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Use of Social Media in Academic Activities by LIS Students: a study in a public university in Bangladesh

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Introduction

In this age of internet, life age has become easier and smoother than before. We can easily browse, access, store, retrieve and disseminate our necessary information comfortably using the various features of internet. Social media is a platform of internet which helps people connecting to each other by sharing their thoughts, experiences, pictures, audio, video, chatting via text messages, audio call, video call, and getting information from others (Eke, Omekwuand & Odoh, 2014). However, social media can be defined as an online service, or area where social relations and communication can be established, and where individuals share various information (Tiryakioglu & Erzurum, 2011). William (2009) defines social media sites as technological tools used by the internet users for developing mutual relationships and for games, business and academic purposes. The use of various social networking sites, i.e., Facebook, blogs, Twitter, web conferencing and LinkedIn has become a universal and standard communication medium (Bandias & Gilding, 2012). Nowadays, social media is being widely used not only for communication purpose but also for educational purposes by the students, teachers and academic staffs.

Since its origin, social media tools have attracted especially young people and university students (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Compared to the students of developed countries, students of developing countries are also using social media platforms for satisfying their educational needs. University students of Bangladesh use various social media platforms in their academic activities. University of Dhaka is one of the oldest and largest public universities in Bangladesh and department of Information Science and Library Management (ISLM) is one of the oldest departments of this university. In other countries of the world, this discipline is also known as Library and Information Science (LIS). However, the present study aims to investigate the use of social media in academic activities by the students of this department.

Literature Review

The impact of social media in educational sectors is beyond description. There have been several studies on the use of various social networking sites in education. For example, Hung & Yuen (2010) conducted a study among the students of two public universities in Taiwan to explore the use of social networking technology in face-to-face courses to enhance students' sense of community and to promote classroom communities of practice in higher education. The findings

showed that majority of the students experienced a favorable feeling in their learning in the classes where social media was used as a supplementary tool. Al-Rahmi, *et al.* (2015) investigated the relationship between social media usage and enhancement of academic performance of the research students of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. The findings showed that social media has significant effect on the students' academic performance with collaborative learning.

Few researchers aimed to explore the use and importance of social media in educational sector. Delello, McWhorter & Camp (2015) conducted a multidisciplinary study using seven social media platforms: Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Skype and Second Life. The framework of the study was formed by three concepts- personal meaning, engagement and community building. Kalia (2013) conducted a survey to study social media's relevance and importance in educational sector and found that it is being used for making presentations, updating assignments, conducting research and staying connected to others. In a theoretical study, Tess (2013) reviewed a number of literatures to study how social media places its role in higher education classes, both real and virtual. The author focused on the utility and effectiveness of social media in higher education class and discussed some limitations. Castro-Romero (2015) explored the use of social media as a learning tool in higher education in Mexico and South Korea. On that theoretical study, author described the features and mechanisms of social media for learning, technological environments and the effect of learning.

Some studies have focused on the educational use of some specific social networking sites. For example, Tower, Latimer & Hewitt (2014) conducted an online survey among the nursing students to examine their perceptions on the efficiency of using Facebook as a study support tool. The study found that social networking sites, i.e., Facebook have the ability to make students self-efficient in learning and can help them develop their education to a deeper level. Dar, *et al.* (2017) conducted a study to explore the use of WhatsApp among medical students and found that most of the students used social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) to learn medicine. Diug, Kendal & Ilic (2016) explored how social media, especially Twitter can be used successfully as a tool to increase medical students' engagement with course materials, peers and other staffs. It was found that Twitter enables greater student-staff engagement and facilitates peer-peer collaboration. Moghavvemi, *et al.* (2018) analysed students' use of YouTube as a learning tool, their usage pattern and factors influencing them to use YouTube and found that the students use YouTube mainly for entertainment, searching information and to support academic learning.

Some studies focused on students' perceptions on educational use of social media. For example, Wiid, Cant & Nell (2013) analyzed students' perceptions of using social media, the purpose of using it, and whether they believe social media as an effective and easy way to study course content; Kutbi (2015) explored how undergraduate female students in Saudi Arabia perceive social media as an educational tool; Williams & Adesope (2017) conducted a survey among 300 undergraduate students of the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria to investigate their attitude towards the use of social networking sites for learning purposes. All studies found that students possess a positive attitude towards using social media in education.

