

May 2019

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Kumaren, Siva and Sivakumaren, K. S., "Awareness, Perceptions and Purposes of Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) among the Research Scholars in State Universities of Tamil Nadu, India: A Study" (2019). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 2587. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/2587>

Awareness, Perceptions and Purposes of Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) among the Research Scholars in State Universities of Tamil Nadu, India: A Study

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Abstract

The study investigates the awareness, perceptions, purposes, and advantages of Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) among the research scholars in State Universities of Tamil Nadu. A well structured questionnaire was designed to collect the data from the respondents and a total of 1100 questionnaire were distributed, 773 filled in questionnaire were received back. The result shows that the level of awareness on ASNS was found less, among the research scholars. The research scholars are highly using ASNS to find and share the information, the research scholars should be encouraged to organize research work systematically and also to collaborate with experts and researchers. Since, the level of awareness is found less among research scholars it is recommended to organize innovative programmes such as workshops and hands on trainings to enhance the level of awareness.

Keywords: *Academic Social Networking Sites, Research Scholars, Universities.*

1. Introduction

Social Networking Sites are playing a vital role in day to day activities of human life. The Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) can be exclusively used for academic purpose like viewing, visiting, and sharing research publications. These tools can be used for sharing

academic information, exchanging research publications and to give / receive opinions, advices, comments, suggestions, and ideas instantly and interactively among them. In this view the study was conducted to know the awareness, perceptions, purposes and advantages of ASNS. ASNS categorized the major areas in to four as follows 1.Profile and Collaboration(Research Gate, Academia and My Science work), 2.Citation / Referencing(Mendeley, Zotero and CiteUlike), 3.Bookmarking(Delicious, Digg and Bibsonomy) and 4. Author Identification(ORCID, Researcher ID and Scopus ID).

2. Review of Literature

Asmi N.A., and Margam, Madhusudhan (2018) found in the study that research scholars have knowledge on ASNS, ResearchGate and Academia.edu was the most used ASNS among research scholars. Further the result shows that ResearchGate and Academia were used by research scholars for sharing research related information. Ali, M. Y., and Richardson, J. (2018) conducted an exploratory study of social science faculty members at five Karachi (Pakistan) public sector universities. The result revealed that the primary reason for accessing an academic social networking site was to search for articles on the site. Further the results also showed that accruing citations was the main reason for which respondents uploaded their own publications. Aleryani, A.Y., Mofleh, H., and Alariki, S. (2017) investigated the opportunities and challenges when using academic social network sites (ASNS) by researchers in universities in Yemen and abroad. The results showed that academic social network sites are still not well known among Yemeni researchers and majority of the researchers are not aware of ASNS and some indicated that they will use in the sites in the future and most of the researchers also expressed the opportunities of using academic social network sites are limited. Bhardwaj, R.K. (2017) compared four popular academic social networking sites (ASNS), namely, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Mendeley and Zotero. He found that performance of ASNS using the latest features and services is not up to the mark, and none of the sites are rated as "Excellent ". User interface of the sites need to improve to draw researchers to use them. Kenchakkanavar, A.Y., and Hadagali, G.S. (2016) examined the use of Academic Social Networking Sites by research scholars of the two state universities. The study indicated that Facebook, Google+ and LinkedIn are the most commonly used general SNS by research scholars and most of the research scholars used the ASNS for finding conferences, seminars, workshops related information. Doaa K. El-Berry (2015) attempted to explore the awareness and use of five famous ASNSs; namely

ResearchGate, Acedemia.edu, LinkedIn, Mendeley and Scholastica by the South Valley University (SVU)'academic staff. The study revealed that most of the respondents were aware of and using the ASNSs. Further it shows that ResearchGate demonstrated the highest level of awareness and usage followed by LinkedIn, Acedemi.edu, Mendeley and Scholastica, respectively.

