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## **Social Websites: A Blessing or Curse? Through the Lense of University Students**

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### **Abstract**

The present study mainly aimed at knowing about “Perceptions of Social Websites Among University Students.” It was a descriptive type of research. The researcher had the objectives including identifying the perceptions of students regarding social websites. Also, the purpose of their usage on the part of students. A questionnaire with 20 items was used for data collection and students of social sciences department at Abdul Wali Khan university Mardan was the population of the study. A random sample of 100 students was selected. The findings show that maximum number of students were of the view that social websites are used for learning purposes. However, it was further revealed that these social websites are also used for communication and interaction with the near and dear ones. Some of the respondents also opined that these websites are used as hobby and entertainment as well.

Key words: social website, networking, mobile use, face book, learning

### **Introduction**

Man is gregarines by nature and he always wants to live in groups. Communication with his fellow being is the best tool for him to keep in touch with each other. With the advancement of technology sources of communication have also been changes. Man has switched to information technology and now it has occupied a pretty dominant place as one of the main sources of communication. student usually use social websites for different purposes. But not all of them have full awareness about these sites. The main purpose behind extreme usage of these sites is their feature of connecting people around the world. it is the main point of interest. Therefore students use them frequently



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either having full command over them or not but sometimes they also face certain problems yet these sites are gaining fame among students.

There are a number of purposes for which students use them. Some use them for connecting to people while some use them for entertainment purpose or both of them. Some use them for getting new information and new knowledge. Purpose of using these sites varies from student to student.

Students sometimes face problems like leakage of personal information. These sites may affect students character or social and mental development. That's why some students are having negative perceptions about these sites. Still some students consider them as beneficent regardless of their negative effects and negative aspects.

There are different social websites that are being used by students. They are attracting their users through different features. While using these sites students often involve in unethical matters while some become aggressive. These sites affect academic performance of students as well. We can say that main cause of being affected negatively by these sites is the frequent use of these sites.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To know about students awareness about social websites.
2. To investigate students perceptions about the role of social websites.
3. To explore about students practices about social websites.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the perceptions of students about social websites?
2. What do students know about the role of social websites?
3. What do students practice in these social websites?

### **Social Networking Sites**

Abbreviated as SNS social networking site is a phrase that describes any website that provides its user to create a public profile on that website and communicate with other users on same website. Social networking is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, small or large.

A Web site that provides a platform for people to share their activities views and ideas however much more with family, friends and colleagues and share their interest in a particular topic. Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and Twitter are the leading social sites.

Members create an online profile with biographical data, photos and any other information they choose to post. They communicate with each other via e-mail, instant messaging, voice or videoconferencing to selected members.

Although social networking is possible in person, especially in the workplace, universities, and high schools. However the term is used most popularly for online interactions.

Because high schools, colleges, or workplaces do not contain much number of individuals and hence the networking is limited, but the internet is filled with millions of individuals who are looking to meet other people, to gather and share first-hand information and experiences about cooking, golfing, gardening, developing friendships professional alliances, finding employment, business-to-business marketing etc at high level. The topics and interests are as varied as the



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story of our universe.

When it comes to online social networking, websites are commonly used for the very purpose. These websites are known as social websites. Social networking websites function like an online community of internet users, the key for communication. Once you get access to a social networking website you can begin to socialize. This socialization may include reading the profile pages of other members and possibly even contacting them.

The friends that you can make are just one of the many benefits of social networking. Another one of those benefits includes diversity because the internet gives access to all individuals all around the world. This means that although you are in the United States, you could develop an online friendship with someone in Pakistan or India and vice versa. Not only will you make new friends, but you just might learn new things like new cultures or new languages and learning is always a good thing.

### **Types of social websites**

#### **Social Connections**

Keeping in touch with friends and family members is one of the greatest benefits of social networking. Here is a list of the most widely-used websites for building social connections online.

**Facebook:** Facebook provides a way for users to build connections and share information with people and organizations they choose to interact with online.

**Twitter:** Share your thoughts and keep connected with others via this real-time information network.

**Google +:** This relatively new entrant to the social connection marketplace is designed to allow users to build circles of contacts that they are able to interact with and also integrated with other Google products.

#### **Multimedia Sharing**

Social networking makes it easy to share videos and photographs online. Following are some of the most popular sites for multimedia sharing.

**YouTube:** Social media platform that allows users to view and share videos.

**Flickr:** This site provides a way for managing digital photographs online, as well as also for sharing them with others.