Very few studies focused on the educators to explore the use of social media in teaching. For example, Prescott, *et al.* (2014) interviewed seven academic members to explore their experience of using Facebook as an educational tool; Bold & Yadamsuren (2019) interviewed 25 university educators to investigate the use of social media in higher education in Mongolia. The studies revealed that most of the educators considered social media as a useful tool for teaching.

Social media in education in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, very few researchers focused on the educational use of social media by the students. For example, Mouri & Arshad (2016) investigated the relationship between academic performance and use of social networking sites by the students of three private universities in Bangladesh. Researchers chose Facebook as a representative social networking site. The study revealed that Facebook can be used in various academic activities and it does not reduce students study time and academic result. Jahan & Ahmed (2012) investigated Dhaka University students' perceptions on academic use of social media. Researchers used a survey questionnaire for the study. The study found that the students showed a positive attitude towards academic use of social media. In a study, Munshi, Mostafa & Alam (2018) investigated the use of social media in education by the postgraduate students of Rajshahi University. The study found a positive attitude by the students towards the role of social media in academic settings. The study also showed that most of the students prefer Facebook than other sites and urged that social media helps in their education and builds a good relationship with their friends, family members and teachers. Shohrwardhy & Hassan (2014) aimed to determine the students' perception on academic use of social media and its impact on their academic performance. Researchers surveyed a questionnaire among 480 students of different private and public universities in Chittagong. They found that most of the students reported a positive impact of social media in their academic purposes.

However, a number of studies have been conducted on different purposive use of social media in education. But no such study focused on the LIS students to investigate how they use social media in their academic activities. For this reason, the present study aims to explore the academic use of social media by LIS students of Dhaka University.

Objective of the study

The initial objective of this study is to explore how the Library and Information Science students of Dhaka University are using various social networking sites for satisfying their academic needs and activities. We have come up with some research questions (RQs) to address this objective. The RQs are:

RQ1: How do the students use social network?

RQ2: Which social media tools do they use frequently for academic activities?

RQ3: What is their main purpose of using social media in academic activities?

RQ4: What is the impact of social media in their education?

RQ5: Are there any significant differences among the students in terms of their use of different social media tools and purposes of using social media in academic activities?

For addressing the fifth research question, Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis tests were performed to measure the differences between students' demographic information, i.e., gender, age group and level of education in terms of different social media tools they use in academic activities and their purposes of using social media in academic activities.

Methodology

Instrument development

For the present study, an online survey was conducted to collect responses only from the students of the department of Information Science and Library Management, University of Dhaka. A well-structured questionnaire was designed using Google Forms which contained both open and close-ended questions. The constructs of the questionnaire were gathered by reviewing several existing literatures on social media and some were self-developed as shown in table 1. The questionnaire included 5-point Likert Scale items regarding the frequency of using some social media tools and students' use of social media in their academic activities.

Table 1: Questionnaire items along with their sources

No	Questions	Sources
Q1	Do you use social media? (If you do not use social media, then mark "No" and then go to question 12)	Self-developed
Q2	Which of the following social media accounts do you have? (Multiple answers possible)	Adapted from Williams and Adesope (2017)
Q3	How do you get access to social media accounts? (Multiple answers possible)	Adapted from Jahan and Ahmed (2012)
Q4	How many years have you been using social media?	Self-developed
Q5	How often do you use social media?	Adapted from Akter and Islam (2019)
Q6	How many hours in a DAY do you spend in social media?	Self-developed
Q7	Please mention how frequently you use the following tools for your academic activities [1=Never to Very frequently=5]	Self-developed
Q8	Please rate your opinion on the following statements of using social media in academic activities [1=Strongly disagree to Strongly agree=5]	Adapted from Jahan and Ahmed (2012)
Q9	In your opinion, what impact does social media places on your education?	Adapted from Raut and Patil (2016)
Q10	Please put forward any suggestion on how to use social media more effectively in education.	Self-developed
Q11	If you do not use social media, why? (Avoid this question if you use social media)	Self-developed
Demographic information		Self-developed

Study population and sample selection

Only the students of the selected department of Dhaka University were the population for this study. As it was an online survey, the questionnaire was distributed among the participants using various social media platforms. Firstly, the link to the questionnaire was posted on the wall of the common Facebook group of all the students of the department. Then, it was posted on the wall of individual groups of each batch including their messenger group. The link was also distributed to some participants via email.

