



Impact of Social Media Networks on the Social Life of University Students

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Abstract

This research aimed to examine the impact of social media on the social life of university students with a focus on international students in Thailand. This research also explored how social networking practices affect their social life. Social life in this study encompassed the neglected part of the student's life, including social relations, networking methods, and informal social circles in his daily life. Examining social life and social networking practices helped us understand the importance of social media for international students and how it affected them at university. This study followed a qualitative and deductive approach and collected primary data through structured interviews. The results showed that all students use different social media applications as a means of long hours, which affects other areas of their lives, including their social life.

Keywords: social life, social media network, international student.

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Introduction and Background to the Study

Introduction and Background Rationale

The concept of social media started in the 2000s³ and henceforth has been influencing the personal and social lives of all netizens⁴ globally (Hauben, 1995). The netizen also refers to the introduction of computer networks into society which has led to the claim that entirely new forms of society are now possible and have better chances of surviving in the rapidly changing world dictated by technology. This group of people, AKA netizens have created the internet or cyberspace culture or cyberculture (Goi, 2009). Social media originated to make human interaction more convenient and faster than the same occurring in real-life scenario (Raghavendra et al., 2014).

It has been observed that the adoption of social media was very fast, especially among university students who are young, technology-friendly, and seeking social networking (Salloum et al., 2018). Their keenness in the adoption of technology due to their young age, their adventure-mindedness and their thirst for novel ideation to solve day-to-day social life problems are likely to be facilitated by social media platforms and self-seeking technology-friendly mindset. Today social media is an essential communication medium in professional as well as personal life. The social media platforms offer a wide variety of communication tools (Baruah, 2012) that have verbal, non-verbal, visual, and written modes such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Blogger, Vlogger, X, TikTok, etc. It makes it easier for university students to connect with their teachers, classmates, friends, and family. Generally, international students always want to be in touch with their friends and family no matter how far away they are. Social media platforms keep people in touch and help exchange pleasantries, and share stories, that enable them to avoid solitude, loneliness, and inactive social life. Living in a networking era, the huge growth of social media has a high impact on the development of university students in which they socialize (Hassan et al., 2019). Additionally, social media is useful to university students to connect and share ideas, thoughts, and opinions with others in a safe and secure environment within a specific circle that includes their social circles (Oxley, 2013).

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⁴ Michael F. Hauben (1995) introduced this word to mean the persons who use the internet frequently by combining two words “Network” and “citizens”.



It helps any social media user to get updates on the news in minimum time so that people can remain fully conversant and aware of the latest changes and developments. It also has an impact on the social life of university students. The question remains as regards the type, amount and nature of impact it has on the university students. The current study attempts to identify those and examine further to identify this lesser-known aspect of international students' social life. It has also been noticed that the duration and intensity of social media usage habits are likely to have an impact on the behaviors of these students (Sin et al., 2014). The higher the duration, the more the intensity - the higher the level of impact (negative or positive) on personal and social lives it is likely to be.

Problem statements

The purpose of the study is to find out the impact of using social media on the social life of university students, focusing on international students. Despite the widespread adoption of social media platforms in this population, the specific nature and extent of its impact is largely unknown. The duration and intensity of social media usage habits are likely to influence students' behavior and social interactions. By identifying and exploring these effects, the research aims to provide insight into how the use of social media affects the social lives of international university students.

Objective of Research

The objective of the study is to identify the impact of social media on university students' daily lives. There are various types of impacts of social media networking on Students.

Primary Research Question

How do the social media usage habits of international students at Thai universities impact their social life?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the existing literature put forward by different scholars and personalities on social media and international students, the social life of a university student, academic behavior, and social media networking.

Social Media and International Student

Social media was introduced to connect humans and update them online. It is a collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing, and collaboration (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Social media is an essential tool for international students to stay in touch with their peers, and families, and communicate back home. This allows them to share their experiences, form support networks, and ask for advice on different aspects of their international student life. While it took radio and television 38 years and 13 years, respectively, to reach 50 million users, it took Facebook less than nine months to reach 100 million users. iPhone applications even hit 1 billion in nine months” (Browning et al., 2011). According to a study by Smith & Duggan (2013), nearly three-quarters of online adults use social networking sites, making it an ideal medium for international students to communicate with family and friends who may be thousands of miles away. By posting updates, photos, and messages on social media, international students can maintain a sense of connection with their loved ones and keep them informed about their experiences abroad. According to research by (Rambe & Bere 2013), social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp have proven to be particularly popular among international students for maintaining cross-border social connections.

