

Uses of Social Networking Sites among Postgraduate Students at University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh : A Study

Shamim Aktar Munshi*, Md. Golam Mostafa#, and Md. Mahbubul Alam@

*Department of Library and Information Science, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh - 202 002, India

#Central Library, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi, Bangladesh

@Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology, Rajshahi, Bangladesh

*E-mail: munshishamim14@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out the use of social networking sites (SNSs) for educational purposes among the postgraduate students at the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. The study selects descriptive survey method and questionnaire tools for gathering the data. Findings of the study shows that students have a positive attitude towards the role of social networking sites for their academic purposes. Notably, the respondents mostly prefer Facebook which is the most preferable SNS among the others. Finding also demonstrates that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that SNSs help their educational field and it builds up a good relationship between their friends, family, educators, etc. This study reveals that respondents are strongly agreed that they get up-to-date information through SNSs and share their thoughts, information to the others. It is interesting to note that almost 90 per cent respondents strongly agreed that SNSs is an effective media which helps to make a platform where they can study collaboratively.

Keywords: Education; Postgraduate students; Social networking sites; University of Rajshahi; Bangladesh

1. INTRODUCTION

Education and learning have always been the agents of social change by transforming human behaviour. If we turn the pages of history, we would see that learning changed slowly. This gradual change has led to the emergence of some sophisticated technology assisted learning processes, which initially met with resistance by educationists regarding the fact that introducing computers into classrooms would replace the human efforts which is one of the main instruments of educational infrastructure. But the benefits that ICT offers are somewhat quite difficult to ignore and in the last few decades technology assisted teaching and learning process have turned out to be highly productive with a rapid pace.

The latest advancement in world wide web (WWW) has greatly transformed the communication system. People can easily access the information and communicate with each other within a short span of time in a single window with the help of modern technologies¹. The social networking sites (SNSs) is a massive contribution of modern technology, and now it's gained much of success in the field of communication. SNSs is an interactive communication platform where people can connect with one another and share their thought, experiences, pictures, audio, video, chatting via text messages, audio call, video call, and getting information from others². However, Tiryakioglu & Erzurum³ defined social network as 'an online service, platform, or area where social communication and

relations can be established, and also individuals share information. Social networks offer the user ability to share online their views, feelings, activities, events, and fields of interest' The foremost advantage of SNSs' is that anyone can create a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, connect with others and communicate with each other⁴; and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system⁵.

Since the introduction, social networking sites have attracted especially teenagers and university students⁶. Nowadays, everyone prefers to use SNSs in our society such as educators, businessman, socialist, etc. for communication purposes. It helps to provide informal education for students and teachers outside of the classroom. Although, Buzzetto-More⁷ stated that 'Social networking services are increasingly being used by educators as teaching and learning tools that supplement traditional classroom environments as they provide new opportunities for enriching existing curriculum through creative, authentic and flexible non-linear learning experience⁷.

2. RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY

The literacy rate of Bangladesh is 66.5 per cent for male and 63.1 per cent for female. More than 98.8 per cent people mother language is *Bangla* while 1.2 per cent is others language. Majority of the population are Muslims (89.1 per cent) followed by Hindus (10 per cent) and others (0.9 per cent) including Buddhist and Christian^{8,9}. According to the

University Grants Commission of Bangladesh there are 38 public universities, 95 private universities, and 2 international universities exist in Bangladesh¹⁰.

University of Rajshahi is the second largest public university in the country. The university was setup by the Act of East Bengal Act XV of 1953, but the academic session started in 1954. The University offers more than 55 courses along with 9 faculties like ; Arts, Science, Law, Business Studies, Social Science, Life & Earth Science, Agriculture, Engineering and Medicine¹¹. The University is equipped with modern ICT facilities such as: computer lab in each department, Wi-Fi facilities in every hostel, departments, central library and offices so that the students can be benefitted. Apart from this, the University has one of the oldest and largest library in Bangladesh which is situated in the heart-centre of the University. This library has a collection of more than 3,20,000 books, 44,000 journal volumes and periodicals¹².

