

# The Usefulness of Facebook in Improving Social Skills among Degree Students at the Faculty of Education UiTM

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## ABSTRACT

When the popularity of the internet has increased worldwide, there have been various websites that have been established and used all over the world including Facebook. Having almost one billion users, Facebook has been very popular amongst youth and the usage of this social network site is increasing daily. Social networking websites like Facebook as virtual communities which allow people to connect and interact with each other on a particular subject. It also provides users a profile and enables them to upload and share photos, music and various types of messages they would like to share with other people. Additionally, these sites provide social and emotional support, information resources and ties to other people. Therefore, this study is aimed to investigate the importance of Facebook among students and also to see in what ways Facebook helps to improve students' social skills. The data are collected by distributing questionnaires to the sample and the data are analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0. The samples of this study consists of 85 undergraduates students of the Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi MARA which 64 are majoring in TESL and 21 are majoring in Mathematics. It is found that students feel Facebook is important for them to communicate with their friends via wall posts, to gather under a group of similar interests, and to meet new friends. Nevertheless, the findings have shown that the students did not think that Facebook has any influences at improving their social skills.

**Keywords:** Facebook, social networking, social skills, information resources

## INTRODUCTION

Social networking site is getting popular nowadays with numerous types of social networking sites available such as Facebook, Myspace and Tagged and so on. Gangadharbatla H. (2008) states that the use of social networking sites (SNS) has been undeniably overwhelming, especially among teens and young adults. Every social networking site has its own uniqueness that make users addicted to it. Facebook has become the most popular social networking site due to the massive daily increase of active members. Although sites like MySpace and Friendster are similar, but Facebook

is generally considered the champion among social networking sites especially among college students (Angela, 2006).

Furthermore, social networking sites actually benefit users if they use it wisely. According to Lloyd J.M. (2007) although some research have shown the impact computer and electronic mail use has on student learning, few researches have been conducted on the impact of various types of technology use, including instant messaging services, blogs, iPod and Facebook. For these reasons, the present research is conducted to investigate the impact of Facebook on students' development.

In terms of education, social networking sites help lecturers with Facebook accounts to get closer to their students. Most of the students who have a Facebook account can access their respective lecturers' online tasks or assignment via Facebook. Instead of that, Facebook also helps teachers to know their students better and vice versa. In addition, the student-teacher and student-student relationship became better after using Facebook.

Facebook also enables members from all over places to always keep in touch and know the development of the group without the need of face to face meetings. According to Faudree M. R. (2009) "Facebook Groups," allows users to create and join groups based on common interests and activities. She also states that the "Facebook Groups" application frequently displays list of group members as well as new friends who have joined recently. Thus, using Facebook will result in civic and political impacts within the groups developed by users and organizations.

Moreover, using Facebook provide many kinds of relationship such as the student-faculty relationship that make them feel likely to be accepted. According to Angela (2006), we have the unprecedented ability to find other users via Facebook based on any specific criteria. Facebook also plays the important role to help educational colleges to create and refines one's self-identity. Students of a college or school can discover who they are and how they relate to others and also their contributions towards the society. In addition, Facebook is important in developing one's mind via games that come with Facebook. Students who play Facebook's games are more creative since the game will need them to use their brain. It is not wrong for the students to play game since they have to rest their mind before the start of another session of study.

According to Swager T. (2010) Facebook's games such as Mafia Wars and Fish World are very popular but the most recent Facebook fad is FarmVille with 74,355,776 active users. The games are good but students are supposed to be disciplined with their time so that the games will not waste their time from doing other important activities. Another impact of Facebook is it teaches students how to use technology creatively. Facebook allows students to express themselves and highlight their talent and experiences via games and activities. It is supported by Angela (2006) who states that Facebook presents students with choices on how to use technology creatively to avoid pitfalls.