**Picasa:** Similar to Flickr, Picasa provides a way to organize and share photos. It is a Google product.

#### **Professional**

Professional social websites are designed to provide opportunities for career-related growth. Some of these types of networks provide a general platform for professionals to connect, while others are focused on specific occupations or



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interests. A few examples of professional social websites are given below.

**LinkedIn:** LinkedIn have a large number of members making it the largest online professional network. Members have an opportunity to build relationships by making connections and joining relevant groups.

**Classroom 2.0:** Social network specifically designed to help teachers. They connect with each other, share and help each other with profession-specific matters.

**Nurse Connect:** Online community designed to help individuals in the nursing profession connect and communicate with each other.

### **Informational**

Informational communities are made up of people seeking answers to everyday problems. For example, when you want to make any change to your home or garden, you may perform a web search and discover countless blogs, websites, and forums filled with people who are looking for the same kind of information. A few examples include:

**Super Green Me:** Online community where individuals interested in adopting green living practices can interact and find new ways for their purpose.

**HGTV Discussion Forums:** Connect with individuals interested in home design improvement through message boards.

**Do-It-Yourself Community:** Social media resource to allow do-it-yourself enthusiasts to interact with each other.

### **Educational**

Educational websites are those where many students go in order to collaborate with other students on academic projects, to conduct research for school, or to interact with professors and teachers for guidance via blogs and classroom forums. They are becoming very popular with passing time. Some examples of such educational social networks are listed below.

**The Student Room:** UK-based student community featuring a moderated message board and other useful resources related to school are provided here.

**The Math Forum:** A large educational network designed to connect students who are interested in mathematics, this site provides interaction opportunities for students by age group.

**ePALS School Blog:** This international social network for K-12 students is designed to build international connections to promote world peace.

### **Methodology Used**



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Survey type descriptive research method is used in this study. It involves collection, tabulation and interpretation of data through questionnaire.

### Questionnaire

A questionnaire is used as mean of collecting information. The instrument contains 20 items of alternate response. A questionnaire showing the awareness, perceptions and practices of social websites among students were administered personally. The investigator visited a number of departments and discussed various aspects of the problem with the students to obtained valuable and important information which are helpful for drawing conclusion and finding facts.

### Sampling

The sample for study consisted of the students of social sciences departments at Adul wali khan university Mardan.

The questionnaires were got filled up from the students of university. A sample of 100 students was randomly selected from the population under study. The sample contained both male and female students.

### Analysis of the Data

Collected data was statistically analyzed in tabular form, percentage was calculated and interpretation of table was made. On the basis of findings, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made.

### Analysis of Data

Table 4.1 Familiar with social websites

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	94	94.0	94.0	94.0
DA	5	5.0	5.0	99.0
UD	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

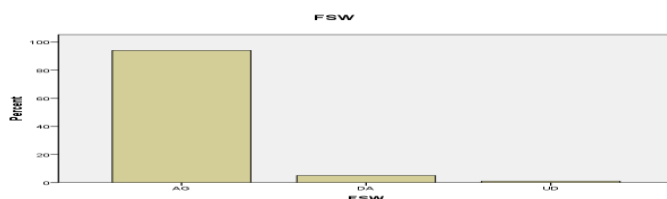


Table 4.1 shows the responses of students to the question I am familiar with social websites , 94 % students agreed that they use social websites whereas a minimum no of students i.e. 5% of them disagreed with the above statement.

Table 4.2 I use social websites daily

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	55	55.0	55.0	55.0



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DA	40	40.0	40.0	95.0
UD	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

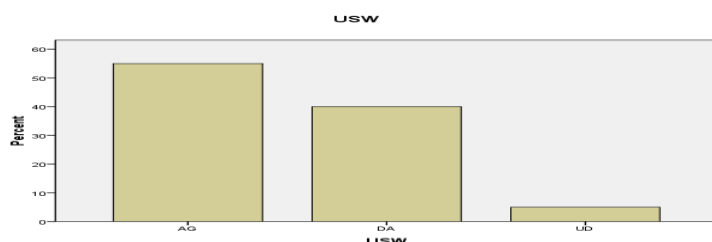


Table 4.2 shows the responses of students to the statement I use social websites on daily basis , 55 % students agreed that they use social websites whereas a minimum no of students i.e. 40% of them disagreed with the statement.