The present study examines the use of social networking sites as an educational purpose among postgraduate students at the University of Rajshahi. Try to investigate that what role SNSs is playing among students in their academic activities. The findings of this study will serve as a great impression for the coming generations to improve their knowledge and utilisation of social networking tools for academic purposes.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

During last ten years, a large number of studies had been conducted by researchers throughout the world regarding ‘Social Networking Sites’. Here, authors discussed few relevant studies which are related to the major theme of this study. Number of researchers^{3-5,13-15} stated that use of social networking tools in learning can prove as a boon of course only if the society starts thinking about it differently and use it for productive purposes rather than chatting all the time.

3.1 Significance of Social Networking Sites in Higher Education

Social networking sites has become very popular during the past few years. It plays an important role in our life nowadays. SNSs helps us in the every field of life such as political field, economic field, and educational field. As well as in the field of e-learning, the social networking sites handled the big problem raised by educators in the recent period¹⁶. According to Nicole¹⁷ ‘Social networks build social capital, where students are supported by, and participate in, learning communities influenced by social discourse and symbolic interactions providing students with social, emotional, and cognitive support. Fulfilling various social learning functions through collaboration and students to like-minded learners and building students’ communication and technology skills and understanding different points of view’. Schlenkrich and Sewry¹³ reported that students are very likely use especially Facebook for several purposes like ‘to keep in touch with old school friends, to check out someone they met socially and learn about people they are interested in, to find out about people in their classes, to organise team meetings, to use Facebook to meet new people, learn about their lecturers and

to find out about university assignments’. Islam and Mostofa¹⁸ found that the use of Facebook would be a supplementary tool in the university education system.

3.2 Usage of Social Networking Sites throughout the World

Hamat¹⁹, *et al.* found that a large number of Malaysian university students spend their time for using social networking sites. Notably, students use SNSs because it is a platform where students can interact and communicate with their peers for the purpose of informal learning and consulting their doubts to their tutors/lecturers. The interesting finding come out from this study that majority of the students believe for using maximum time on SNSs do not affect their academic performance. Hassan & Landani²⁰ found that most of the students use SNSs less than an hour daily. They also reported that ‘SNS allow students not only to expand relationships beyond the classroom but also to improve their communication skills’.

Haneefa & Sumitha¹ revealed that majority of the students are aware about social networking sites and using these sites for communication with their friends, family, teachers, and also for academic purpose. Authors also noted that ‘social networking sites can be used as an interactive platform for academic communication and can be a source of information, knowledge and help’. Vaidigi & Munshi¹⁴ found that social networking tools had made a great impact on the social science students at AMU. Through these tools students can easily share online information, University news, new arrivals in central library, etc. Students are also connected through these tools with their peers to clear their doubts, opinions, and thoughts about their subject matters. Munshi¹⁵ discovered that the majority of the students are ‘highly independent on Internet communication tools and social media for their academic and communication purposes in social life.’ However, students faced few problems while they are accessing these tools e.g. poor connectivity, lack of infrastructure, lack of time, etc.

Hamade²¹ revealed that majority of the Kuwait University students use Twitter and Facebook most of the time. Author also found that SNSs help to make better relationship with family, relatives, friends, teachers and more involvement in social, political and cultural activities. Eke², *et al.* revealed that all the undergraduate students of University of Nigeria using SNSs for interacting and communicating with friends group, ‘connecting to their classmates for online study and for discussing serious national issues and watching movies, etc.’ Another study by Fasae & Iwari²² traced the perception regarding the use of social media for academic purposes by science students in public universities in Southwest Nigeria. The study explored that majority of them are aware about various social media applications, and Facebook is the most preferable SNS among the other social media and second one is Google+. Most of the students are using social media daily for getting up-to-date information. The findings highlighted that Google+ is the most beneficial social media followed by Facebook and Wiki for their academic work. Authors also discussed some problems faced by the students while using social media such as slow Internet connectivity, receiving of unwanted messages and electricity failure, etc.

