

## The impact of social media usage on the academic and research engagements of undergraduate students in Sri Lanka: a case study

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The arrival of social media networks like Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, TikTok, and Telegram made global connectivity faster and more advanced. This research examined the engagement of undergraduate students in Sri Lanka with social media platforms for academic and research purposes. This is a case study based on a state university in Sri Lanka. The primary objective of this study was to identify the impact of social media usage in educational and research activities of undergraduates. This study was mainly based on a quantitative approach. A structured questionnaire was used to identify the basic information about the social media users. The validated questionnaire developed by Gupta & Bashir (2018)<sup>1</sup> was used for the study. All the variables were measured using five-point Likert scale, which ranged from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The study population was the total number of undergraduates (5,456) including the selected four faculties related to social sciences, and a sample of 346 students was selected by applying the stratified random sampling technique. According to the findings, the percentage of active users of social media is 98 % (n=339). The most used social media platforms are WhatsApp 56% (n=194), Facebook 23% (n=80), and YouTube 16% (n=55). Out of the total respondents, 60% (n=208) stated that they use social media for academic work such as academic discussion groups on WhatsApp and Facebook. Whereas, 58% (n=201) of the respondents stated that online usage had a positive impact on their academic and research activities. The findings of the study confirmed that all determinants have an impact on academic performance and they have a moderately positive relationship between social media usage and academic activities as well as students' research activities. Social media provide opportunities to connect with current students, ask questions, and get their feedback on relevant studies. The factor analysis described five main factors related to the students' social media usage, namely, informative; educational; social; entertainment; and financial factors. The study recommends that enhancing the awareness of exploiting social media may maximize the benefits of educational and research activities of students at the university taken into account.

**Keywords:** *social media, academic activities, research activities, factor analysis*

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<sup>1</sup> Gupta, S. & Bashir, L. (2018). Social Networking Usage Questionnaire: Development and Validation in an Indian Higher Education Context . *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 19 (4) , 214-227 . <https://doi:10.17718/tojde.471918>