Data collection and analysis

The study aimed to cover the students of six batches of the department (five running batches and one recently passed) and got responses from 123 students in total. The survey began in the last week of March 2020 and continued through last week of April 2020. The collected data were downloaded to Excel and then analyzed using both MS Excel and IBM SPSS version 20.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze demographic information of the students in relation to their social media usage.

Findings of the study

A total of 123 students responded to the survey. Among them 59 (48.0%) were male and 64 (52.0%) were female. The highest number of respondents (73; 59.3%) was from the 20-22 age group. They were followed by the age groups 23 or more and 17-19 respectively. The age distribution of all the students is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Participating students' age group and gender

Age group	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
17-19 years	11 (8.9)	8 (6.5)	19 (15.4)
20-22 years	28 (22.8)	45 (36.6)	73 (59.3)
23 or more	20 (16.3)	11 (8.9)	31 (25.2)
Total	59 (48.0)	64 (52.0)	123 (100.0)

Graduate level of students (33; 26.8%) constituted the largest group of respondents. Significant responses were also received from honors 1st year (29; 23.6%), 2nd year (24; 19.5%) and 3rd year (23; 18.7%) students. The lowest number of students responded to the survey were from honors 4th year (14; 11.4%) (see table 3).

Table 3: Participating students' education level and gender

Education level	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Honors 1 st year	16 (13.0)	13 (10.6)	29 (23.6)
Honors 2 nd year	9 (7.3)	15 (12.2)	24 (19.5)
Honors 3 rd year	6 (4.9)	17 (13.8)	23 (18.7)
Honors 4 th year	6 (4.9)	8 (6.5)	14 (11.4)
Graduate	22 (17.9)	11 (8.9)	33 (26.8)
Total	59 (48.0)	64 (52.0)	123 (100.0)

Highest number (16; 13.0%) of 1st year students were from 17-19 age group and the rest (13; 10.6%) were from 20-22 age group. On the other hand, the highest number (20; 16.3%) of 2nd year students were from 20-22 age group. Similarly, 20-22 age group occupies the highest number of 3rd year (21; 17.1%) and 4th year (11; 8.9%) students. But the highest number (25; 20.3%) of graduate students were from 23 or more age group (see table 4).

Table 4: Participating students' education level and age group

Education level	17-19 (%)	20-22 (%)	23 or more (%)	Total (%)
Honors 1 st year	16 (13.0)	13 (10.6)	0 (0.0)	29 (23.6)
Honors 2 nd year	3 (2.4)	20 (16.3)	1 (0.8)	24 (19.5)

Honors 3 rd year	0 (0.0)	21 (17.1)	2 (1.6)	23 (18.7)
Honors 4 th year	0 (0.0)	11 (8.9)	3 (2.4)	14 (11.4)
Graduate	0 (0.0)	8 (6.5)	25 (20.3)	33 (26.8)
Total	19 (15.4)	73 (59.3)	31 (25.2)	123 (100.0)

Students' use of social networking sites

Among 123 respondents, all of them (100%) used various social networking sites. Many students used several social media simultaneously. It is interesting that nearly all respondents (121; 98.4%) had at least a Facebook account. Besides Facebook, other most commonly used social media sites were YouTube (105; 85.4%), WhatsApp (93; 75.6%), Instagram (74; 60.2%) and Google+ (48; 39.0%). Students also used Twitter (38; 30.9%), LinkedIn (37; 30.1%), Snapchat (29; 23.6%), Skype (19; 15.4%), Viber (16; 13.0%). The lowest number of students (3; 2.4%) had an Imo account (see table 5).

Table 5: Participating students' use of social networking sites

Social networking sites	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Facebook	121	98.4	2	1.6	123	100.0
YouTube	105	85.4	18	14.6	123	100.0
Twitter	38	30.9	85	69.1	123	100.0
WhatsApp	93	75.6	30	24.4	123	100.0
Viber	16	13.0	107	87.0	123	100.0
LinkedIn	37	30.1	86	69.9	123	100.0
Instagram	74	60.2	49	39.8	123	100.0
Google+	48	39.0	75	61.0	123	100.0
Skype	19	15.4	104	84.6	123	100.0
Snapchat	29	23.6	94	76.4	123	100.0
Imo	3	2.4	120	97.6	123	100.0

Most of the students accessed social media accounts by using Wi-Fi (87; 70.7%) and mobile data (83; 67.5%). The lowest percentage of students used only broadband connection (2; 1.6%) to access social media. 28 (22.8%) students used all of these three types of connection to access their social media accounts (see table 6).

