Research Article

Landscape of Social Networking Sites in Schools: An Administrative Perspective

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Abstract

Social Networking Sites (SNS) have become an integral part of an individual's life. Their potential is very well-acknowledged by the researchers in the field of teaching. Effective school management and administration are central to better functioning of a school, and this needs a constant and frequent communication between the authorities and staff. This research work acknowledges this fact and aimed at bringing out an administrative view on the usage of SNS in school. This study was conducted with 38 administrators (Principal, Vice-Principal, Academic coordinator, Head of the department) through river sampling (social networking sampling). It was found that SNS can help in massive communication, and sending information. The data revealed that effective coordination can be maintained and promoted in schools through SNS but this seems to be a distal dream due to privacy issues and technological challenges. So, proper working and encouragement in schools toward SNS can make it a cost-effective and accessible means for communication. This paper concludes that SNS are potential platform and its usage by the administrators can bring more accountability and transparency in public dealing.

Keywords: Administration, Administrator, Management, SNS and Transparency

Introduction

In this era of ubiquitous communication, and technological advancement we are in constant interaction with new and improved forms of technology. This world is of virtual networks and communities (Balalle, 2018). Domination of technology is being felt in all realms of life and education is not an exception to this. Over a period, social media and networking site has come into the reach of the majority of people and has led to the development of net communities. Social networking sites (SNS) have become prevalent and this is achieved because of the ease in accessibility of the Internet in the recent years that helps in easier, faster and at times cheaper communication (Kukreja & Kanvaria, 2017). Potential of SNS for communication, interaction, exchange of ideas is well acknowledged by the researchers (Jukic & Merlak, 2017). Our education system is using it as the platform for making the teaching-learning process (Ellis & Abreu-Ellis, 2015) more effective and enriching but it is central in establishing the coordination within the staff which is crucial for productive functioning of the school.

This paper attempts to look at the pattern of usage of SNS in schools among the administrators of schools. Over the years the whole landscape of schools has changed and there is great onus which lies on the people who are running them in an administrative capacity. Principal, Vice-Principal, Head of the departments, Academic coordinators, etc. are at a varied administrative position in school, and this study tries to trace their perspective about using SNS as a platform for enhanced functioning of the school. It also discusses the need, relevance and challenges these administrators face while using SNS with their staff.

Review of related literature

There are plenty of studies available concerning the changing trends of communication over the years. Communication is very central to the efficient functioning of any workplace or organisation. In this present study, an attempt was made to look at the social networking sites as a potent communication platform for effective administrative work in the schools.

Balalle (2018) in her study tried to explore the relationship between social media usage by the students and their achievement. Although there was no significant relationship between the two but it was revealed that students use social networking sites quite often and for many purposes. In their choice, the most popular site was Facebook which was being used by around 68% of the taken sample size for maintaining social contacts.

Jukic and Merlak (2017) found that Facebook as SNS in Slovene state administration organisations has great potential in ensuring increased interaction between public administration and its users, but this usage is scarce. According to them an increased usage of SNS in administrative purpose can bring transparency, and the image of an organization can be improved by this. It can also result in improved service delivery and inclusive policy processes. This potential of SNS is commendable because of the large number of users; bigger reach of information can be communicated to them. It further serves as a marketing tool in the private sector organization. They also discussed that nowadays, in case of public administrator; SNS is used in unidirectionalmanner like for making announcements or sending information only.

Stickel (2017) in his study tried to explore online harassment victimization by generational age through social networking sampling on Facebook and LinkedIn. He found a strong association between frequency of SNS usage and generational age stating that digital natives (born in the digital age, i.e. after 1980) are frequent user of SNS as compared to digital immigrants (those who were born before 1980). Also according to him, this usage was multiple times a day. SNS is a key method of distal communication among youthful population. He also highlighted that there is a permanent adoption of interactive constructs globally. For him, SNS usage is ubiquitous to online communication and hence it is in reach of a wider audience.

Powers and Green (2016) conducted a study with school principals of Texas school to bring out their perspective about the usage of social media in schools. It was observed by them that they were using SNS such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, Blogs and Wiki etc. with stakeholders for instruction and disseminating information. Principals also acknowledged the enthusiasm amongst teacher for using SNS as an instructional

tool though it was a complex process. It was observed by them that SNS is a robust platform for communicating with parents and communities. They also discussed that SNS usage has some limitation and challenges like the majority of staff lack the skills to handle it also Principals faced resistance from teachers due to technological problems.