Table 4.3 I can use social websites easily

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	84	84.0	84.0	84.0
DA	12	12.0	12.0	96.0
UD	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.3 shows responses of the students to the question I can use social website easily, 84% agreed with the statement while 12% disagreed with the statement.

**Table 4.5 Social websites for communication purpose**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	69	69.0	69.0	69.0
DA	22	22.0	22.0	91.0
UD	9	9.0	9.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	



**Vol. 3 No. 3 Table 4.4 Social websites for learning purpose**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	79	79.0	79.0	79.0
DA	13	13.0	13.0	92.0
UD	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.4 shows responses of the students to the question I use social websites for learning purpose, 79% agreed to the statement while 13% disagreed to the statement.

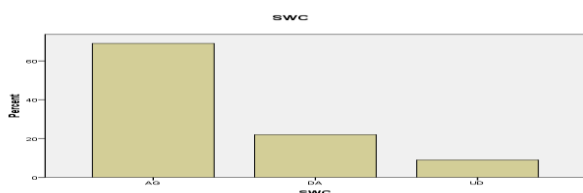


Table 4.5 shows responses of students to the question I use social websites for communication purpose, 69% agreed that they use social websites for communication purpose while 22% disagreed to the statement.

**Table 4.6 Social websites for staying connected with friends**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	71	71.0	71.0	71.0
DA	24	24.0	24.0	95.0
UD	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

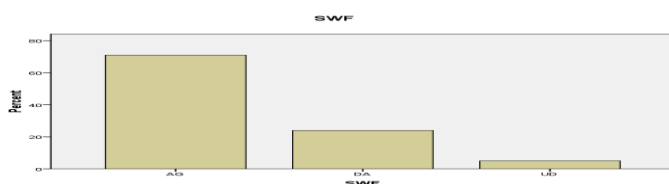


Table 4.6 shows responses of the students to the question I use social websites for staying connected to friends, 71% agreed that they use social websites for staying connected to friends while 24% disagreed to the statement

**Table 4.7 Social websites to meet new people**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	58	58.0	58.0	58.0
DA	34	34.0	34.0	92.0
UD	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	



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Table 4.7 shows responses of the students to the statement I use social websites to meet new people around the world, 58% agreed that they use social websites to meet new people around the world while 34% disagreed to the statement.

Table 4.8 Social websites to get access to teachers

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	48	48.0	48.0	48.0
DA	40	40.0	40.0	88.0
UD	12	12.0	12.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

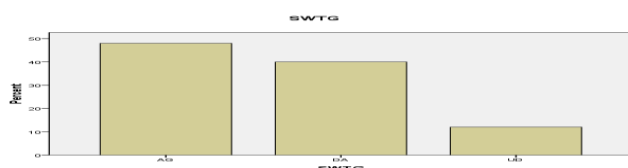


Table 4.8 shows responses of the students to the statement I use social websites to get access to my teacher for guidance, 48% agreed that they use social websites for getting access to teachers while 40% disagreed to the statement.

Table 4.9 Use social websites for entertainment

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	70	70.0	70.0	70.0
DA	27	27.0	27.0	97.0
UD	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

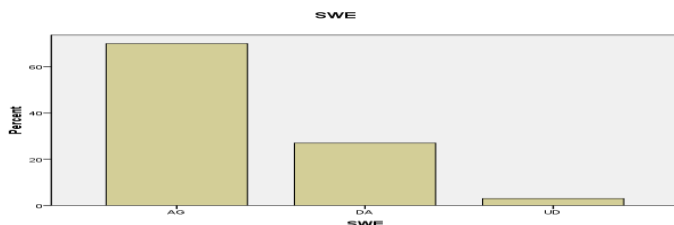


Table 4.9 shows responses of the students to the statement I use social websites for entertainment purpose, 70% agreed that they use social sites for entertainment purpose while 27% disagreed to the statement.

Table 4.10 Social websites are source of learning

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Valid	AG	73	73.0	73.0	73.0
	DA	14	14.0	14.0	87.0
	UD	13	13.0	13.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	



Table 4.10 shows responses of students to the statement social websites are best source of learning, 73% agreed that these sites are best source of learning, 14% disagreed to the statement while 13% don't have any idea about these sites as best source of learning.