There are many benefits of Facebook. However, it is important for students to use and adapt to the use of Facebook wisely. Facebook helps to develop critical social skills that are developed via making friends from all over the world. Experience is the best teacher. This is supported by Boyd D. (2007) that manage impressions is a critical social

skill that is honed through experience. The author also stresses on the fact that diverse social environments help people develop these skills because they force individuals to reevaluate the signals they take for granted. We learn over time on how to make up a situation, handle friend's reactions and so on.

Facebook impacts on social capital in many ways. According to Sebastian V. (2008), common interest groups can help users to coordinate for collective action. At the same time, he states that trust and norms of reciprocity that resulted from regular exchanges between users are key antecedents of community life. Similarly, news feeds and notes allow users to regularly keep in touch with what is going on and tagging them will automatically engage them in the social postings on Facebook. Hence, social capital can be developed when students use Facebook as their medium of connection. On top of that, it can enhance the development of soft skills via multiple channel communications among Facebook users.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of the study is to determine the importance of Facebook among Degree students at the Faculty of Education, UiTM Shah Alam.

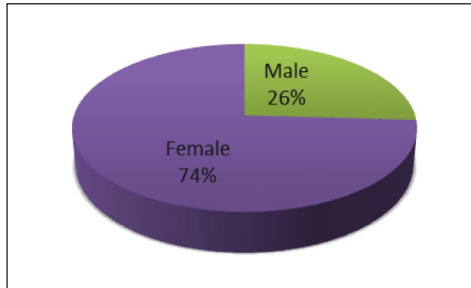
## **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher used descriptive research methodology to investigate the use of Facebook in improving of social skills. In this study, researcher used quantitative approach to collect the data by using questionnaires. The questionnaires consist of three sections which are Parts A, B and C. Parts A covers the respondents' demographic background. Parts B and C focus on the basic knowledge and the importance of Facebook. The samples of this study consists of 85 undergraduates students of the Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi MARA which 64 are majoring in TESL and 21 are majoring in Mathematics.

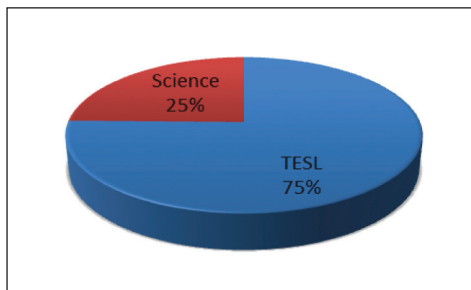
## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Discussion will be divided into three parts. Part A contains demographic information pertaining to each respondent selected for this study. Meanwhile, Parts B and C respectively report the responses they gave in the questionnaires pertaining to the importance of Facebook usage among students and how Facebook can improve their social skills.

### *Demographic Background*



**Figure 1** Respondents' gender



**Figure 2** Respondents' academic courses

A total of 85 respondents were involved in the study. Based on the pie chart in Figure 1, it was found that 74% (63 students) of them were female and only 26% (922 students) were male. Meanwhile, Figure 2 reveals that 75% (64 students) of the total respondents were TESL students and the balance 25% (21 students) are Science students.

Figure 3 reveals the frequency of accessing the internet by the respondents. The graph shows that 83.5% of the respondents stated that they access the internet everyday, 15.3% access the internet at least once a week and merely 1.2% respondents use the internet less than once a week. In short, it can be said that majority of the respondents were frequent internet users. In addition, the responses from the questionnaires also revealed that all 85 respondents are also familiar with Facebook. A total majority of 98.8% respondents admitted that they have Facebook accounts or are Facebook members.

Figure 4 shows six different websites visited by the respondents. A majority of 89.4% respondents stated and agreed that social network is their most frequently visited website, followed by blog (67.1%), entertainment website (60%), informational website (40%), online games (15.3%) and finally business and marketing website (9.4%). These results are not surprising as majority of them had earlier on expressed great familiarity to Facebook.

