

MODERN TOOLS FOR LEARNING: STUDENTS`S PERCEPTIONS OF USING FACEBOOK

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Abstract

The main purpose of the present study is to explore students`perceptions towards Facebook educational usage. Nowadays it is clearly evident the crucial role of social media. Facebook is today used both by teachers and students on their current activities. Due to its growing popularity it is important to understand why students use Facebook for academic purposes. Considering that, a total of 108 students from Bucharest University of Economic Studies participated in a research regarding their attitudes about using Facebook as an educational tool.

Keywords: Facebook, social media, higher education, students`perceptions

JEL classification: I23

1. Introduction

Facebook is unequivocally the most popular online social networking site (Chen, 2018), with more than 2.45 billion global monthly active users according to data from 2019 (Statista, 2019). It is also a very popular online platform among students, given that many of them are looking to appropriate it in order to enhance their learning experience (Menzies, Petrie and Zarb, 2015). From this point of view, Facebook could be seen as an interactive educational platform.

Mazman and Usluel (2010) highlight three dimensions of Facebook educational usage synthesized as communication, collaboration and sharing. Moreover, according to recent research, resource sharing and collaboration are the most influencing factors in adopting Facebook for academic purposes (Manasijević, Živković, Arsić and Milošević, 2016).

We are in an era of a changing world, so education faces today numerous challenges. But along with the challenges new opportunities arrive from digitalization and social media. Facebook offers great opportunities for higher education such as facilitating communication among students and their professors, exchanging materials and documents and so on. Its numerous advantages make it an essential choice for learning and teaching (Chugh and Ruhi, 2017). Taking into consideration that almost all students and professors have Facebook accounts, Facebook can be used as a modern educational tool.

Interaction with peers and developing good relationships create social support and sense of belonging (Yu, 2010). Lambič (2016) emphasizes that social networking sites in general and Facebook in particular make students feel more connected with their colleagues. Though Facebook is primarily a technological tool for social rather than academic purposes (Voivonta and Avraamidou, 2018), students often try to integrate it into the learning process.

2. The aim of the paper

Undoubtedly, Facebook has changed education in many ways. Traditional practices have been replaced by modern ones. From the literature review one can easily observe that Facebook is perceived as an important part of students'life. An interesting finding (Robandi, Kunitati and Sari, 2018) is that communication and digital information influence in a significant manner education and particularly higher education.

But why do students use Facebook and how useful do they think is for educational purposes? Given the above, the main goal of this paper is to better explore students'perceptions towards educational usage of Facebook today.

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3. Methodology

108 undergraduate students from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies responded to a questionnaire in order to collect data regarding their attitudes about Facebook educational usage. The first section included questions about students' demographics (gender and age), number of Facebook friends (How many friends do you have on Facebook?) and the amount of time spent on Facebook (How many hours do you spend daily on Facebook?).

The second part of the questionnaire included 5 questions, as follows:

Q1: On a scale from 1 (totally useless) to 5 (very useful), how useful do you think Facebook is related to academic purposes?

Q2: On a scale from 1 (totally useless) to 5 (very useful), how useful do you find Facebook for the improvement of academic performance?

Q3: On a scale from 1 (totally useless) to 5 (very useful), how useful do you think spending more time on Facebook is for academic purposes?

Q4: In your opinion, the main advantages of Facebook educational usage are (mark all that apply):

- facilitates interaction among colleagues;
- increases students' motivation to graduate;
- improves the sense of belonging to an academic group;
- information exchange and material sharing;
- other.

Q5: How many hours do you spend daily on Facebook regarding educational purposes?

- 1 hour;
- 2 hours;
- 3 hours;
- 4 hours;
- ≥ 5 hours.

4. Results

Descriptive statistics of the survey respondents are presented in Table 1. As we can observe, 90 (83.33%) females and 18 (16.67%) males between the ages of 18 and 26 responded to the questionnaire. Most of students spend 1-2 hours per day on Facebook, having more than 501 online friends.

Table no. 1: Descriptive statistics of respondents

Item		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	18	16.67
	Female	90	83.33
Age	18-20	84	77.78
	21-23	21	19.44
	24-26	3	2.78
Facebook usage (hours per day)	1-2 h	56	51.85
	3-4 h	27	25
	≥ 5 h	25	23.15
Friends on Facebook	< 300	24	22.22
	301-500	22	20.37
	501-1000	32	29.63
	> 1001	30	27.78

Source: Author's representation using respondents answers

In table 2 are presented reasons why students use Facebook as an educational tool. Results show that students choose Facebook mainly for information exchange and materials sharing. Also, Facebook educational usage may improve the sense of belonging to an academic group and

facilitate interaction among colleagues according to the answers. Moreover, a few students think that Facebook could increase their motivation in order to graduate.