Table 4.11 Social websites educate people

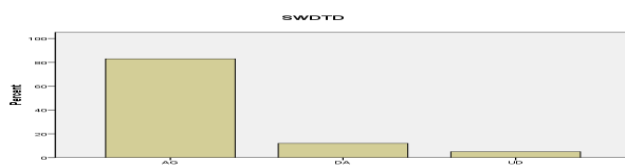
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	AG	73	73.0	73.0
	DA	17	17.0	90.0
	UD	10	10.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	



Table 4.11 shows responses of the students to the statement social websites educate people, 73% agreed that these sites do educate people, 17% disagreed to the statement while 10% have no idea.

Table 4.12 Social websites keep us informed

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	AG	83	83.0	83.0
	DA	12	12.0	95.0
	UD	5	5.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	





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Table 4.12 shows responses of the students to the statement social websites keep us informed from day to day happenings, 83% agreed that these sites do keep us informed while 12% disagreed to the statement.

Table 4.13 Social websites easy way to access people

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	83	83.0	83.0	83.0
DA	12	12.0	12.0	95.0
UD	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

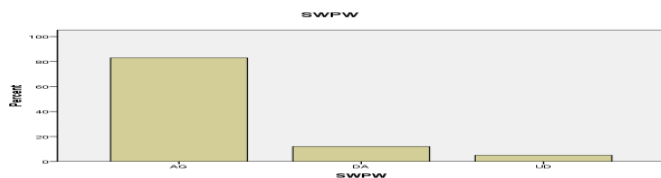


Table 4.13 shows responses of the students to the statement social websites is an easy way to access people anywhere in the world, 83% agreed that these sites are an easy way to access people anywhere in the world while 12% disagreed to the statement.

Table 4.14 Social websites are informative

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	77	77.0	77.0	77.0
DA	13	13.0	13.0	90.0
UD	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	



Table 4.14 shows responses of the students to the statement social websites are informative, 73% agreed while 13% disagreed to the statement.

Table 4.15 Social websites enhance my knowledge

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	76	76.0	76.0	76.0
DA	9	9.0	9.0	85.0
UD	15	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	



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Table 4.15 shows responses of the students to the statement social websites enhance my knowledge, 73% agreed, 9% disagreed to the statement while 15% have no idea.

Table 4.16 Social websites are source of career information

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	69	69.0	69.0	69.0
DA	21	21.0	21.0	90.0
UD	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	



Table 4.4.16 shows responses of the students to the statement social websites are best source of career information, 69% agreed that these sites are source of career information, 21% disagreed to statement while 10% have no idea.

Table 4.17 Social websites make students violent

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	40	40.0	40.0	40.0
DA	38	38.0	38.0	78.0
UD	22	22.0	22.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	



Table 4.17 shows responses of students to statement social websites make students violent, 40% agreed, 38% disagreed to statement while 22% have no idea.

Table 4.18 Social websites reduce face to face communication

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Valid	AG	65	65.0	65.0	65.0
	DA	24	24.0	24.0	89.0
	UD	11	11.0	11.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	



Table 4.18 shows responses of students to the statement social websites reduce face to face communication, 65% agreed, 24% disagreed to statement while 11% have no idea.

Table 4.19 Social websites lack privacy

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	62	62.0	62.0	62.0
DA	27	27.0	27.0	89.0
UD	11	11.0	11.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	



Table 4.19 shows responses of students to the statement social websites lack privacy, 62% agreed and 27% disagreed to statement while 11% have no idea.

Table 4.20 Social websites are time consuming

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid AG	67	67.0	67.0	67.0
DA	26	26.0	26.0	93.0
UD	7	7.0	7.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

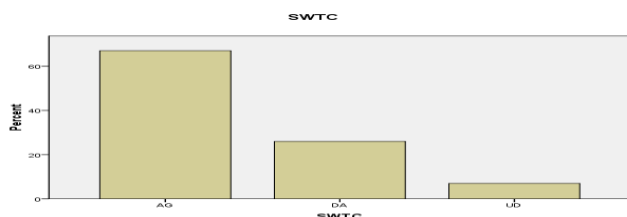


Table 4.20 shows responses of students to the statement social websites are time consuming, 67% agreed and 26% disagreed to the statement while 7% have no idea.

## Findings

Major findings of the study are as follows.

