time the participants spent in the use of SNS, they had variant answers. Few could spend the entire day while others spent less.

“Yes, more than 8 hours every day.” Res10001

“Yes, it affect my time allotted in my work job. It is almost 2 hours and 30minutes.” Res10051

The responses of the participants on the length of time they spent on SNS use was beyond the findings of Jelenchick, Eickhoff and Moreno [33] of 28 minutes median with an interquartile range of nine to 54 minutes per day. This indicates that the participants excessively use SNS. Baker and White [23] state that too much time consumed in SNS distract spending on alternative activities. On the other hand, Weber [24] points out that excessive time use on SNS potentially interrupts concentration.

In summary, majority of the participants believed that SNS use did not necessary affect the performance of their jobs, tasks, and studies. Only few participants find it otherwise. On the other hand, the participants spend too much time in use of SNS every day. However, they could not consider whether they were addictive to SNS or not because SNS use was part of their jobs and activities as IT teachers and students.

3.2 Happiness in Using SNS

Generally, the participants found happiness and satisfaction when they use SNS. The SNS
connected them to their love ones such as family members, relatives, and close friends who were in other country. The SNS was the only accessible medium.

“I am happy in terms of family relationships because through social networking i can be able to communicate with my loved ones even though they are out of the country, we could still chit-chat and talk about things just as if we are in the same place. I can bond with my family in just one click and i can talk to them all day long because of social networking.” Res10081

One participant revealed that he could not measure his happiness whenever he was connected with his parents through SNS. Also, he was glad when he bonded with his classmates, relatives, and friends because he remembered his shared happiness with them. This shows that SNS becomes the means of connection between and among individuals.

“I am so happy that anyone cannot measure. Although my parents are separated, I still feel that they are always at my side watching and that also added to my happy memories together with my classmates, relatives and friends.” Res10082

Other participant shared that through the SNS, he could share openly his difficulties, could link with his family members, could enjoy his friends company, could converse with his co-workers. These things pleased him and it was possible by the SNS. Several investigations revealed that SNS use significantly correlates with self-disclosure [34]; happiness positively relates to SNS use and excitement is positively link to IT [25]; SNS use, happiness, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being are interrelated [26].

“Through sharing our problems, bonding with in the family, hang out with friends, and communicating with my co-worker because with that situation, I will be gaining more interest with them through their lives and with that way, it makes me happier!” Res10085

Through the SNS, family members could still share their dilemmas in life. The SNS became an instrument where family members could talk and listen with each other. They felt happy when they received updates about their family and friends.

“I really need it most by communicating them in terms of problems and News therefore i am really happy.....” Res10039

In summary, the main reason of the participants in using the SNS was to connect with their loved ones. It became a conversation platform where they could have exchanged of ideas, views, and opinions. These interconnections made the participants felt fulfilled and gratified. It implies that the participants would not mind spending long time in SNS as long as they could connect with their loved ones.

3.3 Self Confidence in Using SNS

Normally, there are reasons why users use the specific application in the internet. They use SNS to gain, connect, and share with friends. Wang, Jackson, Wang, and Gaskin [35] aver uploading content and interacting with online friends significantly promote self-confidence of the users. Evidently, the researchers observed that there were those individuals who boast their uploaded photos in the FB especially when friends gave confirmations and positive comments.

The result of this study generally showed that the participants boosted their moral and self-worth when their uploaded photos and written comments were appreciated by their friends.

“If it is used in the proper way it can increase self-confidence because most of the basic needs, especially students, is given by the Site.” Res10139

“For me, it kinda boost your self confidence, because if people see you doing so well in your life and you post it on Facebook, the compliments you get can affect your mood, thus boosting your self confidence.” Res10127

The participants were also certain that the SNS could make them persons with self-confidence through diverting their attentions to the pictures and updates. Watching pictures that were pleasing made them realized that they had also the right to be happy by updating their knowledge about the new things that were present in the site.

“sometimes it boost my my self confidence because it helps you to know something new, or helps you to update and aware different things in the world.” Res10136
Definitely, the comments of affirmation gave high spirits to the participants. Kraut [36] mentions that posts may confirm one’s self-presentation goals, thus, increases self-confident and affirmation.

“No, because even if we use Social Networking sites we cannot build a self confidence by posting in a photos or your status on facebook or in Instagram but if people will look at you in person like you are presenting in front of many people you still get nervous and makes you feel not confident.” Res10059

Also, to have a self-confidence someone needed to be himself. Appreciations from others could mislead his view of himself.

“No, because even if we use Social Networking sites we cannot build a self confidence by posting in a photos or your status on facebook or in Instagram but if people will look at you in person, like you are presenting in front of many people you still get nervous and makes you feel not confident.” Res10059

Other participants also reiterated that it was not the SNS that gave someone self-confidence because it didn’t have a face-to-face confrontation with the specific person. It was illustrated in their answers that a confrontational realization gave confidence because real feelings were involved. SNS’s compliments and comments were unauthentic, unreliable blank words with less warm and less emotion and can’t be confirmed. Complements were best done personally not virtually.

“No, it doesn't. In fact it reduces self confidence when you are using it to tell anyone your thoughts not in person.” Res10046

In summary, many of the participants believed that SNS increased their self-confidence by the positive comments they received from their virtual friends; however, other participants
believed otherwise. They argued that SNS used didn’t promote self-esteem because they believed that scammers abound the site. Likewise, other participants believed that SNS was the venue for cyber bullying. Interestingly, others felt that the comments given by individuals in SNS were just mere emotionless and worthless words. They preferred to receive the comments personally.

