AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON AWARENESS AND USE OF ACADEMIC SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AMONG COLLEGE FACULTY MEMBERS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COIMBATORE

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Abstract

Over the years, a number of Academic Social Networking (ASN) Platforms have grown in prominence, including Research Gate, Academia.edu, and Google Scholar. Many of these academic social networking sites provide an online repository where users may post and distribute research papers as one of their common features. It is appropriate to assess how and why ASNS are utilised now that Academia.edu, Research Gate, and Mendeley have been available for ten years, the current market leaders. Microsoft Academic has also recently. These websites provide professional engagement and the submission of academic articles, abstracts, and links to published publications. They also track published article demand. This study will look into how the websites are used and whether or not academics think they are useful. This study ought to demonstrate college faculty members' familiarity with ASNSs.

Keywords: ASN, Research Gate, Academia.edu, Mendeley, Research, Academic Community, Professional Interaction, Citation

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1.2 Introduction

The academic community is the target audience for Academic Social Networks (ASNs), which are similar to social networking sites. These online platforms enable you to create a profile, communicate with other researchers, and share content that is academic in nature. Most of the time, using these tools is free. The most alluring aspect of these websites is the user-friendly platform they provide for sharing your academic outputs with colleagues and scholarly communities throughout the world. The major outputs of the scholarly information lifecycle have typically been publications. A scholar's profile can now be expanded in novel and increasingly interactive ways thanks to the development of social media and networked technology, which has also changed the cycle to incorporate emerging media like blogs, podcasts, and networking sites. It is crucial to comprehend not only the traits of the member academics but also the primary drivers behind their involvement with these websites and their services if ASNS are to be effective in changing the established patterns of scholarly communication. The capacity of librarians to offer useful guidance and resources will be improved by having a general grasp of how academics use ASNS, given the role that libraries play in assisting scholars throughout the entire scholarly communication lifecycle.

1.3 Importance of Academic Social Networks

There is no secret about how popular and widely used online social networking services are among the younger generation. These social networking services are mostly used by users for leisure activities such as sharing events, life experiences, photos, and videos with their social circle. Recently, a new subset of online social networks dubbed academic social networking sites has emerged (ASNWs). Other than for amusement, ASNWs have other uses. These platforms cater to the scholarly needs of the academic community. ASNWs are quite popular among academics because of their focus on the academic community.

Users can build a personal profile, upload articles, get feedback, follow researchers, send direct messages to other researchers, and examine analytics on their works using Academia.edu, a comparable resource. Users on Academia.edu can also integrate the numerous networking tools mentioned by importing contacts from Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo, and Google to identify colleagues who already have Academia.edu profiles. A for-profit social networking site for academics is called Academic.edu. To identify networks of users with related interests, a researcher can build a profile, upload their work, and pick topics of interest. There are analytics accessible for involvement with uploaded research.

Google Scholar offers a search engine that can be used to locate connections to publications that are freely accessible to the public or that are accessible through institutional libraries. Users can see their citations per year data by creating a personal Google Scholar profile.

In order for readers to find links to all of your scholarly work, articles published on ResearchGate, Academia.edu, or other databases can also be linked to your Google Scholar profile. A for-profit social networking platform for researchers is called ResearchGate. A researcher can make a profile, upload publications, participate in discussions, and connect with colleagues. There are also other KPIs that are specific to this platform. Mendeley is an academic social network that many academics are already familiar with as a reference management. Researchers can create profiles, share their work, and establish connections with other researchers. Elsevier purchased Mendeley in 2013. Microsoft Academic Search (MAS) goes above and beyond being only a citation-counting document retrieval service. Even if there is only a small amount of quality control, it is sufficient to be taken into account for research evaluation and scientific benchmarking. It automatically gave the bibliographic records organised by authors, journals, institutions, or research disciplines.

1.4 Review from previous studies

Li et al. (2015) examined 1,021 ResearchGate answers from a sample to look at what makes an answer "excellent" (quality being defined by the number of up votes received). The posting speed and length of responses, as well as the responders' authority, were all positively related to quality. In the context of the ASNS, objectivity and truthfulness are crucial once more because responses that contained social factors were associated negatively with quality. In a 2016 survey conducted by Manca and Ranieri, the Italian Higher Education sector was asked how frequently they used various social media sites for personal, professional, and educational purposes. Lower levels of use were reported overall in regard to teaching compared to personal or professional purposes for ResearchGate and Academia.edu, which were combined. The data indicate a relationship between the level of personal usage of the sites and the participants' teaching experience, whereas the level of personal use was connected to age. Gender was shown to be significant in each of the three applications, with females using academic SNS more frequently for personal, professional, and educational purposes.