Doghmi²³, *et al.* investigated the use of social networking sites for academic purposes among the students of several Jordanian Universities. The result showed that high number of Jordanian universities students are using social networking sites as a communication tool for consulting their problems with friends and educators. Cho²⁴ revealed that most of the university students in Hong Kong and Wuhan are using SNSs for interacting with their friend groups, discussing subject matter, sharing information among themselves, etc.

3.3 Usage of Social Networking Sites in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, a number of studies^{18,25-27} have conducted regarding the use of social networking sites in several universities. Khandaker & Rana²⁵ found that students of public and private university in Dhaka, are mostly use social media like Facebook and YouTube. The study also highlighted that majority of the students are spending a significant amount of time on social media mostly in 'digital social infotainment juggling rather than using them for their educational support in higher education'. Al-Jubayer²⁶ pointed out that social networking sites and its effects especially on the youth teenagers in Dhaka. Teenagers are likely to use Facebook on communication purpose.

4. OBJECTIVES

The authors have drawn some of the objectives which are as follows:

- i. To find out the level of awareness regarding social networking sites
- ii. To identify the various social networking sites are being used by the postgraduate students at the University of Rajshahi
- iii. To determine for what purpose and how much time spent for using SNSs
- iv. To know their opinions about the role of social networking tools (SNSs) for academic purposes.

5. METHODOLOGY

The present study selects the descriptive survey method. The survey was conducted among the postgraduate students

of various departments through simple random sampling. 160 questionnaires circulated among the postgraduate students at the Reading Room Section in the central library and out of these the investigators got 153 questionnaires. Out of 153 questionnaires, investigators found only 03 questionnaires which were left unanswered. Hence, 150 questionnaires have applied to this study.

After accumulating the 150 questionnaires, the investigators have seen that the participants belong to various departments namely bengali, english, political science, information science & library management, sociology, history, mathematic, physics, anthropology, earth science, agriculture and islamic studies. The data collection was done during the month of July 28th to August 14th, 2016. In this survey it has been found that there are 97 (64.66 per cent) male and 53 (35.34 per cent) female respondents.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

6.1 Knowledge about Social Networking Sites

Mahmud²⁷ pointed out that at present time Bangladesh is assumed as a growing ICT country in the world, where the rate of Internet use is increasing day-by-day. Kabir²⁸, *et al.* mentioned that 'large numbers of students in Bangladesh, especially in Dhaka spend a lion share of daily time by wandering through online social networking sites'. However, the present study seeks to examine the knowledge about social networking sites among the postgraduate students at University of Rajshahi. The study demonstrates that 79 (52.66%) of them having very good knowledge about SNSs. Apart from this, 45 (30%) of them having excellent knowledge, and 26 (17.34%) participants having good knowledge about social networking sites. Moreover, this study clearly demonstrates that majority of postgraduate students having very good knowledge about SNSs. This finding agrees with the findings of Munshi¹⁵ that the majority of the engineering students at AMU one having very good knowledge about SNSs.

6.2 Types of Devices used for Accessing Social Networking Sites

We never deny that the great contribution of ICT in every segment in our life, which changes the lifestyle of each person