3.4 Reputation in Using SNS

Typically, the participants claimed that SNS could be the basis of someone’s integrity. Their reputations were evident on the comments they supplied and on the judgment they gave. It was also seen on how they handled certain situations illustrated in the SNS. It implies that someone’s thought matters in the determination of maturity and reputation in the SNS.

“Significantly. Your integrity and everything you are affects the way you work and the environment you are into. Your reputation defines the quality of your work and your attitude towards it.” Res10004

Interacting with people of reputation in the SNS was significant to the students for them to learn how to make good and fair comments and judgment. Thus, they could be selective and reflective on the words they would give.

“Yes if you are a teacher. It depends on how you handle the situation.” Res10005

Other participants mentioned that SNS could be a tool to ruin someone’s reputation. They revealed that there were instances when someone put comments ridiculing a certain person and exposing his/her misconduct. This situation commonly happened when someone was given a task and was not complied on time. In an instant, someone’s personality was shattered.

“Reputation of everyone is very important but it’s really depends on how the people accept you for being who you are, in the first place you are working on that particular job and being yourself its really depend on how the people accept you and trust you and area” Res10059

The respondents claimed that SNS was a blueprint of a person’s experience and it could be traced on the specific activities he/she made like posting, commenting, and sharing. Also, someone’s profile or account could be considered not only as a reputational qualification but also a portfolio of personal achievements and challenges of the user. This was illustrated when other users confirmed someone’s claims and actions.

“Yes, because the reputation we have is the biggest role to be used for work. In here we will be known by our employer or our future employer.” Res10061

In bird’s eye view, the participants believed that SNS could make or break someone’s reputation. SNS could be a tool for confirming someone’s personality but it could also be used to disgrace someone. In particularly, someone’s profile in SNS could be a blueprint of his/her personality; however, its authenticity remained in question if nobody would confirmed it.

3.5 Financial Stability in Using SNS

The researchers observed that availment of internet connection in the Philippines cost a lot. A Php 200 load lasted for five days. Others may availed the free data of the telecommunication sharks provider that made the bandwidth limited and no clear display of the best SNS graphical user interface. This could be the reason why others were so concerned with the amount they spent to access the SNS.

Surprisingly, other participants claimed that money was not a factor in connecting to internet. They believed that the money they spent for the connection surpassed by the benefits and satisfaction they got when they use the SNS.

“Social networking sites really don’t affect my financial stability. I don’t really spent much of my time in SNS except if there are something i need to ask or something i need to know” Res10117

Variantly, other participants believed that the SNS could bring satisfaction and happiness through communicating with their family who were working abroad and they would not mind spending money. It implies that the participants value family relations more than the money.

“For me it is not a problem when it comes to the use of networking sites since they are not a great loss to me if I do not open for example my facebook account.” Res10061
Campus wide wifi zone was not available; hence, teachers and students need to find ways to be connected with the internet. However, loading a pocket wifi was not favorable because the signal was slow and the rate was expensive.

“I spent 500 to 1000 a month using Social Networking.” Res10054

Thus, teachers and students had no choice but to avail pocket wifi to be connected. As a result, the participants were forced to spend much money for connection.

“Social Networking Sites affects my financial stability through surfing the net in the netcafe per hour rate payment) which may cause P1800 in a month.” Res10024

Although the participants spent much money and troubled by clear internet connections, they took a blind eye on them because of their desired to be connected with their loved ones.

“It affect in way loading in a long time and I really spend a lot of money of waiting on it....10% of my money spend in one month...” Res10111

“It really affects our financial stability because using a social networking sites we can be able to communicate and do our jobs, especially me and my brother because we tend to have some businesses through online.” Res10113

“It really affects our financial stability because everyday we are using connection in our house” Res10124

“Social networking sites really affects me because of the money I spent just to be connected” Res10116

In summary, even though many participants revealed that connecting to the internet was financially draining, they had no options but to spend and be connected. It was their desire to communicate with their friends, families, and colleagues that urged them to do so. It was only few participants who claimed that money was not an issue.

4. CONCLUSION

It is revealed that SNS use does not affect the jobs, tasks, personal activities, and studies of the participants. It implies that SNS use has become a normal activity for the participants because they are inclined to technical skills and the fact that they are IT individuals. It further shows that addiction in SNS does not depend on individuals’ professions. It is also revealed that SNS use gives happiness and satisfactions to the participants. The participants’ continuous connections with their family members, friends and relatives make them closer because of SNS. This characteristic is a typical of Filipino’s strong family ties. Moreover, participants also build confidence when friends appreciate and affirm their status in the SNS. It shows that SNS is a virtual venue which psychologically affects someone’s view of himself/herself. Further, SNS serves as someone’s blueprint or portfolio which shows his/her achievements. Thus, the SNS users can gain reputation by the information they post in the site. Finally, most participants are not bothered by the spending incurred in connecting the internet as long as they can communicate with their families, relatives, and friends in the SNS. This implies that the participants give more value on relationships than money for money can be found but relationships can’t.

CONSENT

All authors declare that written informed consent was obtained from the patient (or other approved parties) for publication of this paper.

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**COMPETING INTERESTS**

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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