3. Research Methodology

In order fulfill the objectives of the study, a well structured questionnaire was designed to collect the data from the respondents and a total of 1100 questionnaire were distributed among the PhD research scholars of science discipline in the State Universities of Tamil Nadu and 773 filled in questionnaire were received back and the response rate is 70.27%. Further the collected data were grouped under Awareness, Purposes, Perceptions and Advantages. The data were analyzed by using SPSS 11.5 version.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To know the level of awareness on Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) among the PhD Research Scholars in State Universities of Tamil Nadu.
2. To find out the various purposes of using Academic Social Networking Sites among Research Scholars.
3. To know the various perceptions of research scholars on Academic Social Networking Sites.
4. To analyze the various advantages experienced by the research scholars on Academic Social Networking Sites.

5. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were framed.

1. There is a significant difference in the level of awareness on ASNS among male and female research scholars.
2. There is no significant difference in the purposes of using ASNS among the research scholars of various age groups.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

6.1. Demographic Information

The data collected from the PhD research scholars were further grouped into three major categories such as “Gender”, “Age” and “Qualification”. The same is shown in Table 6.1.

Table 1
Gender, Age and Qualification

S.No	Description		Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	393	50.8
		Female	380	49.2
2	Age	20-30	661	85.5
		31 and Above	112	14.5
3	Qualification	With M.Phil	351	45.4
		Without M.Phil	422	54.6
		Total	773	100

It is demonstrated in Table 1 that 50.8% of the research scholars are male and 49.2% are female. Further, 85.5% of the research scholars are from age group of 20 to 30 and 14.5% of the research scholars are from age 31 and above. Among 773 research scholars 45.4% are qualified with M.Phil degree and the remaining 54.6% are not possessed M. Phil degree.

6.2. Awareness on Academic Social Networking Sites

The study has ascertained the level of awareness of Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) among the research scholars. It has been categorized into four major areas such as “Profile and Collaboration Sites “(PCS), “Citation / Reference Management Sites” (CRMS), “Book Marking Sites” (BMS) and “Author ID” (AID) for the study. A three point scale such as “Low”, “Medium” and “High “were used to find out the level of awareness. The mean and standard deviation were calculated, and ranks were assigned. This is displayed in Table 6.2.

Table 2
Awareness on Academic Social Networking Sites

S.No	Description	Low	Medium	High	M	Std	R
1	Profile and Collaboration Sites	139 (18)	531 (68.7)	103 (13.3)	1.95	.558	1
2	Citation / Reference Management Sites	285 (36.9)	441 (57.1)	47 (6.1)	1.69	.579	3
3	Book Marking Sites	375 (48.5)	353 (45.7)	45 (5.8)	1.57	.601	4
4	Author ID	249 (32.2)	360 (46.6)	164 (21.2)	1.89	.723	2

It is found from Table 2 that the majority of research scholars are highly aware of Profile and Collaboration Sites (82%) which is placed on first rank followed by Author ID (67.8%) with second rank, and Citation / Reference Management Sites (63.2%) with third rank. It is also found that the level of awareness on Book Marking Sites (51.5%) is found less among the research scholars with fourth rank.

6.2.1 T-Test for Awareness on ASNS

T-Test was administered to ascertain significant differences in the level of awareness on Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) among the male research scholars and female research scholars. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
T-Test for Awareness on ASNS

S.No	Description	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T Value	Df	p value
1.	Profile and Collaboration Sites	Male	393	5.89	1.475	.321	771	.748
		Female	380	5.93	1.391			
2	Citation / Reference Management Sites	Male	393	5.20	1.652	.551	771	.582
		Female	380	5.27	1.623			

3	Book Marking Sites	Male	393	4.80	1.818	1.304	771	.193
		Female	380	4.97	1.737			
4	Author ID	Male	393	5.55	1.986	2.059	771	.040
		Female	380	5.85	2.069			

Table 3 shows that the mean score of awareness of Profile and Collaboration sites for male research scholars is 5.89 and for female scholars it is 5.93. The T-value of .321 is not statistically significant as the p-value is .748 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the difference in the mean score of the profile and collaboration sites by gender is not statistically significant. Hence the hypothesis is not proved.