Table 1. Demographic information

Category	Item	No. of respondent	Percentage
Questionnaires distributed	Distributed questionnaires	160	100
Questionnaires received	Received questionnaires from participants	153	95.6
Questionnaires selected for study	Selected participants	150	98
Gender	Male	97	64.66
	Female	53	35.34
Faculty wise respondents	Faculty of arts	41	27.3
	Faculty of science	25	16.6
	Faculty of business studies	12	8
	Faculty of social science	54	36
	Faculty of agriculture	5	3.3
	Faculty of life & earth science	13	8.6

across the World. Our daily life has become fast with the help of modern technology. The number of electronic devices like laptop, smartphone, tab, etc. are changing the students' reading habits. These days majority of students carrying smartphone in their University/Collage. Notably, smartphone having some great advantages such as for tapping silently, reading email or composing, quick conversations, know other information to the peers, as they walk between University campus and classes. However, regarding the use of electronic devices among the PG students at the University of Rajshahi, the highest number of participants (N = 144; 96%) using smartphone followed by laptop (N = 89, 59.33%). Participants are also using desktop (N = 78; 52%), tab (N = 29; 19.33%), and e-book reader (N = 19; 12.66%). (See Fig. 1).

6.3 Use of Social Networking Sites

Figure 2 shows, 143 (95.33%) of them reported that the most effective and popularly used SNS are Facebook followed by YouTube (N=137; 91.33%). The study also reveals that participants using Twitter (N=94; 62.66%), Blog (N=66; 44%), Flickr (N= 35; 23.33%), MySpace (N=24; 16%), and others (N=41; 27.33%) like LinkedIn, Research Gate, Google+, etc. The findings agree with several earlier findings from different studies conducted by researcher^{3,15,22,29}, that Facebook and YouTube are the most popular and effective SNSs among the others. From various literatures, it was observed that more than 90 per cent of the students throughout the World, having a Facebook account followed by others like Twitter, Google+, etc. The findings from this study is also related to the other studies, like Kabir²⁸, *et al.* revealed 83.8 per cent of students in Dhaka; Fasae and Iwari²², found 93.48 per cent students in public universities in Southwest Nigeria are mostly preferred Facebook amongst the other popular SNSs.

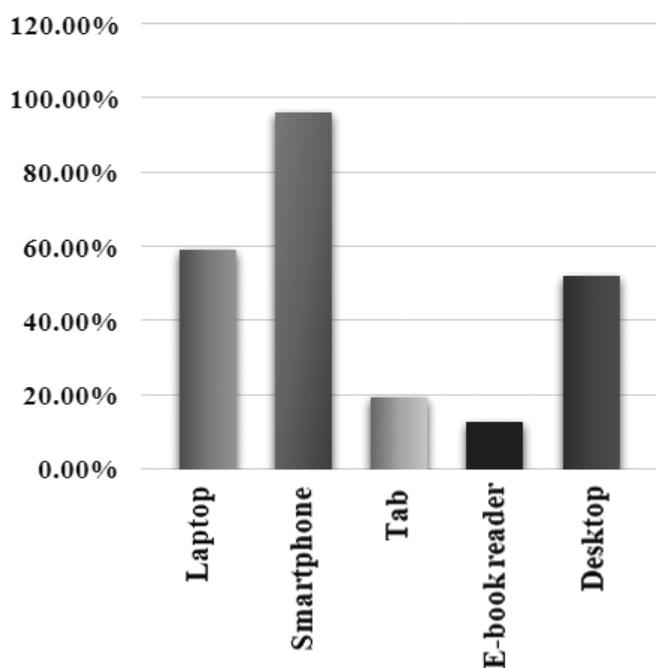


Figure 1. Devices used for accessing SNSs.

(Note: Total percentage is more than 100 because of multiple choices)

6.4 Frequency of Use of Social Networking Sites

Table 2 shows that out of 150 participants, 133 (88.66%) of them using social networking sites daily followed by 11 (7.34%) weekly. Only 6 (4%) participants using monthly. The study also portrayed that 84 (56%) of them using SNSs less than one hour while 37 (24.66%) participants using more than two hours. The fewest number of participants 22 (14.66%) using more than four hours and 7 (4.66%) of them marked that they use more than six hours in every day. Besides, this study exposes that majority of the participants are using SNSs less than one hour daily.