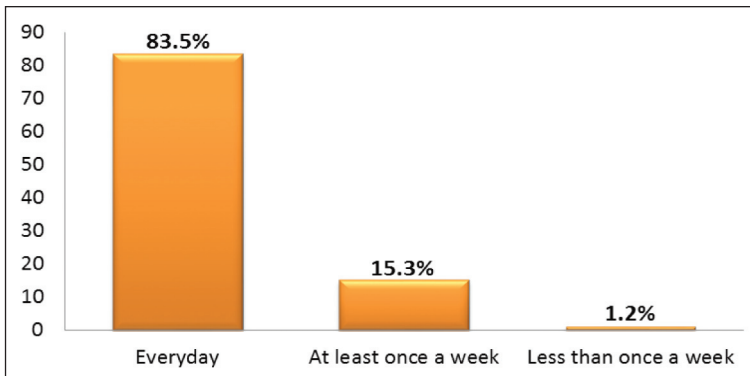


Figure 3 Accessing the internet

*The Importance of Facebook Usage among Students*

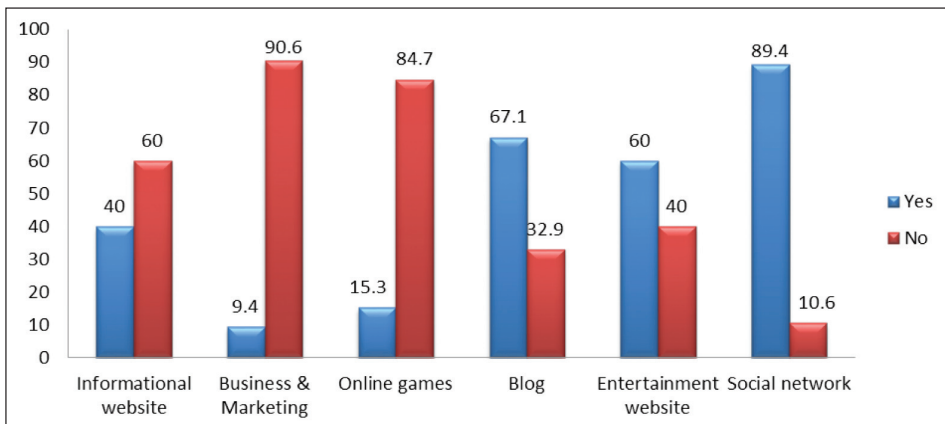


Figure 4 Website preference

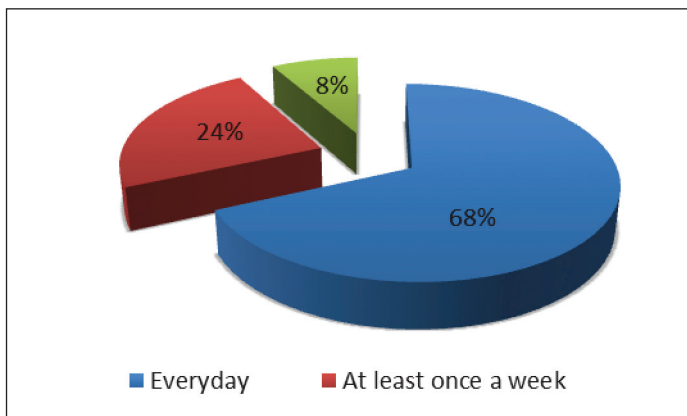
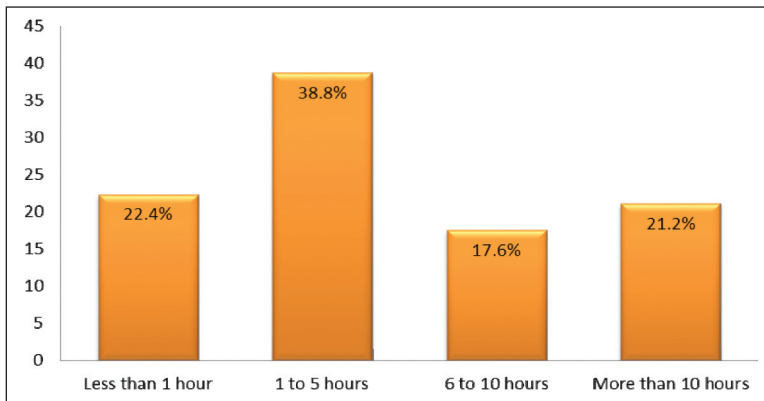