Table 6: Participating students' type of access to social media

Connection type	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Mobile data	83	67.5	40	32.5	123	100.0
Broadband connection	2	1.6	121	98.4	123	100.0
Wi-Fi	87	70.7	36	29.3	123	100.0
All of these	28	22.8	95	77.2	123	100.0

Figure 1 shows students' years of using social media. The largest group of respondents (40%) was using social network sites for more than 5 years. A fairly large group of students (34%) mentioned that they were using social media for 4-5 years. A significant number of students (23%) were also using them for 2-3 years. Only a few respondents (3%) indicated that they were using social network sites for 1 or less than a year.

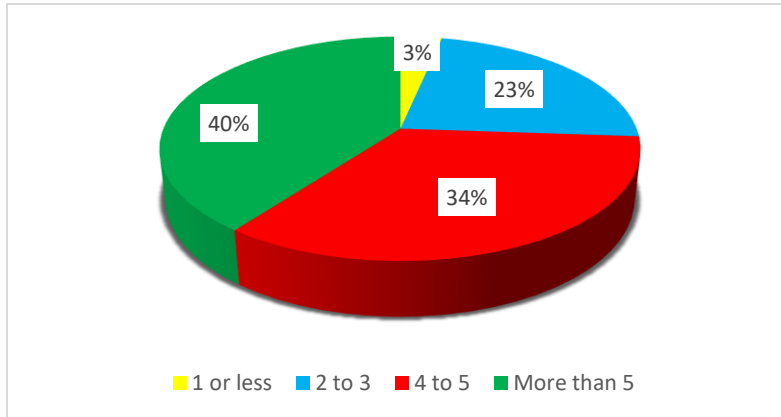


Figure 1: Participating students' years of using social media

The bar diagram in figure 2 illustrates how frequently the students use social media. Out of 123 students, majority (59) used social media frequently followed by a fairly good number of students (41) used it very frequently and the rest of the students (23) used social media sometimes.

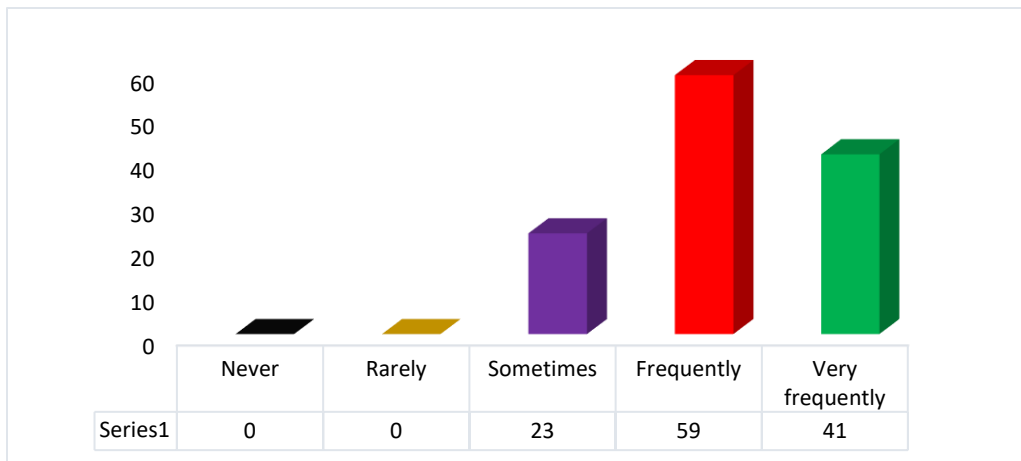


Figure 2: Participating students' frequency of using social media

Highest number of male students (27) used social media 2 to 3 hours per day whereas highest number of female students (25) used it more than 5 hours daily. In Figure 3 it has been shown that only 8 male and 4 female students used social media 1 or less than an hour per day. 20 female students used social media 2 to 3 hours per day and 10 male students used it more than 5 hours in a day. 14 male and 15 female students used social media 4 to 5 hours daily.