An international student is someone who has traveled to a country other than their own to pursue educational opportunities. International students in Thailand are using social media to connect with their friends and family who are in their home country so that they can feel connected to them and that can make them feel better. It has been seen that international students normally have more time to spend at home in comparison to Thai students.

Social life of a university student

According to a study conducted by Smith & Johnson, (2023), social life is heavily influenced by technology and social media. The research found that individuals are increasingly relying on social media platforms to connect with others and maintain relationships. A person’s social life involves connections, relationships, communication with other people, making friends, meeting new people, and participating in social activities such as attending community events,

joining clubs, volunteering, and engaging in group activities (Bargh & McKenna, 2004). It is important to have a connection and relations with others. The social life of a university student encompasses academic responsibilities and social engagements. A strong social network can provide students with a sense of belonging and support, helping them to navigate the challenges of university life. Research has shown that students who are socially connected tend to have higher levels of satisfaction and well-being during their time in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Social interactions with peers can also promote critical thinking, communication skills, and emotional intelligence, all of which are important for personal and professional success (Tinto, 1993).

It has been found that the social life of a university student will affect their future. The social life of university students will teach them about social interaction, relationships, and friendship which will help them in the future. (Møller, 1996). The statement refers that university life will teach social skills.

Academic behavior and social media networking

Academic behavior refers to students' actions and habits for learning and academic success. This includes attending classes regularly, actively participating in discussions, completing assignments on time, studying consistently, seeking help when needed, and maintaining integrity in academic work. (Ariastuti & Wahyudin, 2022). The link between academic behavior and social media is the role of social media in shaping students' social interactions and interpersonal relationships. Research has shown that communication on social media platforms can have both positive and negative effects on student well-being and academic achievement (Kross et al., 2013). For example, students who interact with their peers in supportive and constructive ways online may feel more connected and motivated to succeed academically. It can also provide access to educational content and online learning resources, improving students' knowledge and understanding of their courses.

Additionally, social media can be a platform for colleges to share important information and updates with students, promoting engagement and participation. News in social media is educating students and improving their academic performance but sometimes they get false information or lack of information which causes a big misunderstanding. Which may impact their personal lives too. In addition, the overuse of social media networking also causes a student to lose a real-world communication skill which will impact in their relationship and affect in their academic life (Yao & Cao, 2017). When it comes to tackling social issues and



encouraging academic reform in university students, social media can be a strong instrument. There has been a comparable rise in the incorporation of social media into teaching, learning, and communication at the university level with the rapid expansion in the number and use of social media as a daily communication medium for individuals and organizations (Kulsum & Islam, 2022).

On the other hand, social media networking assists students in enhancing their knowledge and creativity, exchanging knowledge, and improving technical skills which will make an impact on academic behavior. In addition, social media also effects on academic performance of students which can cause a disturbance in student life. The balance of using social media should be in a limited circle is very important so that social life and academic life won't be affected. social media also create a different type of illusion of being connected that students don't need to meet in person which is one of the serious issues that have to be understood by students.