The mean score of awareness of Citation / Reference Management sites for the male research scholars is 5.20 and the female scholar is 5.27. The T-value of .551 is not statistically significant as the p-value is .582 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the difference in the mean score of the citation / reference management sites by gender is not statistically significant. Hence the hypothesis is not proved.

Table 3 shows that mean score of awareness on Book Marking Sites for the male research scholars is 4.80 and for the female scholars it is 4.97. T-value of 1.304 is not statistically significant as the p-value is .193 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the difference in the mean score of the Book Marking sites by gender is not statistically significant. Hence the hypothesis is not proved.

The mean score of awareness of Author ID for the male research scholars is 5.55 and the female scholar is 5.85. The T-value of 2.059 is statistically significant as the p-value is .040 which is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, the difference in the mean score of the author ID by gender is statistically significant. Hence the hypothesis is proved.

6.3. Perceptions on Academic Social Networking Sites

The study has ascertained the perceptions on Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) on a Likert scale such as “*Strongly Disagree*”, “*Disagree*”, “*Undecided*” “*Agree*” and “*Strongly Agree*”. The mean and standard deviation are calculated, and ranks are provided. The same is shown in Table 6.3.

Table 4
Perceptions on Academic Social Networking Sites

S. No.	Description	SD	DA	UD	A	SA	M	Std	R
1	It helps to upload digital content	4 (0.5)	9 (1.2)	87 (11.3)	403 (52.1)	270 (34.9)	4.20	.717	3
2	It helps to find and share information	2 (0.3)	11 (1.4)	53 (6.9)	416 (53.8)	291 (37.6)	4.27	.672	1
3	It is a powerful tool to collaborate with researchers	8 (1)	13 (1.7)	85 (11)	362 (46.8)	305 (39.5)	4.22	.785	2
4	It creates visibility at a global level	8 (1)	30 (3.9)	85 (11)	379 (49)	271 (35.1)	4.13	.832	4
5	It requires ICT skills to use it.	18 (2.3)	53 (6.9)	177 (22.9)	331 (42.8)	194 (25.1)	3.82	.964	5
6	It is not highly secured	56 (7.2)	109 (14.1)	199 (25.7)	276 (35.7)	133 (17.2)	3.42	1.142	7
7	It may lead to plagiarism	29 (3.8)	94 (12.2)	193 (25)	282 (36.5)	175 (22.6)	3.62	1.076	6

It is found from Table 4 that majority of the research scholars (91.4%) opined that ASNS “helps to find and share information” followed by “It is a powerful tool to collaborate with researchers” (86.3%) and “It is helpful to upload digital content” (87%). It is also found that few research scholars’ (52.9%) opinion was that “ASNS is not highly secured”.

6.4. Purposes of using Academic Social Networking Sites

The study has ascertained the various purposes of using Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) on a Likert five point scale such as “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, “Undecided” “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”. The mean and standard deviation are calculated, and ranks are provided. The same is shown in Table 5

Table 5
Purpose of using Academic Social Networking Sites

S. No	Description	SD	DA	UD	A	SA	M	Std	R
1	To communicate research related information	6 (0.8)	8 (1)	32 (4.1)	345 (44.4)	384 (49.7)	4.41	.693	2
2	To explore review of literature	3 (0.4)	3 (0.4)	37 (4.8)	336 (43.5)	394 (51)	4.44	.642	1
3	To get information and methods for research	7 (0.9)	4 (0.5)	47 (6.1)	312 (40.4)	403 (52.1)	4.42	.711	3
4	To share research work and publications	7 (0.9)	19 (2.5)	85 (11)	324 (41.9)	338 (43.7)	4.25	.814	4
5	To organize research work systematically	12 (1.6)	26 (3.4)	96 (12.4)	365 (47.2)	274 (35.4)	4.11	.860	5
6	To collaborate with experts / researchers	13 (1.7)	21 (2.7)	114 (14.4)	338 (43.7)	287 (37.1)	4.11	.875	6

It is demonstrated in Table 5 that the majority of scholars (94.5%) are utilizing the Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) “to explore the review of literature” followed by “to communicate research related information” (94.1%) and “to get information and methods for research” (92.5%). Few research scholars are using ASNS (80.8%) to “collaborate with the experts / researchers” and also to “organize research work systematically” (82.6%).