6.5 Accessing Places of Social Networking Sites

Here, the investigators put question about the places where the participants accessing social networking sites. The study reveals that 93 (62%) of them accessing SNSs in their hostel followed by cyber café (N=66; 44%). The study also found that a large number of respondents i.e. 45 (30%) are day scholar who are accessing SNSs at their home. Around 47 (31.33%) of them using the central library for accessing SNSs whereas 36 (24%) respondents accessing SNSs in university computer centre.

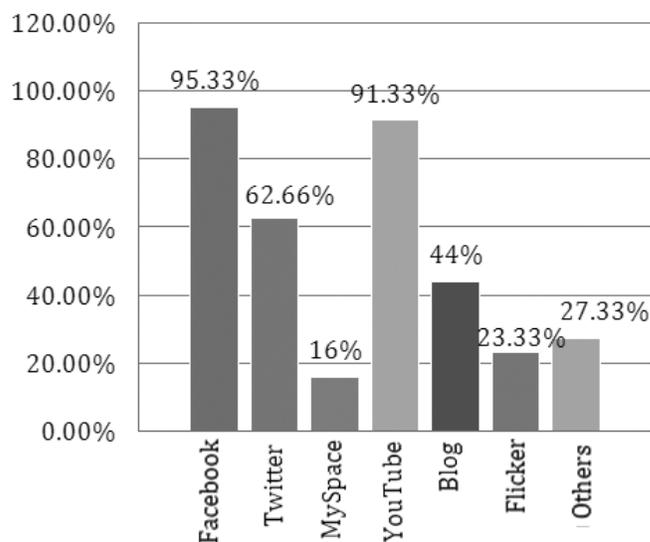


Figure 2. Types of social networking sites used.

(Note: Total percentage is more than 100 because of multiple choices)

6.6 Purposes of using Social Networking Sites

The study made an effort to inspect how many participants using social networking sites for different purposes. Table 3 clearly shows that majority 145 (96.66%) of them using SNSs for communicating and interacting with their friends circle. Significantly, most of the respondents are using Messenger and Google chat box for their day life communication. Apart from this, 139 (92.66%) of them for using SNSs for private messaging, uploading their photos, 134 (89.34%) respondents for academic purposes like group discussion and getting study partners in online, 132 (88%) of respondents using SNSs for leisure and personal socialisation, 127 (84.66%) of them for watching movies, video songs, news etc. and 98 (65.33%) for online learning. Therefore, it is observe that students get tacit

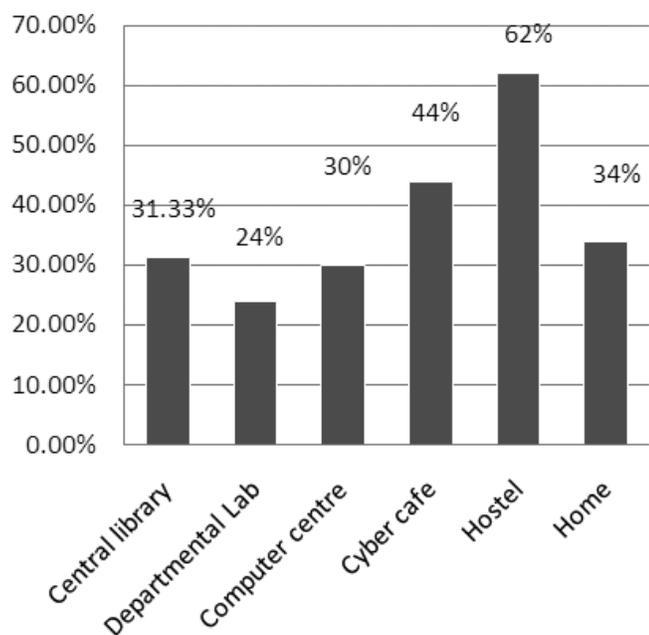


Figure 3. Accessing places of SNSs.

(Note: Total percentage is more than 100 because of multiple choices)

knowledge from SNSs through communicating and discussing their educators, friends and other professionals.