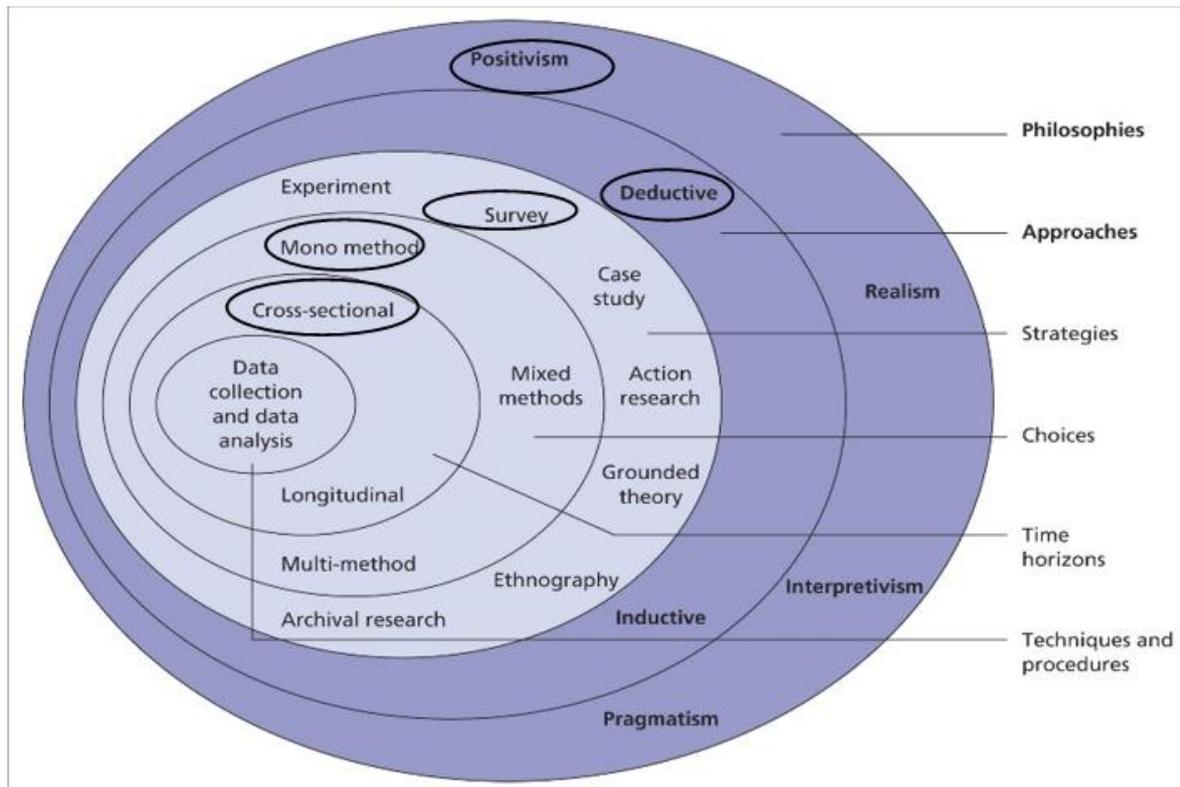
Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is based on a person's habit of spending a lot of time in the virtual world including social media networks and how such habits and preferences influence other aspects of him or her including social life. when it comes to university students, they have more preference even high time in the virtual world and this study attempts to examine the impact of social media on social life at university. Such interactions between social media and social life are influenced by the duration and intensity of social media use, which can affect academic behavior as well. University students usually stay alone, and they don't have a community to share their personal life or social life so much. It is likely their screen time will be more than anyone. The purpose of the framework is to find out and understand how the use of social media affects the social life of international students in the university environment.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology used in the research. This included Research Onion, study population, sampling procedures, data sources, and ethical considerations.

Research Onion



Philosophy – The philosophy for this study is Deontology and Exploratory Qualitative Research.

- i. **Deontology** – The student's duty and responsibility are to pursue an academic program and try to do well in studies. Anything that is enabling to do better or affecting to worst can be put under study.
- ii. **Exploratory qualitative research** - This research method allows for an in-depth study of complex social issues, such as the impact of social media on interpersonal relationships and social interactions among university students.

Approach – The Approach used for this study is deductive.

- i. The research process and analysis are guided by theories on the impact of social media on social life.

Method - The process entails conducting interviews to gather information, and then utilizing qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis to examine and interpret the answers.

- ii. Conducting interviews: Interview university students has gathered first-hand information about their social media use and how it Impacts their social lives.



- iii. Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis: The data collected from the interviews has been analyzed using qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and insights related to the impacts of social media on the social lives of university students.

Strategy -The study conducts face-to-face interviews as the most effective survey strategy to seek information and perceptual understanding of the subjects on the issue.

Time horizon – cross-sectional. The interview was conducted at a specific point in time to capture the current state of social media usage and its impact on the social life of university students. (3 Days)

Data collection - Structured interviews have been used to gather data, which has been audio recorded, transcribed, and subjected to analysis.

Interview Questions – The interview questions are -:

1. What do you understand about social life?
2. What is social media?
3. What social media do you use and why?
4. since how long have you using social media? (years)
5. Why is social media important to you?
6. How does social media impact your social life?
7. How often do you meet your social media friends?
8. What is social media addiction?
9. Do you think that you are addicted to social media?
10. What is the right age for using social media?
11. How to balance social life and social media

Source: Author's own

Data Analysis – For this study, qualitative methodology was considered for content analysis and thematic analysis.

Study population.

The research was carried out at a university in Bangkok. International students who are studying undergrad program in the university were the sample. International students who are fluent in English were the targeted sample to conduct the interview for this study. The respondents were from India, Bangladesh, and Thailand.

Sampling Procedure.