Rudolph (2016) in his research explored how principals use SNS (twitter) for effective personal and professional development purposes. In his study, there was a high correlation between the use of Twitter for professional purposes and the key feature of effective professional development.

Zhang and Leung (2015) in their review of the SNS research in communication journals from 2006 to 2011 found that the focus of the majority of researches, nearly 25percent from a sample of 84 researches, was on the impression management and friendship performance which is a psychological domain of SNS. They also found that other research themes were network and network structures; bridging offline and online networks and privacy. It was found that roles and impact of networking sites on the degree of its persuasiveness for the management was the most neglected part and hence need to be explored in future researches so that the true potential of SNS can be explored.

Cox and McLeod (2014) conducted detailed interviews with 12 principals who were using at least two social media platforms such as blogs, microblog (e.g. Twitter), SNS (e.g. Facebook), podcasts, and online videos with different stakeholders. The objective of the research was to bring out the communication experience of the principals on social media platforms. Researchers found that there was greater reliance on social media by school principals because it allows

greater interaction with stakeholders; helps them to establish strong connections with fellow educators; and hence results in personal and professional growth; and nowadays its usage is expected from them; it is no more a discretionary aspect of their work profile.

Cox (2012) in his work on social media as a communication platform used by school principals and superintendents found out that SNS has changed and improved the way of communication in school. In his work he explored that SNS allow for greater interaction between school administrators and their stakeholders; it provides stronger connections to local stakeholders, fellow teachers, and to the world; it leads to administrators personal and professional growth; its usage is more of an expectation and not an option. Social customer responsibility management can be expanded by the usage of SNS as they can help in focusing on relationships, trust, and two-way communication.

Winn (2011) reflecting on need and relevance of digital citizenship in schools felt the requirement of separate SNS platform that has been developed exclusively for schools such as Social Engine, Edmodo, & Ning and for the particular school students to save them from cyber victimization. These SNS provide a platform for teachers to connect with their students in an appropriate manner in a safe and secure ecosystem. According to the researcher if a school is using SNS then they have an opportunity to shape students into responsible and informed digital citizens.

MMS education, edWeb.net, IESD and MCH strategic data (2010) in their research with school principals and SNS in education tried to explore this unexplored dimension of SNS in schools with educators. According to school

principals (who were understudy), SNS such as ASCD, What Works, National School Leadership Networks etc. has value in education as they can be used for sharing information and resources. They can serve as professional learning platforms and can give a boost to school-wide communication with students and staff. This study further supports the exposure of more educators to technology for effective management and coordination in school.

It is quite evident that there are very limited research works related to the usage and impacts of SNS (Zhang & Leung, 2015) in school specifically for the administrative purpose. Effective administration is one of the keys for the effective working of a school. Every administrator need to be in constant communication with all the stakeholders for the effective functioning of its organisation. SNS has been projected as efficacious platforms for communications and building contacts with a wide audience. Keeping this in mind the objectives of this research work were formulated.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were:

- To look at the shift in the mode of communication in school.

- To identify various categories of SNSs used by school administrators.

- To explore the purpose and role of the usage of SNSs in school administration.

- To examine the challenges and drawbacks of using SNSs.

Rationale of the study

Social networking sites have been in use amongst people nowadays. Its usage is increasing in all spheres of life. Technological advancement in SNS has led to a reduction in its complex functionalities and has grown to engulf the globe (Sharma & Godiyal, 2016). People are aware of using these platforms for both personal and professional means. This increased audience and availability of several networking sites have transformed the way of communication. All workplaces are in some or other ways using social networking sites to connect with its workforce and in these schools are also not listed behind.

Researchers also understand the deep involvement of people with social networking site, and hence keeping this in mind the study tried to explore the usage of same in the school campuses. Teachers use SNS for gathering content and enhance their knowledge bank and this idea is reflected in a good deal of research done worldwide but administrative perspective in this regard has been neglected for quite long.

The researchers acknowledge the fact that the person who holds any administrative position in the school need to connect with several people in and around the school. Their work relies on good communication practices and effective coordination. There is a need to work and look at schools from their perspective so that we can understand schools and their functioning in a holistic manner. This need and paucity of researches about the work culture of school administrator and usage of SNSs amongst them can be an interesting area to explore.