Moreover, the result shows that maximum percent of the respondents using are SNSs positively either communication purpose or academic discussion with their friends and teachers. This finding agreed with the study of Munshi¹⁵ that a large number of the engineering students at AMU using social media for communication followed by academic purposes.

6.7 Opinion about the Role of Social Networking Sites for Academic Purposes

The investigators were asked number of questions related

to the importance of social networking sites for their academic purposes. Majority of the respondents given positive opinions about SNSs for academic field. Table 4 reveals 97 (63.66%) participants strongly agreed, and 53 (35.34%) of them agreed that SNSs help their educational work. The interesting findings come from this study, that nobody can point out SNSs do not help their academic work.

Present study depicted 134 (89.34%) of them strongly agreed, and 16 (10.66%) respondents agreed that SNSs help to build up a good relationship between their classmate, friends and teachers. Not only the present study, but also another study by Kabir^{28,28}, *et al.* had found the similar results that SNSs support to connect their friends circle, parents and teachers across the world. Schlenkrich & Sewry¹³ have stated that ‘SNSs are popular online destinations that offer students, lecturers, teachers, parents and businesses easy ways to build and maintain their relationships with each other’. Therefore, it is clear that SNSs help to build up the better relationship between students and teachers.

The study shows, out of 150 participants, 113 (75.34%) of them strongly agreed, and 35 (23.33%) respondents agreed that, they feel SNSs help to increase their discussions, collaborative work with their classmates and teachers at any time anywhere. Only a few number of respondents 2 (1.33) not given any comments about this question as shown in Table 4.

The investigators put a question that does the SNSs help to get up-to-date information? Majority 115 (76.66%) of them agreed, and 32 (21.34%) respondents strongly agreed that SNSs help to get various information which are beneficial for improving their general knowledge as well as course studies. Only 3 (2%) of them did not answer this question.

Most of the social networking sites provide multiple services to the users like instant messaging, audio chat, video chat, blogging, file sharing, photo-sharing, etc., so that, students can easily interact with each other (Ozkan and McKenzie)³⁰. However, the present study finds 88 (58.66%) respondents

Table 2. Frequency and time spend for using social networking sites

Frequency	Respondents N=150	Percentage	Frequency	Respondents N=150	Percentage
Daily	133	88.66	< 1 h	84	56
Weekly	11	7.34	> 2 h	37	24.66
Monthly	06	4	> 4 h	22	14.66
Occasionally	00	00	> 6 h	07	4.66
When required	00	00	***	***	***

Table 3. Purposes of using SNSs

Questions (Do you use SNSs for ..)	Yes N=150	No N=150
Communicating and interacting with your friends circle?	145 (96.66%)	05 (3.34%)
Online learning?	98 (65.33%)	52 (34.67%)
Finding friends online?	96 (65.34%)	54 (34.66%)
Leisure and personal socialisation?	132 (88%)	18 (12%)
Professional activities (searching for job, higher education centres, etc.)?	86 (57.34%)	64 (42.66%)
Academic purposes such as group discussion and getting study partners online?	134 (89.34%)	16 (10.66%)
Watching movies, video Songs, news, etc.?	127 (84.66%)	23 (15.34%)
Private messaging, uploading photos?	139 (92.66%)	11 (7.33%)

Table 4. Students views regarding the role of social networking sites for academic purposes