6.4.1. T-Test for Purposes of ASNS

T-Test was administered to test the significant difference in the purposes of using Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) among the research scholars of various age groups. The results are shown in Table 6

Table 6**T-Test for Purposes of ASNS**

Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T Value	Df	p value
20-30	661	25.75	3.377	345	771	.730
31 and above	112	25.86	3.598			
Total	773					

(*M=Mean; Std=Standard Deviation; R=Rank*)

Table 6 shows that the mean score of the purpose of utilizing ASNS among the research scholars of the age group 20-30 is 25.75 and the mean score of age group 31 and above is 25.86. T-value of 345 is not statistically significant as the p-value is .730 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the difference in the mean score of the purpose utilizing ASNS for the research scholars by age is not statistically significant. Hence the hypothesis is not proved.

6.5. Advantages of Academic Social Networking Sites

The study has ascertained the various advantages experienced by the research scholars on Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) on Likert five point scale such as “*Strongly Disagree*”, “*Disagree*”, “*Undecided*” “*Agree*” and “*Strongly Agree*”. The mean and standard deviation are calculated, and ranks are provided. This is demonstrated in Table 7.

Table 7**Advantages of Academic Social Networking Sites**

S. No	Description	SD	DA	UD	A	SA	M	Std	R
1	To share and publish research works	4 (0.5)	3 (0.4)	50 (6.5)	368 (47.6)	348 (45)	4.36	.668	2
2	To update research knowledge/skills	5 (0.6)	4 (0.5)	46 (5.9)	337 (43.6)	381 (49.3)	4.40	.684	1
3	To get adequate resources for research	4 (0.5)	9 (1.2)	74 (9.6)	359 (46.4)	327 (42.3)	4.29	.727	3

4	To collaborate with research experts and enrich expertise	9 (1.2)	26 (3.4)	97 (12.5)	363 (47)	278 (36)	4.13	.841	4
5	To interact with peer groups	9 (1.2)	28 (3.6)	114 (14.7)	366 (47.3)	256 (33.1)	4.07	.852	6
6	To increase more citations for publications	11 (1.4)	20 (2.6)	112 (14.5)	352 (45.5)	278 (36)	4.12	.850	5
7	To obtain various bibliographical styles	12 (1.6)	37 (4.8)	124 (16)	364 (47.1)	236 (30.5)	4.00	.893	7

Table 7 shows that Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) are useful to “update research knowledge/skills” (92.9%). It is also helps to “share and publish research works” (92.6%) and “getting adequate resources for research” (88.7%). Further, it is indicated that few research scholars (77.6%) opted that Academic Social Networking Sites (ASNS) helps “to obtain various bibliographical styles”.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The ASNS are the most important tools to collect, store, retrieve and share the research activities among the academicians and research scholars. The tools also facilitate to discuss with the peer research scholars, and also to get expert’s opinions, advices and suggestions to support and improve the research activities. Overall, these tools enable the research scholars to do their research works in a systematic way, complete the research works on time and also to improve the research outputs. Since, the level of awareness on ASNS is less among research scholars, it is recommended to organize the innovative programmes such as workshops and hands on trainings to enhance the level of awareness on ASNS. The perception of ASNS is not only helps to find and share information but, also helps to avoid the plagiarism and also to create visibility. Further, it recommends that the purposes of ASNS are not only to collect the review of literature, and also to be used to organize research works, collaboration with experts / researchers.

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