The understanding of the role of SNS

in the school administration purpose can guide us in developing an effective communication network in schools and amongst the schools. This study can further help other stakeholders in exploring ways through which they can develop or adopt SNSs in a more efficient way. Further, this study tried to figure out the major challenges involved in communicating through SNSs so proper solution of these pit holes can result in more effective functioning.

Definition of the terms and concepts

Researchers and scholars define a term or concept according to their perceptions and understanding. Here are some definitions from some sources which reflect the same meaning in which these are being used in this research.

Social Networking Sites

SNS is a widely used term in media research and it is used interchangeably both as social networking sites or social networking services.

Hansen (2016) defines social media as a platform on the internet that connects people via social networking. According to her, social networking sites are websites and web applications to connect informally with other users, as well as finding similar interests.

SNS are technological features used in daily life and for the dynamic practice of social interaction. They provide communicative opportunities which are more synchronous with and parallel to real social life because of the features of instant updates, notifications and location specifications (Zhang & Leung, 2015).

Boyd and Ellison (2007) consider social networking sites as the services which offer mainly three features to their users. The three features are 1) development of public or partly public profile; 2) insight into the list of users with whom one is sharing the contact; and 3) monitoring their own and other users' list of connections. They further define them as a tool for electronic communication through which the users create online communities for sharing ideas, information, personal messages and other content.

SNS is not a static phenomenon or platform. They are in a state of flux and constant development not only in terms of technology but also in its usage patterns. Today, SNS are not restricted to desktop or personal computer browsing websites only. The development in mobiles/ smartphones with high-speed data transmission facilities on one go has made SNS omnipresent on all kind of devices.

This technological dynamicity of SNS can be understood with most widely used SNS such as WhatsApp. Earlier a simple application on phones now can be accessed on our personal computer through a transformed version called WhatsApp Web.

One of the objectives of the study was to explore the categories of usage of SNS amongst school administrators hence the definition of SNS was kept broad.

The present study on school administrators defines SNS as an internet-based virtual platform (web or mobile-based) used by any person to communicate or connect, share content and collaborate with others.

School administrators

In this study school administrators are defined as the people who are engaged in the administrative setup pertaining to the functioning of the school. They are the staff at any institution that has the prime responsibility and duty of students-related administrative tasks (Hansen, 2016). In the Indian school system, they are Directors, Principals, Vice-Principals, Coordinators (Academic or Co-curricular activities), Head of the departments (HoDs) and Incharges etc.

Administrative perspective

Administrative perspective is defined as the view or outlook which is presented by the people who are in the capacity of an administrative position or post. It is an ideology or vision of the administrators towards any issue. These administrative issues consist of the functioning of school affairs, day-to-day business of the school, coordination between teacher, parents and management of the school etc.

This study has tried to bring out the usage of SNS for the functioning of school from the viewpoint of these school administrators.

Delimitations of the study

The purpose of this study was to look at the role of social networking sites on the school campus. This study tries to explore SNSs from the administrative lens and hence responses from the school administrators who hold any position concerning the school functioning and activities was taken into account.

This study delimited itself to the administrators who have served at this position for at least three (03) years.

Methodology

Sample

The idea of this study was to look for an administrative perspective on the use of SNSs in the functioning of the school. Around 50 school administrators were invited by survey link but 38 received responses were analysed. The sample consisted of administrators like Principals, Vice-principals, head of the departments, Academic coordinators, etc. They are serving at their respective positions from at least three years.
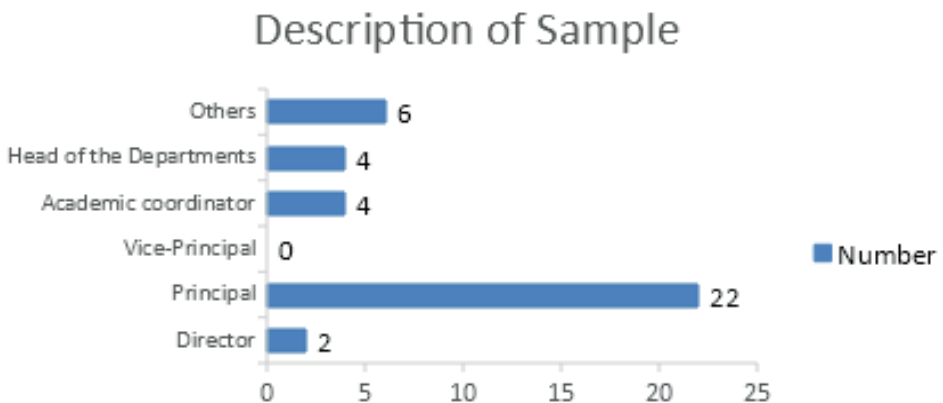

Figure- 1: Sample description

Years of experience of each sample at their current administrative position lie in the range of 3-23 years.