Figure 5 Facebook login in a week

The pie chart in Figure 5 indicates the frequency of Facebook login by the respondents in a week-period. The results revealed that 68% of the respondents login onto Facebook every day, 24% login at least once a week and a minimum of 8% stated that they login onto Facebook less than once a week. These results indicate that many respondents are regular visitors and users of Facebook.



**Figure 6** Weekly time spend to Facebooking

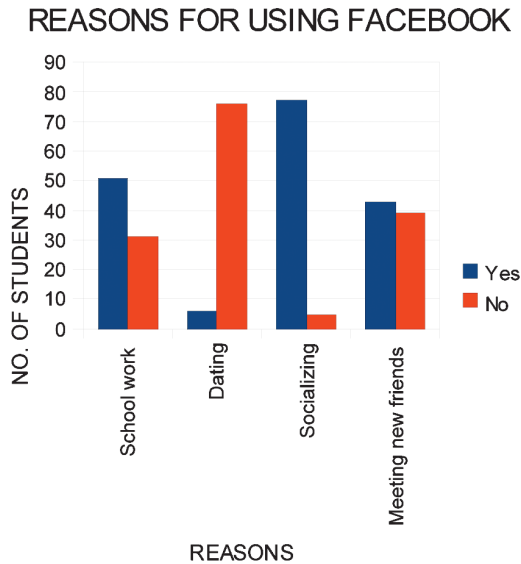
The bar graph in Figure 6 shows the time spent by the respondents to Facebooking on weekly basis. The results revealed that only 22.4% respondents spent less than 1 hour to Facebook weekly. A total of 38.8% spent 1 to 5 hours and a sum of 38.8% respondents spent more than 6 hours on Facebook every week. The results show that the respondents spent a lot of time to Facebooking every week.

In sum, all the results presented on the above indicate that Facebook usage is important to majority of the respondents. This is evident as they preferred to visit social network website when accessing the internet, besides the high frequency and the large number of hours they expressed to have spent to use or login onto Facebook on weekly basis.

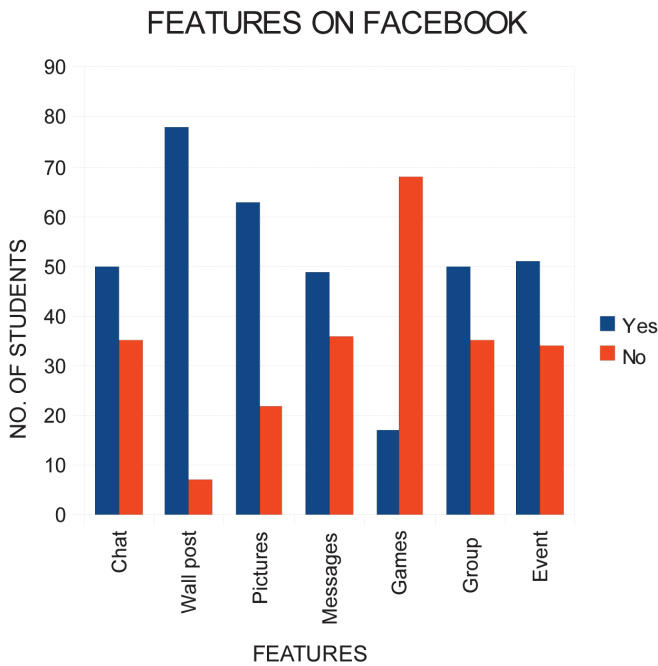
***How Facebook Improves Students’ Social Skills?***

In the context of reason for using Facebook, the results showed that the highest number of respondents use Facebook for socializing. A total number of 77 respondents out of 82 agreed that they use Facebook for socializing. On the other hand, the findings also showed that only 6 out of 82 respondents had chosen to use Facebook for dating. The reason why the least number of students chose dating might be because of the security and safety reason. Besides, as many as 51 respondents indicated that they used Facebook for school work purposes. Moreover, 43 respondents said that meeting new friends is

one of the reason they used Facebook. To summarise, the researchers found that most respondents have displayed that the main reason they used Facebook is for socializing.