The sampling procedure used for this research is purposive random sampling. Face to face interview was conducted with each participant. Before selecting the participants, questions were asked like do they use social media platforms during their stay in Thailand. In addition, for the interview sessions, a quiet place was selected to avoid the disturbance. Pen, paper and voice recorder was carried during the interview sessions.

Data Source.

There were two types of data sources used. Primary and Secondary data.

Primary data

The primary data was collected through the structured interview data.

Secondary Data

The secondary data obtained from the scholarly articles have been used to compare with the interview data for drawing meaningful inferences at the end of this study.

Ethical Consideration.

A high ethical standard was followed throughout the study. Anonymity, identity of the respondents was maintained throughout the interview sessions. There was no force for answering the Question. With the permission of the participants the interview sessions were recorded which was used later to transcribe and complete the content analysis. The information gathered during the interview was only used for the academic purpose only.

RESULT

This chapter discussed the Interviewee's characteristics, a summary of results, and a summary of respondent answers.

Interviewee characteristics

All the interviewees were bachelor's degree students from universities in Thailand. There were five respondents. Four of them were female and one was male. The ages of all the respondents were between 18 to 30. All of them were international students from India, Bangladesh, and

Thailand. However, one in five respondents had limited experience of working in the university.

Summary of result

The responses from the interviewees provided valuable insights into the impact of social media on the social lives of university students. The varying perspectives and experiences shared by the respondents shed light on the complexities of navigating social media in the context of social interactions and relationships. Most of the respondents accept that they do an overuse of social media. But also, social media was also very important for their daily lives it helps them in many ways such as getting new information and updates about their friends and family. The respondents highlight the importance of social media in maintaining connections and staying informed but also acknowledge the need for balance and moderation in its usage. It can be understood that social media became a basic human need that keeps educating and keeps humans up to date. Social media was surely a distraction in social life, but it also helped to make a connection which can't be possible without social media. The right number of social media were surely be needed to make an informative person.

Table 1: summary of respondent answer

Q. NO	Question	Resp. 1	Resp. 2	Resp. 3	Resp. 4	Resp.5
1	What do you understand about social life?	Life with your friends and family.	Having interaction and bond with the people who are your friends and family. giving quality time.	Interaction between other people.	Interaction and relationship with others in the real world.	Relationships and interactions you have with other people in real life.
2	What is social media?	Everyone needs it in this generation.	To Increase connection either for business or personal reasons.	Every application in the online platform that we use to connect to other people	The online life.	For me, social media is a platform where we can create, share, and exchange information.



Q. NO	Question	Resp. 1	Resp. 2	Resp. 3	Resp. 4	Resp.5
3	What social media do you use and why?	Instagram. It's easy to use and can talk with many friends.	Instagram and WhatsApp to talk with friends and family.	Tweeter. I love to see the news	Instagram. To talk with my friends and see what going on in people's lives.	I use Instagram for sharing photos and reels keeping up with friends and trends.
4	since how long have you using social media? (years)	7-8 years	15 years.	Almost 10 years.	6 years	About 5-6 years now.
5	Why is social media important to you?	To know about friends and family.	To keep connected with the workplace, family, friends, and education institute.	It to connect to friends even when we are far away	To stay connected and share information.	It helps me stay connected with friends and family. Learn new things and keep up with current events.
6	How does social media impact your social life?	It helps to know many friends from social media, and it makes a good impact on social life and makes them less productive.	I won't be able to do much because it is easy to stay connected with the help of social media.	Spend a lot of money to look good for followers.	It Makes me busy with my phone all the time.	By providing a sense of community and connection. it can be a source of inspiration and information, but a bit distracting sometimes.
7	How often do you meet your social media friends?	Once a week.	Yes, they all are my real friends. I do not keep strangers on my social media.	Rarely.	Very rarely.	Most of my real friends are on my social media. And others are just online friends.
8	What is social media addiction?	When they can't stay without their phone	A syndrome where you can't keep yourself away from social media updates.	Checking social media every hour.	Feel anxious and stressed when they do not see any new notifications.	For me when I spend too much time on social media to the point where it interferes



Q. NO	Question	Resp. 1	Resp. 2	Resp. 3	Resp. 4	Resp.5
						with my daily life.
9	Do you think that you are addicted to social media?	Not addicted but feel good while using social media.	No.	Yes.	Yes, I spend a lot of time. Just watching reels.	I don't think I'm addicted, but I do spend a lot of time.
10	What is the right age for using social media?	18 but for this generation 15 to 16 is good enough	15-16 years old	More than 16.	13 should be the right age.	Around 16. It's important for parents to guide them.
11	How to balance social life and social media	One needs to get along with others.	Should be by limiting the amount of time you spend on social media.	Not using the phone when with family.	We should understand that social life is the real world. And we should give more importance to that.	Set boundaries for your screen time, and prioritize face-to-face interaction.