Sampling technique

River sampling method (Steber, 2018) was used by the researcher to gather data. In this online sampling technique, the researchers invite the respondent to take the survey via online banners, ads, promotions, and invitations placed on websites by providing links. Once the respondent clicks on the link they are routed to the survey and surveyor is clueless about who will respond (Researchspace, 2016; Calegaro et. al., 2014). It is also called social networking sampling technique (Stickel, 2017) because the data is collected with help of SNS.

In the present study, the responses were gathered through a mixed online survey made with the help of Google forms and invites were sent through LinkedIn to persons who are at administrative positions.

Description of tool

A mixed questionnaire was designed for data collection. The sample for the study was school administrators who are still working and has a busy schedule. Their busy schedule and time constraint were considered and the tool was designed accordingly. This questionnaire consisted of 16 items. First, the tool was validated by peers, and then the link of survey was circulated through LinkedIn.

Table-1: Items of the tool used for data collection

S. No.	Theme	Number of items
1	Demographic details	3
2	The trend in the present communication	2
3	Reasons for using SNS	2
4	Purpose and role of SNS in school administration	6
5	Drawback and Challenges of SNS usage	3

Out of these 16 questions, a question was kept descriptive to gather detailed feedback on drawback, issues and challenges faced while coordinating through SNSs.

Discussion and analysis

The main idea behind the study was to explore the usage of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) as a tool in the school administration and leadership. The objectives of this study were formulated so that this research work can explore any connection or relation which is possibly present between the usage of social media, and the functioning of school on a day-to-day basis.

Demographic details

It was observed that the majority of the participants under study were currently serving at an administrative position in their respective schools. They work at different levels of school in some or other administrative capacity. In this study, around 58percent are serving as the principal in the school. This number was followed by the head of the departments which constituted around 11percent of the whole sample.

Further, taking the glimpse of the range of experience of all the samples then it was from 3 years to 25 years.

Trends in the present communication

In response to the question about the shift in ways of communication over the decade, the entire group of participants agreed to the fact that there has been a shift over time. Further the ways of establishing contact with the stakeholders whether they are parents, other teachers and academicians are completely different in many aspects. According to the respondents communication through virtual media is prevalent as the teachers receive frequent messages or emails from parents rather than a visit to the school.

It was also asked whether school administrators encourage the usage of SNS in their staff members. Around 79percent of administrator agreed that they promote its usage with the staff.

Categories of SNS used by school administrators

It was observed that they are aware of the majority of online available platforms. There are multiple social media platforms and networking sites being used in schools. The SNS which are in usage are both personal gadget (Mobile phones, Ipads) and desktop supported. In the survey, it was found that WhatsApp is the most popular SNS as it was in use by 32 participants (nearly 85percent) followed by Facebook and LinkedIn by 11 users (29percent of sample size) in each case.

A faction of it also mentioned about the other sites and media in usages such as Blogs, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, Gmail, Flinnt and YouTube.
Thus it is observable from the responses that SNS is quintessential communicative tool among the administrators and other parties of school. They are using different SNS for both personal and professional exigencies.

Reasons for using SNS

When the reasons behind using the SNS at the administrative capacity was discussed with the participants, then around 60percent of the sample cited that stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and school management are the principal drive behind using SNS. Around 21percent of the sample cited administrative concerns pertaining to allotment of duties and smooth functioning of the school as the factor for active usage of SNS by the school administrators. The purpose of networking was amongst the least influential factor.

In response to the audience with whom they interact or communicate the maximum were their staffs. Around 95percent of administrators in this study agreed to the fact that they mainly communicate with the faculty or non-faculty member that constitute their staff through SNS. The second-highest choice (around 84percent) of administrators for establishing contact was their students' parents and their family members & friends. There were around 26 administrators who use SNS for establishing contact with students and school management body. Least purpose or reason for using SNS according to the participants was media coverage.