**Figure 7** Reasons for Facebooking



**Figure 8** Facebook features used

In the context of students' preference of the features on Facebook, the results of the findings showed that 78 respondents agreed that they like the 'Wall post' feature on Facebook. Meanwhile, 63 respondents admitted that they prefer to look at the pictures in Facebook. Moreover, a total number of 50 respondents prefer both the 'chat' and 'group' feature on Facebook. On the contrary, only 17 respondents agreed that they like the 'games' feature in Facebook. In brief, it can be concluded that the data from the study demonstrates that the respondents preferred the features that enable them to socialize on Facebook.

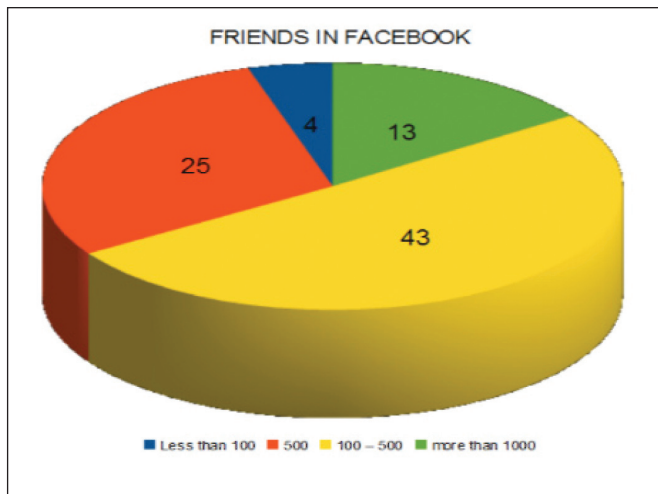


Figure 9 Number of friends in Facebook

With regards to the number of friends that the respondents have in their Facebook, this study found that 43 respondents have about 100 to 500 friends in Facebook. Moreover, 25 respondents showed that they have 500 friends in their Facebook. Further, the result of the findings also confirmed that 13 respondents have more than 1000 friends in their Facebook. On the other hand, only 4 respondents have less than 100 friends in their Facebook. In short, findings from the study revealed that most of the respondents have more than 100 friends in their Facebook account and this supports that students use Facebook as a mean for them to socialize with their friends.

## CONCLUSION

From the data which had been gathered and analysed, it can be concluded that the students put Facebook in high regard because it apparently helps them to socialize easier. This is achieved via several activities available on the Facebook applications such as posting wall posts, joining groups of similar interests and meeting new friends without borders.



All these activities are practically impossible to be materialized in real life world in contrast with the cyber environment that Facebook offers. Meanwhile, as for Facebook being useful to the extent of improving the students' social skills, majority of them chose to remain neutral and believed that their social skills are unchanged even with the presence of Facebook memberships and frequent activities indulged in the most famous SNS. Overall, the findings of this study showed that this SNS evidently helps making the students' social life easier. This is because with Facebook, the students can interact with their friends via wall posts, group application and knowing new faces with just a simple click. However, the findings rejected the possibility of Facebook to have helped the students to boost their social skills. In contrary, even with these virtual accounts, the students' personalities and their social circle of lives are not altered absolutely. Hence, this dismissed the labelling of how Facebook is making them a better member to the community while mixing around with the crowd. It is hoped that further researches can investigate other potential significant benefits of Facebook to other aspects of the students' lives.

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