To investigate temporal changes in the institutional population at Academia.edu, Google Scholar Citations, and ResearchGate, Ortega (2017) expands on the 2015 study. The development of the originally well-represented topics in the sample declined while growth rose in under-represented locations, suggesting that over time the discrepancies in discipline populations found at different sites may equilibrate. According to job title and academic seniority, growth rates also exhibited variances. Academia.edu showed an increase in senior academics, whereas ResearchGate showed growth in graduate students and junior academics.

Yan and Zhang (2018) harvested profile data from 87,083 users of ResearchGate from 61 American universities. The data includes numbers for follower and following counts even though social network data was not expressly analysed. Greater levels of followers (and strangely, smaller levels of followees) were connected with higher research active institutions, according to comparisons made based on the research activity levels of the academics' institutions. Additionally, it was discovered that academics were most likely to interact with students from the same institution. Before presenting a thorough overview of the empirical research conducted to date on ASNS, Jordan K (2019) examined the background and definition of ASNS. The relevance of the platforms to Open Access publishing, metrics, interactions with others through the platforms, platform demographics and social structure, and user viewpoints are five major themes that have been discovered in the research literature. Although Mendeley's use profile is slightly different, Academia.edu and ResearchGate show a comparable footprint. Being reachable, discovering others, and sharing content are the uses that receive the highest scores. Two of the themes described in this paper are present; measuring metrics are of moderate importance, whereas conversations and engaging in social interaction are not given much weight in general.

1.5 Objectives of the study:

The study is incomplete without proper objectives . The present study is formulated to attain the following objectives

- To find out the most popular Academic Social Networking Site by the respondents.
- To examine the number of registered profiles in Academic Social Networking sites.
- To extract the principal purpose of Usage of ASN by the faculty members.
- To know the reason from the respondents for uploading publications in ASN.
- To identify the frequency of access by the respondents.
- To determine the satisfaction of using social networking sites
- To identify the problems associated with social networking sites.

1.6 Sampling Design

The present study is a quantitative in nature and survey research method has been adopted by the researcher for data collection. There were 280 filled questionnaire received .The survey designed in a way that a single respondent was not allowed to give more than one response. In the given period, a link to the online/offline questionnaire was sent to selected college faculty members in the Coimbatore region through E-Mail . Closed questions included in the questionnaire cover different aspects of the awareness, usage and feelings of faculty members about ASNWs. Simple Random sampling Technique was used to complete this study and it is conducted during 2021-22.

Statistical tools used:

1.Descriptive Analysis

2.Percentage Analysis

3.Garret Ranking Technique

1.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Table 1

Distribution of respondents according to the gender wise

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	158	56
Female	122	44
Total	280	100

The above table details the number and percentage of Male and Female respondents selected for this study. Out of 280 respondents 158 [56 %] are male and the remaining are female. This proves that male respondents exceeded female respondents by 12 percentage.

AGE WISE RESPONDENTS

The distribution of respondents according to their age wise is shown in Table2

Table 2

Distribution of respondents according to their age

Age and percentage	Age	Percent	Age	percent	Age	percent	Age	percent
Age in years	20-30	%	31-40	%	41-50	%	Above 51	%
Count	178	36	198	40	90	18	32	6

Source: primary data

The above table describes about the age wise classification of the respondents. The age group was divided into four categories ranging from 20-30 years , 31 – 40 years,41-50 years and above fifty years. Among these more number of respondents belongs to the age of 31-40 years which holds 40% (198 respondents) and the next highest percentage was 36% which is from 20-30 years category followed by 18% from 41-50 years and finally 6 % which belongs to above 51 years category.

Table 3

Educational Qualifications

Qualification	Respondents	Percentage
PG	76	27
MPhil	112	40
PhD	92	33
Total	280	100

Source: primary data

Table 3 tabulates about the educational qualification wise classification of the selected respondents. 40 percentage of the respondents which counts 112 have M.Phil qualification followed by 33 percentage of the respondents with Ph.D which accounts for the count of 92. Among the selected respondents the lowest is 27%which has the count of 76 respondents with Post Graduation degree.

Table 4

Preferred Academic Social Networking Sites

S.No	Service	Frequency
1	Google Scholar	182
2	Academia.edu	148
3	Research Gate	118
4	Mendely	63
5	Microsoft Academic	48
6	Orcid	79

Source: primary data

The above table describes preference of Academic Social Networking Sites adopted by the selected samples . This is multiple choice in nature . Since the academicians rely on multiple sources for information gathering. It is revealed that 182 prefers google scholar followed by 148 who opined for academia.edu whereas 118 preferred research age followed by 79 who has orcid and finally 63 opines they have Mendely and 48 uses Microsoft academic as well.