Table no. 2: Reasons of Facebook use by students

facilitates interaction among colleagues	56
increases students' motivation to graduate	6
improves the sense of belonging to an academic group	28
information exchange and material sharing	95
other	0

Source: Author's representation using respondents answers

As shown in the figure below, the usefulness of Facebook related to academic purposes is positively perceived by students (54.63%). Only 17.59% find it useless with regard to the educational environment. The results suggest that Facebook is getting more popular among students as a modern tool for educational activities.

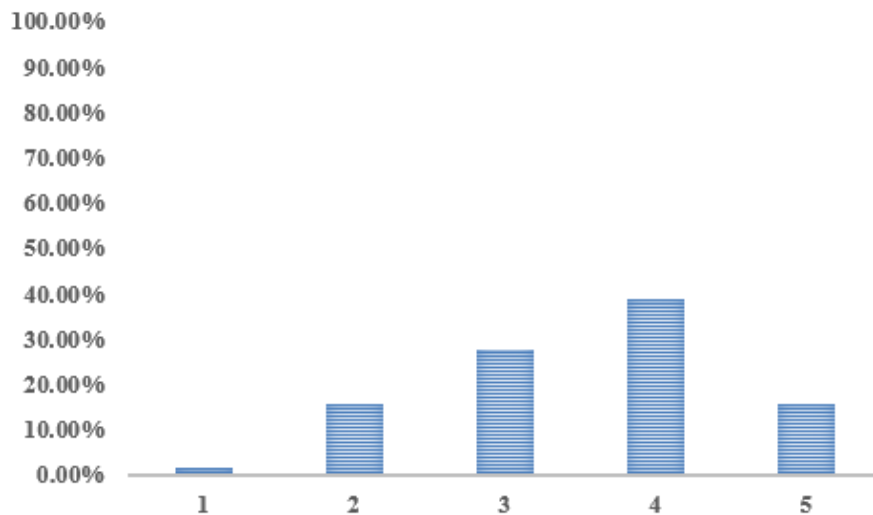


Figure no. 1: Usefulness of Facebook for academic purposes

Source: Author's representation using respondents answers

Figure 2 illustrates students' attitude towards the possibility of spending more time on Facebook for academic purposes. From the respondents answers we can observe that only 34.26% of students would allocate more time for such thing.

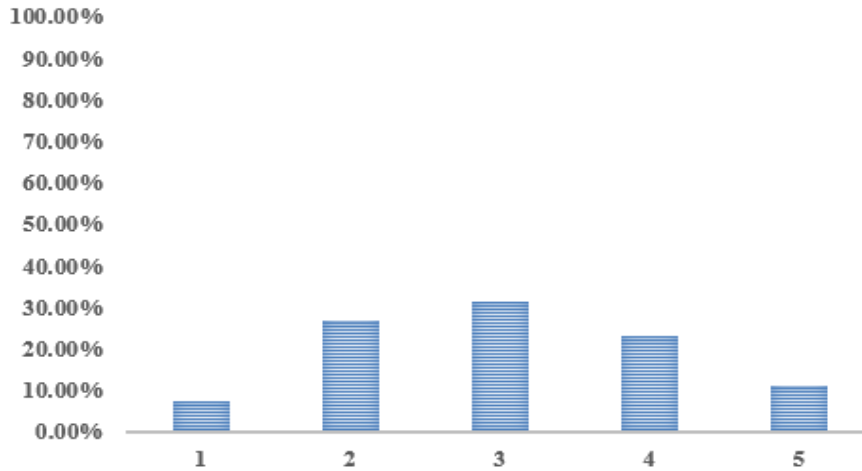


Figure no. 2: Students`attitudes about spending more time on Facebook for academic purposes

Source: Author`s representation using respondents answer

As shown in figure 3, while most students find Facebook useful for educational purposes, they do not think it can improve academic performance. We found a negative perception in regard to this variable, which it means further research on this subject is necessary.