Role of SNS in school administration

Six questions were included to learn about the participants' opinions under the purview of the purpose and role of SNS. Out of these questions, five were on Likert scaling of five (1-5) from never to frequently. Based on the frequency of the discussion on SNS, amongst administrators, the five purposes on which they were asked to rate were academic concerns, students' achievement, teachers' duty, parents' events and school activities.

Table-2: The response of the sample on the purpose related to SNS usage

Theme	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Some-times (%)	Very often (%)	Frequently (%)
Academic Concerns	5.3	5.3	10.5	26.3	52.6
Students Achievement	-	-	10.3	26.3	63.2
Teachers duty	10.5	-	5.3	26.3	57.9
Parents Events	5.3	5.3	5.3	21.1	63.2
School Activities	-	-	-	10.5	89.5

It can be seen that most of the administrators use SNS as a platform for frequent discussion about school activities which is followed by the discussion on the other events like parent-teacher meet and students' achievement. Academic concerns are the least discussed issue or matter of concern for the administrators on the SNS.

In response to the question about the role of SNS in the school administration process, it was found that the motivation and zest of being connected to other on the personal and professional front is the principal factor for being on the social networking sites. Apart from that the immediate feedback process and effective redressal mechanism are other decisive factors for using SNS in the capacity of administrators. Networking and being social was of least concern in terms of SNS usage.

Drawback and challenges of SNS usage in school

Technology is often considered as tricky by many and resistance towards its usage is conspicuous through their actions (Powers & Green, 2016). So, the need for understanding the issues and challenges related to the usage of SNS in the administration was taken into consideration by the researchers.

The data related to the drawbacks and challenges of using SNS for school administration purpose was collected through open-ended feedback question. Based on the analysis of detailed responses from the sample the following major themes emerged which are represented in table 3.

Table-3: The response of the sample to the issues faced in using SNS

S. No.	Issues	Responses (%)
1	Time	10.5
2	Accessibility with all	15.8
3	Privacy at stake	52.6
4	Teachers resistance	-
5	Technological Challenges	21.1

It is observable from the responses collected on the above themes that privacy issues were central to the use of SNS services. Many administrators consider privacy as a major challenge while using SNS (Ellis & Abreu-Ellis, 2015) for administrative purpose as their private space seems to be breached while being available to everyone. It is observed that using SNS on a professional platform leads to personal space exploitation of administrators as some of the parents demand quick responses and resolution of aroused issues. Next to it are the technological challenges that also considered being a barrier to effective SNS usage. One of the respondents believed that most of the senior teachers are digital immigrants and hence a resistance from them is observed as compared to the digital native teachers in the school (Balalle, 2018). Lack of awareness about technology was also highlighted by some of the administrators as a problem among the digital immigrant population which further gives a boost to their resilient behaviour towards SNSs usage in the school campus. Some of the administrators believed that teachers sometimes use their phones and SNS during class timing which impacts the teaching-learning process.

Contrary to the views cited above, some of the administrators in response to the open-ended question said that despite all these challenges SNS has accelerated the communication and it is cost-effective as compared to other traditional methods of establishing contact with people.

Conclusions

The study aimed at capturing the viewpoint of the people who are at an administrative position in the functioning of a school. These people incapacity of being an administrator have dynamic roles to play. Their job profile is facing challenges every day and to these, innovation at the workplace is the only way out. It was observed in the study that usage of SNS is quite popular amongst school staff and WhatsApp is at the top of this SNS list for making contact with all the stakeholders. Participants under the study appreciated the potential of SNS usage in school for many reasons. Apart from using them as massive communication platform; they are using SNS majorly for discussing school-related activities and student's achievements. Academic issues and teachers' duties allotment was amongst the least discussed issues. This shows that SNS is being used for active collaboration whether it's related to school activity organization or students' performances. It was also found that SNS has improved the grievances and redress mechanism as compared to the traditional times. It was found in the study that apart from the benefits of SNS there are some challenges like the hijacking of private space & privacy. Technological issues are major barriers in making it an effective platform for quality communication and public dealing. It is very prominent from the fact that the key to quality administration lies in the constant and timely exchange of words with all the stakeholders. SNS is helping administrators in maintaining that regularity and making it beneficent

for the functioning of the school, but SNS as a tool for the good governance of the school is far from the reality due to some of its challenges. Active cooperation and effective mechanism from these stakeholders can make it a success.

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