1. 94% students agreed that they are familiar with social websites while 5% disagreed about familiarity with the term social websites.
2. 55% students agreed that they use social websites on daily basis while 40% disagreed about using these websites on daily basis.
3. 84% students are having full command over these websites as they agreed that they can use them easily while 12% said that they cannot use them easily.
4. 69% students use these websites for communication purpose, 22% disagreed about using these websites for communication purpose while 9% didn't say anything.
5. 79% students agreed that they use social websites for learning purpose while 13% disagreed with the statement of using social websites for learning purpose and 8% didn't say anything.
6. 71% students use social websites for staying connected to their friends while 24% percent disagreed with the statement of using social websites for staying connected to friends.
7. 58% students agreed that they use social website to meet new people around the world, 34% disagreed that they use social websites for meeting new people around the world while 8% remained undecided with the statement.
8. 48% students agreed that they get access to teachers for guidance via social websites, 40% disagreed that they use social websites for getting access to teachers and 12% have no idea.
9. 70% students use social websites for entertainment purpose while 27% don't use these sites for entertainment purpose.
10. 73% students agreed that social websites are best source of learning, 14% students disagreed about these websites are best source of learning and 13% have no idea about these sites being best source of learning.
11. 73% students are of the view that social websites educate people 17% disagreed with the statement social websites educate people while 10% choose the option undecided.
12. 83% students agreed that social websites keep us informed from current happenings while 12% disagreed with the statement social websites keep us informed and 5% were unable to decide.
13. 83% students agreed that social website is an easy way to access people anywhere while 12% disagreed to the statement social websites is an easy way to access people anywhere.



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14. 77% students agreed that social websites are informative while 13% disagreed to statement social websites are informative and 10% were having no idea.
15. 76% students agreed that social websites enhance their knowledge while 9% disagreed to the statement social websites enhance my knowledge and 15% couldn't decide.
16. 69% students agreed that social websites are best source of career information while 21% disagreed to statement social websites are best source of career information and 10% were having no idea.
17. 40% students agreed that social websites make students violent, 38% disagreed to the statement social websites make students violent and 22% were unaware.
18. 65% students agreed that social websites reduce face to face communication, 24% disagreed to the statement social websites reduce face to face communication while 11% couldn't decide.
19. 62% students agreed that social websites lack privacy, 24% disagreed to the statement social websites lack privacy while 11% were having no idea.
20. 67% students agreed that social websites are time consuming while 26% disagreed to the statement that social websites are time consuming.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

1. It is optimistic on the part of students that they are familiar with social websites so university should provide enough facilities to students to get benefit from them.
2. Many students use these websites on daily basis hence it is recommended on the part of university to provide facilities as well as arrange classes for the students in order to provide them guidance.
3. Students can use these websites easily it is therefore recommended that university should make sure to upload knowledgeable material and arrange for informative blogs and websites also.
4. It is recommended that university should form a link with scholars and other qualified persons so that students can communicate with them and can seek guidance in their learning.
5. It is recommended that teachers should tell the students about different websites that contain subject related and general information in order to assist them in learning.
6. It is recommended on the part of university to establish links with other foreign universities so that students can meet new people and get benefit from them.
7. It is recommended that teachers should provide guidance to students beyond their working hours or whenever they approach them.
8. Students should be made aware that these websites are not used for entertainment purposes but it has also got some other advantageous functions as well. They should use these websites for education purposes also.
9. Students agreed that social websites are best source of learning so university should arrange classes based on information about newly established



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- informative sites and also tell them about how to access these sites and learn new things.
10. It is recommended on part of university to encourage and motivate students to search via social websites and find out new vistas of knowledge and inventions, also university should inform students about different online courses to learn.
  11. Students agreed that social websites keep us informed from day to day happenings it is therefore recommended that university should establish blogs and articles based on news and other happenings.
  12. University should motivate students to access qualified people around the world and learn new things.
  13. Teachers should motivate students to collect information on different topics in order to make them competent.
  14. It is recommended on part of university to establish blogs and articles based on new knowledge to facilitate students.
  15. University should arrange classes based on guidance about career and should suggest students' websites containing career information.
  16. University should arrange for the counseling of students so that they might not become violent while using these websites for different purposes.
  17. It is recommended on part of university to encourage students for face to face communication rather than screened communication and should also arrange practices to develop their social skills.
  18. It is recommended that teachers should make aware and train the students about the cyber theft and other related dangers linked with privacy and guide them not to share real information on these social websites.
  19. It is recommended on part of university to raise awareness among the students about the disadvantages of using social websites and tell them that they are time consuming and might divert them from their studies.

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