The summary of the responses, which included all of the author's questions, was taken from the above table. Additionally, this type of interview had never been conducted at Siam University. This is a brand-new area of study at the institution. The responses of the various respondents shed light on their understanding and use of social media concerning their social lives. Respondents seemed to see social life as interacting and interacting with friends and family in the real world. They value spending time with loved ones, and some believe social media plays a role in keeping them connected. Social media was considered a platform that allows you to interact with others whether for personal or professional reasons. Respondents mentioned that they use applications such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter to keep in touch with friends, family, and current events. It was seen as an opportunity to exchange information and stay informed. Although some respondents had been using social media for years, they believe it is important to stay in touch with friends and family. It provided an opportunity to share information, learn new things, and keep up with current events.

The impact of social media on social life varies by respondent. Some mentioned that it helps them make a lot of friends and has a positive effect, while others think it makes them less productive or keeps them busy on the phone. Some respondents mentioned the concept of social

media and described it as an inability to stay away from the phone or anxiety without new notifications. All the respondents expressed their surprise in Question 9. However, not all respondents believed that they were addicted, but admitted that they spend a lot of time on social networks. Answers about the right age to use social networks ranged from 13 to 18 years. Some cited the importance of parental guidance so that younger users can use social media responsibly. When balancing a social life and social media, respondents emphasized setting boundaries, limiting screen time, and prioritizing face-to-face interaction. They emphasized that it is important to understand that offline social life is essential and should be given more importance.

Discussion

Social media has become a prime part of our lives in today's digital world. It has transformed the way we connect, communicate, and share information with our friends and family. Recognizing social life is necessary for appreciating the influence of social media on our daily activities. Social life includes the relationships and exchanges we have with our real-world friends, family, coworkers, and even strangers. It involves spending quality time with loved ones and sharing experiences. Conversely, any online platform or program that enables users to generate, share, and exchange information with others is referred to as social media. It has developed into an effective tool for building relationships, whether for professional objectives like networking and marketing or for personal ones like keeping in touch with friends and family. As per the respondents, the most used social media site is Instagram because it's easy to use, and most of their friends are there and also they can get updates from there about their friends.

“A syndrome where you can't keep yourself away from social media updates.” These are the words of one of the respondents. Where there is a word social media update which can refer to a fresh post or content shared by a user on a social media platform. This update may consist of text, images, videos, links, and other multimedia components. Social media updates are commonly utilized for interacting with followers, dispersing news or updates, advertising products or services, or engaging with the audience. Maintaining a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle requires finding a balance between social life and social media. Establishing limits on screen usage, emphasizing in-person communication, and restricting social media usage are



effective strategies for finding stability. It is important to keep in mind that social interactions extend beyond the virtual realm of social media to include the genuine connections and relationships we have with people in real life.

Different respondents have varying opinions on the appropriate age for using social media. Some people think young teens of 13 can begin using social media, while others believe they should be around 15-16 to use it responsibly. Parental guidance and implementing age-appropriate restrictions can reduce the harmful effects of social media on young users.

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Conclusion

Social media has the power to upgrade our social lives by accelerating connections, sharing information, and developing relationships. However, finding a balance between virtual interactions and real-world connections is crucial to a healthy and fulfilling social life. By understanding the impact of social media overuse and setting boundaries for usage, we can control the benefits of social media while maintaining meaningful relationships in the real world. It's very important to understand the right way to use social media so that can't negatively affect your social life. social media is a necessity for all of us. The contribution of social media is everyone has made life easy by connecting and keeping us up to date.

The dependency of university students on social media is very much in their daily lives. So, educating them at an early age should be a must. It will also them to know the right way to use the online world and how to make that profitable in their daily life.

Recommendations

Parent

Keep an eye on your child's social media use and be mindful of any potential harm it may be causing to their well-being and social life.

Student

It is important for students to recognize the impact of social media on their social lives and take proactive steps to ensure a healthy balance between their online and offline interactions.

Universities

Provide students with tools and guidance on how to responsibly use social media, such as workshops on digital health and mental health resources.

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