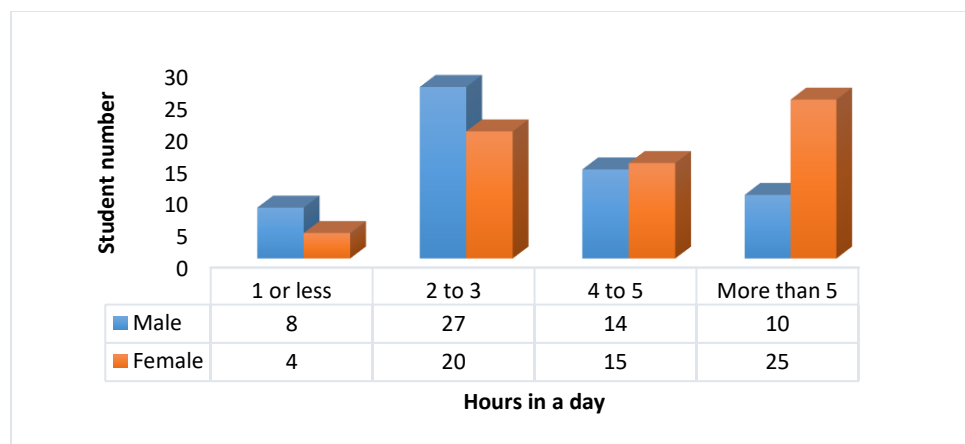


Figure 3: Participating students’ daily hours of using social media and gender

Social media tools used for academic activities

We asked the students to rate their opinion on their use of some social media services for academic activities. Table 7 shows that majority of them used Facebook group (weighted mean 3.86 ranked 1) and Messenger group (weighted mean 3.85 ranked 2) very frequently. Personal messaging/ mailing (weighted mean 3.70 ranked 3), Facebook page (weighted mean 3.46 ranked 4) and Email groups (weighted mean 3.10 ranked 5) were also used frequently for academic activities. Some of the students sometimes or rarely used Google (Virtual) classroom (weighted mean 2.89 ranked 6) and WhatsApp, Viber or any other group (weighted mean 2.89 ranked 7) for satisfying their academic needs.

Table 7: Weighted mean scores for students’ frequency of using social media tools for academic activities

Social media tools	1	2	3	4	5	Wt. Mean	Rank
Facebook group	3(2.4)	12(9.8)	47(38.2)	34(27.6)	27(22.0)	3.86	1
Messenger group	4(3.3)	12(9.8)	43(35.0)	39(31.7)	25(20.3)	3.85	2
Personal messaging/ mailing	9(7.3)	21(17.1)	45(36.6)	23(18.7)	25(20.3)	3.70	3
Facebook page	12(9.8)	31(25.2)	43(35.0)	19(15.4)	18(14.6)	3.46	4
Email group	22(17.9)	26(21.1)	52(42.3)	17(13.8)	6(4.9)	3.10	5
Google (Virtual) classroom	25(20.3)	36(29.3)	49(39.8)	7(5.7)	6(4.9)	2.89	6
WhatsApp, Viber, other groups	44(35.8)	31(25.2)	30(24.4)	10(8.1)	8(6.5)	2.89	7

Note: The numbers into the parenthesis indicates percentage and the Weighted Mean were assigned to each individual item (1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Frequently; 5=Very frequently).

Purposes of using social media in academic activities

Students were asked to rate their opinion on some statements on using social media in academic activities on a 5-point Likert scale. The results shown in table 8 suggested that students were more likely to use social media for sharing departmental information and notices and for exchanging documents and lecture sheets among them provided by their teachers. In general, students' opinion in all suggested statements as their ratings fell above 3 (i.e., the average score). However, using social media to communicate with teachers got the lowest rating. The reason may be the fact that student-teacher relationship is considered to be formal in Bangladesh and thus many students seem unwilling to use social network for online discussion with their teachers.

