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THE PATTERNS OF USAGE AND PERCEIVED IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ON MEDICAL STUDENTS' EDUCATION

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Background. The use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) is rising among today's college students. Instructors are beginning to consider the possible significance and implications of social media for education practice and provision; making it a target for further research.

Aims. To know the patterns of usage and the perceived positive and negative effects of SNSs on students' education.

Methods. A cross-sectional study was done in University of Sharjah using Qouta sampling method to enroll first to third year students in the colleges of Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy. Self-administered questionnaires were completed. Data was processed and analyzed using SPSS 22.

Results: A total of 350 students (74% females and 26% males) participated in the study. YouTube ranked first as the SNS used for educational purposes (52.7%), while Facebook was first for non-educational purposes (45.2%). Smartphones were most used to access SNSs (80.3%), which explains why 69.1% had SNSs always run on their devices. Videos (55.3%) and photos (24.3%) were the most preferred media for educational enhancement. Of our total sample, 92.2% thought that SNSs are helpful in studying mainly due to fast access to information (78.6%), easy communication (69.2%) and aiding colleague socialization (45%). Those who disagreed said that it wastes time (66.7%) and that the information is not always authentic (33.5%).

Conclusion: Many students now depend greatly on SNSs to enhance their learning experience, as they believe that their positive effect on education outweighs the negative. Thus, we suggest implementing SNSs in the educational process to a greater extent.

Biography

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