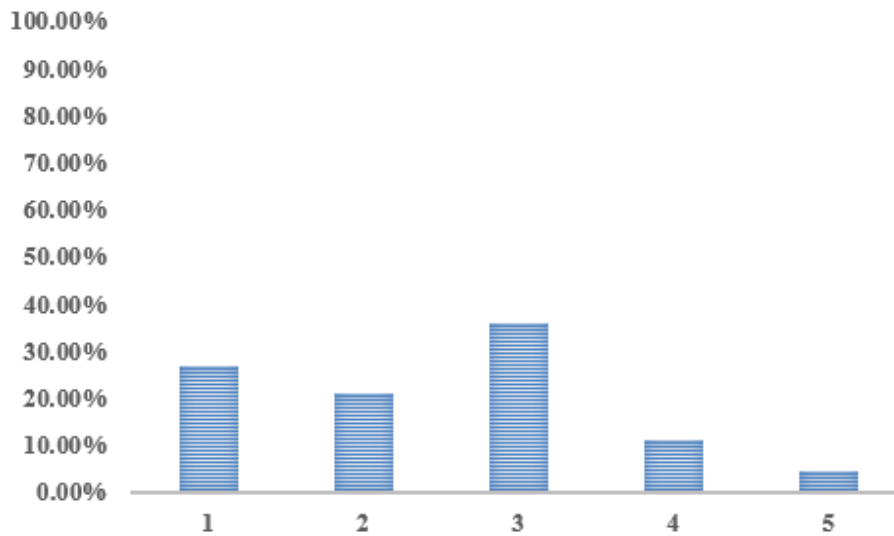


Figure no. 3: Improvement of academic performance related to Facebook

Source: Author`s representation using respondents answers

As figure 4 shows, most students allocate only one hour to Facebook for academic purposes (78.70 %) and 10.19 % of them spend 2 hours a day for such activity. According to these results Facebook is still used mainly for social reasons, as previous studies reported.

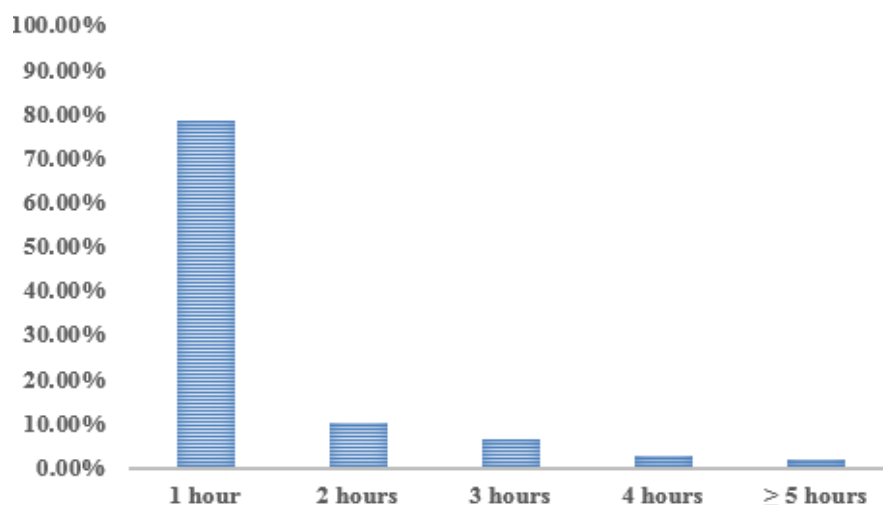


Figure 4: The amount of time spent on Facebook for educational purposes

Source: Author's representation using respondents answers

5. Conclusion and future research

The paper explored some aspects of Facebook uses among students, for a better application of social media in the context of higher education. As Sanchez et al (2014) pointed out, Facebook has the potential to promote collaborative and cooperative learning.

The results of the study revealed that 54.63% of students think that Facebook is useful and very useful for educational purposes, but the educational use of Facebook is still limited when discussing time students spend on academic motivations. The majority of them spend only one hour a day for academic activities.

The results indicated no relationship existing between Facebook educational usage and the improvement on academic performance. Only 15.74% of students have a positive perception of the use of Facebook and their academic performance.

Furthermore, we note that information and materials sharing as well as the interaction among colleagues are the main reasons why students use Facebook as an educational tool. It was found that Facebook also has the potential to improve the sense of belonging to an academic group.

The main limitations of the study are related to the small number of questions and to the small sample size.

Further investigation is needed to explore other aspects of Facebook within higher education given that Facebook continues to be the most popular social networking site among students. Future research may be focused on the relationship between Facebook educational usage and students' satisfaction.

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