Table 8: Ranked mean scores on students' purposes of using social media for academic activities

Educational purposes	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sharing departmental information and notices	4.59	.572
Exchanging documents and lecture sheets provided by teachers	4.57	.654
Preparing presentations and assignments	4.53	.577
Conducting research	4.51	.670
Performing online discussion	4.32	.761
Communicating with class teachers	3.95	.895

Impact of social media in education

Students were asked for their opinion on the impact of social media on their education. Figure 4 illustrates the number of their responses. Majority of the students from all education levels stated that social media places a positive impact on their education. Highest 31 graduate students, 18 from both 1st and 3rd year, 15 from 2nd year and 11 students from honors 4th year rated it positive. A total of 12 students rated that social media had a negative impact on their education. And, the rest 18 students were not sure whether the impact was positive or negative.

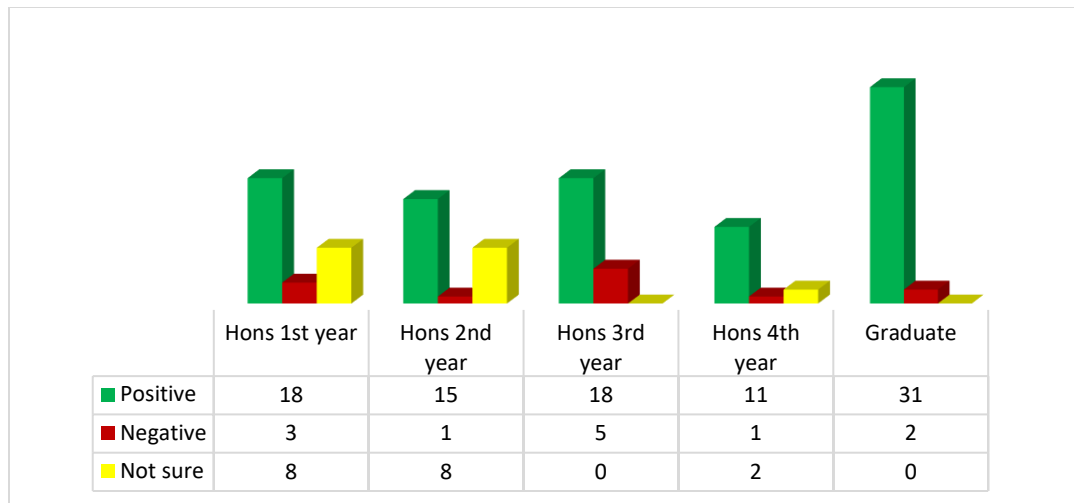


Figure 4: Participating students' opinion on the impact of social media in education and education level

Comparisons of students' use of social media tools and purposes of using social media in academic activities

Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests were carried out to find the differences in students use of different social media tools in academic activities and purposes of using social media in academic activities based on their gender, age group and education level. Table 9 shows the Mann-Whitney U test results for students use of social media tools in terms of their gender. The test results found no significant differences between male and female students use of different social media tools, except in two cases, i.e., Facebook group and Facebook page. In these cases, the mean ranks of male students were higher than female students suggesting that male students used these tools more frequently than female students.

Table 9: Differences in use of social media tools in terms of gender (Mann-Whitney U test)

Social media tools	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Facebook group	1369.500	3449.500	-2.749	.006**
Messenger group	1834.500	3604.500	-.283	.777
Email group	1752.500	3522.500	-.720	.471
Google (Virtual) classroom	1751.000	3521.000	-.730	.465
Facebook page	1395.500	3475.500	-2.580	.010**
Personal messaging or mailing	1769.000	3539.000	-.624	.532
WhatsApp, Viber or other groups	1763.000	3533.000	-.659	.510

Notes: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$

Table 10 shows the Kruskal-Wallis test results for students' use of social media tools in terms of their age group and education level. The test results found no significant differences between

different age groups for their use of different social media tools, except in two cases, i.e., Facebook group and Personal messaging and mailing. In these cases, the mean ranks of “23 or more” age group were higher than other age groups suggesting that students of 23 years or more ages used these tools more frequently than the students of other age groups. On the other hand, no significant differences were found in four out of seven items of students use of social media tools in terms of their education level, but significant differences were found in the case of Facebook group, Facebook page and Personal messaging and mailing. In the cases of Facebook group and personal messaging and mailing, the mean ranks of graduate students were higher than other students meaning that the graduate students more frequently used Facebook groups and personal messaging and mailing than the students of other education levels. In the case of Facebook page, the mean rank of Honors 4th year students was higher than other students meaning that the students of honors 4th year more frequently used Facebook page than the students of other education levels.