Table 5

Purpose of ASNs in your research

Purpose	Frequency
Want to promote sharing your research publications	116
Want to know how much of articles are cited	186
interact with the experts in research field	51
participated in the discussion	32
access required articles	128

Source: primary data

The above table describes Purpose of ASNs in your research . This is multiple choice in nature. Since the academicians rely on multiple purposes for information gathering. It is revealed that 116 “Want to promote sharing your research publications” whereas 186 who opined they “Want to know how much of articles are cited ” whereas 128 uses the same for “access required articles “

Table 6

Search strategy adopted ASNs information

Search strategy	Respondents	Percentage
Title Search	71	25
Keyword Search	63	23
Author Search	42	15

Subject Search	104	37
	280	**100**

Source: primary data

The table above represents Search strategy adopted ASNs information. It is evident from the analysis that 37% uses for Subject Search which accounted for 104 followed by 25 percentage of the respondents who opined they prefer title search and 63 opined that they use keyword search for the same . Finally 42 samples opined that they prefer author search over others.

Table 7

Preference for Using ASNs

Preference for Using ASNs	Respon-dents	Perce-ntage
Increasing Citation of research publications	71	25
Increasing the visibility of research	63	23
Helps to collaborate with other researchers	42	15
Use of ASNS promotes the research culture	54	20
Tracking the reading and citation of research articles	50	17

Source: primary data

The table above depicts the Preference for Using ASNs, the present study reveals that "Increasing Citation of research publications "is the main preference with the count of 25% followed by "Increasing the visibility of research " with the count of 63 whereas 42 opined that their preference relies "Helps to collaborate with other researchers ". It is also evident that "Use of ASNS promotes the research culture " was opined by 20% of the samples . Finally "Tracking the reading and citation of research articles " was the primary purpose of ASN.

TABLE 8

RANK THE REASON FOR UPLOADING PUBLICATIONS

S.NO	FACTORS	TOTAL SCORE	MEAN SCORE	RANK
1	For Marketing and publishing	2134	5.45	**II**
2	For Citations	2228	5.67	**I**
3	To Downloads	1623	4.97	III
4	To Views/Reads the articles	1372	4.24	**V**
5	Information sharing with students/early career researchers	1489	4.60	**IV**
6	To Following researchers	1173	3.76	**VII**
7	To know the Publication statistics	1312	3.90	**VI**

Source: primary data And Garret Ranking method

The above table 4.2.3 reveals the reason for uploading publications "For Citations" was ranked first by the selected sample respondents with the total score of 2228 and mean score of 5.67. "For Marketing and publishing " was ranked second with the total score of 2134 and mean score of 5.45. "To Downloads " , Information sharing with students/early career researchers third and fourth position with the total score of 1623 and 1489 and mean score of 4.97 and 4.60 respectively. "To Views/Reads the articles" was ranked fifth with the total score of 1372 and mean score of 4.24. "To know the Publication statistics" occupied sixth position with the total score of 1312 and mean score of 3.90. "To Following researchers" occupied seventh position with the total score of 1312 and mean score of 3.76.

Table 9
Preferred Format to Upload the Publications

Preferred for Upload Publication	Respondents	Percentage
Full-text	115	41
Abstract	78	28
Abstract and references	48	17
Metadata	39	14
Total	280	100

Source: primary data

The above table shows the preferred format of uploading publications adopted by the selected respondents. It is evident that 41 percentage of the samples upload full text documents followed by 28 who opined that they upload abstract and 17 percentage stated that they upload abstract as well as references for the uploading publication . Finally 39 opined that they prefer to upload meta data.

Table 10

Frequency of Access to ASNS

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Daily	102	36
Twice a Week	82	30
Weekly	45	16
Whenever I Required	51	18
	280	**100**

Source: primary data

The table given above represents the Frequency of Access to ASNS of the sample respondents selected. It is evident form the analysis that 36% of the samples access Academic social networking site daily followed by 82 respondents who opined that they access in twice a week for reference purpose followed by 51 respondents who opined they access the same whenever required.

1.8 Conclusion

Academic Social Networking research tools plays a vital role in scholarly communication and research. Many of them exclusively designed for researchers In order to save their time and energy which will ultimately help them to organize their research work and increase their productivity in number of ways. The outcomes of the study revealed that Google scholar is most used academic social networking sites by the researchers. The present study accomplishes the purpose of using academic social networking sites is the research assist, found literature reviews and citation access. The scholars and academicians must use the best use out of ASNS to enrich theirself about the recent trends in their respective domain.

1.9 Reference

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