Questions (Do you feel that SNSs help in...)	Strongly agree N=150	Agree N=150	Disagree N=150	Not answered N=150
Your educational work?	97 (63.66%)	53 (35.34%)	Nil	Nil
Build up a relationship between your classmates and teachers?	134 (89.34%)	16 (10.66%)	Nil	Nil
Increasing the discussion between your peers and teachers?	113 (75.34%)	35 (23.33%)	Nil	02 (1.33%)
Getting up-to-date information?	32 (21.34%)	115 (76.66%)	Nil	03 (02%)
Spreading various information with peers?	51 (34%)	88 (58.66%)	Nil	11 (7.33%)
Effective media to implement the group studies?	136 (90.66%)	12 (08%)	Nil	02 (1.33%)
Increasing your e-learning habits?	18 (12%)	123 (82%)	Nil	09 (06%)
Getting job information?	91 (60.66%)	57 (38%)	Nil	02 (1.33%)

agreed, and 51 (34%) of them strongly agreed that through SNSs they can easily share several information with their family, friends and teachers. Only 11 (7.33%) respondents did not answer.

Table 4 reveals 136 (90.66%) of them strongly preferred that SNSs is an effective media which help the collaborative work or group studies. Only 12 (8%) of them agreed the following statement and 02 (1.33%) respondents did not answer this question.

The learning pattern has drastically changed with the help of modern technology. These days, students mostly favour e-learning through various electronic devices. According to Nichols³¹ e-learning as 'strictly being accessible using technological tools that are web-based, web-distributed, or web-capable'. Moreover, the investigators put a question from the participants that does SNSs help to increase their e-learning habits? Table 4 highlights that 123 (82%) of them agreed and 18 (12%) respondents strongly agreed that SNSs help to increase their e-learning habits. A few number of participants, 9 (6%) did not answer this question.

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In 21st century ICT has made an impact in all spheres of life, e.g. education, business, industry, etc. As a matter of fact, the communication system has been changed radically. The social networking tools are an online platform where people can freely create an individual account and communicate with their family, friends, classmates, teachers, etc. from one corner to another corner across the World. Such special features having social networking sites which provide a database of users so that people can find their friends, form communities, discusses and connect with others who share similar interests with them.

However, the present study is to determine the importance of social networking sites for educational purposes among the postgraduate students at the University of Rajshahi. The findings shows that majority of the participants having very good knowledge about various SNSs. The respondents mostly preferred Facebook followed by YouTube among the other SNSs. They also reported that Facebook is the most popular and effective SNS. A good number of participant use SNSs daily less than one hour in their hostel. Apart from this, many respondents mentioned that they use SNSs in cyber café and their home for basically communicating as well as for academic

purposes. The results of the study support the notion that students have a positive attitude regarding the importance of SNSs for their academic purposes. The majority of the participants strongly support that SNSs help their educational work and it builds up a good relationship between their educators, friends and other professionals. Notably, investigators have seen many students strongly agreed that it helps to create the collaborative workstation, where students, teachers, and professionals can discuss their problems. They get up-to-date information through SNSs and share their thoughts to the others. Apart from that, investigators have also found, a huge number of respondents strongly agreed that they get various job information through SNSs. Significantly, it is observed that a number of professional have created various pages on Facebook where they regularly update job notifications in several institutions, organisations, etc. in Bangladesh as well as abroad. Moreover, this study demonstrates a large number of respondents strongly supported that SNSs is an effective media which helps to connect with each other for group studies, discussions and social communication. In the present scenario SNSs are the strong media which spreads any information in few second throughout the world.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Mr Shamim Aktar Munshi received his integrated MLISc and PGDLAN, from Pondicherry Central University, India. Currently working as a Senior Research Fellow, Department of Library and Information Science, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India. He is a life member of IASLIC. He has presented a number of papers at various National and International conferences in India and Abroad.

Dr Md. Golam Mostafa received his Master's in Library & Information Science from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and PhD in Library & Information Science from the University of Burdwan, India. Presently working as a Deputy Librarian of Rajshahi University Central Library, Bangladesh. He has authored & co-authored six books, edited two books and compiled four books and published ten articles.

Mr Md. Mahbul Alam has completed his master's in Information Science and Library Management from Dhaka University, Bangladesh. Presently working as an Additional Librarian at the Central Library of Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology, Rajshahi, Bangladesh. He has authored 5 articles in journals/conferences.