Table 10: Differences in use of social media tools in terms of age group and education level (Kruskal-Wallis tests)

Social media tools	Age group			Level of education		
	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Facebook group	20.753	2	.000***	35.046	4	.000***
Messenger group	5.568	2	.062	8.772	4	.067
Email group	.014	2	.993	2.754	4	.600
Google (Virtual) classroom	.690	2	.708	7.377	4	.117
Facebook page	2.137	2	.343	14.726	4	.005**
Personal messaging or mailing	6.683	2	.035*	17.625	4	.001***
WhatsApp, Viber or other groups	2.830	2	.243	5.478	4	.242

Notes: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$

Similarly, to measure the differences for students’ purposes of using social media in terms of their gender, age group and education level, separate Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis tests were performed. The test results found no difference in students’ purposes of using social media based on their demographic characteristics.

Discussion and recommendations

The primary goal of the study was to investigate how the LIS students of University of Dhaka use various social media in their academic purposes. The findings of this study are supported by the findings of several previous studies in this area. In **RQ1**, it was found that Facebook and YouTube are most used social networking sites by the respondents. Majority of the students access social

media frequently using Wi-Fi and mobile data. It is quite natural as recently Facebook has gained more attention by the students compared to other social networking sites. Also, campus-wide Wi-Fi is available at residential halls of Dhaka University and dept. of ISLM provides free Wi-Fi facilities for the students. These findings support the findings of Munshi, Mostafa & Alam (2018) where the researchers found that Facebook (95.33%) and YouTube (91.33%) are the frequently used and popular social media sites by the post graduate students of Rajshahi University. In **RQ2**, it was found that most of the students use social media for educational purposes and Facebook groups and messenger groups are their preferable tools in this case. This finding is in line with the finding of Bold & Yadamsuren (2019) where it is found that all of the Mongolian University educators use Facebook groups mainly to communicate with colleagues, professionals and students and post the study materials on those groups. In **RQ3**, it was found that the educational use of social media by students lies mainly in sharing departmental notices and sharing and exchanging academic information with their classmates. Due to the use of Facebook and messenger batch groups, it has become easier for them to share important notices and documents. These results are supported by the findings of Jahan & Ahmed (2012) where the authors found that majority of the students of Dhaka University used social media to communicate with other students in their courses and view their course schedules. In **RQ4**, it was found that majority of the students from all education levels stated that social media places a positive impact on their education. This is quite true as the availability of various social networking sites has made the educational process easier than before and the students can easily become up-to-dated with their classmates and teachers also. Our result is supported by the findings of Shohrwardhy & Hassan (2014) where the researchers found that most of the students of different private and public universities in Chittagong reported a positive impact of social media in their academic purposes. In **RQ5**, Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests were carried out to find the differences in students' use of different social media tools in academic activities and purposes of using social media in academic activities based on their gender, age group and education level. The test results suggested that, in some cases, students' use of social media in academic activities varied based on their demographic characteristics; but no significant differences were found in their purpose of using social media in academic activities based on their demographic characteristics.

Finally, our findings can be summarized as follows: most of the LIS students of Dhaka University use social media in their academic purposes and they possess a positive attitude towards it. They

have embraced social media like other web-based services, i.e., cloud services (see Atikuzzaman and Islam, 2020). They are not behind the use of these modern services and Facebook has become a part of their life. They often use these tools to share academic information with each other by using different groups. These findings can surely provide a clear understanding that social media has become a part and parcel of students' academic activities. Hence, the academic body of Dhaka university needs to find effective ways to properly implement various social media sites in the provision of quality teaching among the students.

Conclusion and future studies

The popularity of social networking sites among LIS students of Dhaka University is indisputable. Because of students' incredible interest in social media, it is necessary to find ways to engage their use in academic activities. Hence, more research is needed to explore the ways how these sites could be utilized to improve teaching and learning in the department and also in University of Dhaka. This is the first attempt to study the use of social media among the LIS students of Dhaka University. This study indicates that social media holds great chances for transforming education in countries like Bangladesh. However, our study has some limitations as well. The response rate was low and could not include all the students of the department. Further studies can be conducted including more sample size and other departments as well.

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