

Facebook Use as Mechanism in Understanding Emotion and Self-regulation

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ABSTRACT

Schools and school administrators regulate the use of social networking sites especially Facebook in the campus as they consider it unfavorable to students' academic life. This study looked into the positive contribution of Facebook to students' life. It correlated students' frequency of Facebook use and their level of emotion regulation. This descriptive-correlational study utilized Emotion Regulation Questionnaire to collect data from the 130 student-respondents. The study revealed that the Misamis University High School students used

Facebook for 1-2 hours a day on average. As the students increase their frequency of Facebook use, their level of understanding and regulating their emotion get better. The study reconsiders revision of the school policy on Facebook use in the campus and integration of the same in instructional practices.

Keywords – Educational Psychology, Facebook Use, Understanding Emotion, Self-regulation, Descriptive-Correlational Study, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Facebook (FB) is a popular social networking site (SNS) used primarily to communicate and stay in touch with friends, family and colleagues. Students adopt it for academic and non-academic purposes (Lampe, 2008; Roblyer, 2010; Bakar, 2009). Many psychologists and researchers afterwards posed recurring questions about the detrimental effects of Facebook use to individuals who frequently use the social site. Compulsive use of the networking sites may have deleterious effects on the user's psychosocial well-being, (Tokunaga & Rains, 2010). On the positive side, Facebook provides emotional support on teens who suffer emotional problems related to their academic studies (Erjavic, 2013).

The features of Facebook impact the emotion of its users and its format can intensify feelings (Mod, 2010). Users enjoy collaborative learning and can direct their emotions through posts. Hence, expressing one's emotion and learning something becomes easy. These strategies specify how people go about managing a particular unwanted emotion.

Failure to regulate emotions affects the advancement of the affective domain (Gratz, 2009). Emotion regulation (ER) is a strategy we use to maintain components of an emotional response (Schmidt, 2008). It is also the process responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reaction in order to accomplish one's goals (Mcewen&Flouri, 2009). Emotional regulation comprised a multitude of physiological, cognitive, and behavioral overlapping processes (Sim&Zeman, 2006). Emotion regulation is the process of maintaining, modulating, or changing the occurrence and intensity of physiological processes (Eisenberg et al., 2000). The maturation of these ER capacities is central to the individual's growing abilities to handle stress, develop coping skills, and modulate attentive and learning processes (Shen& Zhang, 2012). Inability to regulate emotions can cause maladaptive ways of modulating emotional arousal, difficulties in controlling behaviors during emotional distress, and failure to use

emotions as information (Gratz, 2009).

Many issues rise as the use of Facebook is becoming popular. Bullying has become more prevalent because of profane photo or video comments and irresponsible post (Mazer& James, 2012; Litwiller&Brausch, 2013). Social networking sites such as Facebook have evolved as a combination of personalized media experience within the social context of participation. In SNSs like Facebook, profiles, friends and comments are publicly visible (Ahmad, 2011). In sum, social interaction is now more open causing openness also on the issues on irresponsible posting, degrading comments, and even war of words. With these issues, a total ban of Facebook is the battle cry of many. Schools and academic institutions safeguarded their subjects by a total ban of Facebook use in the school premises.

Many researchers attempt to explain the effects of Facebook use on the individuals. However, they failed to associate Facebook use on the affective domain specifically on the emotion regulation aspect of the learners. This paper will take a different view and see how Facebook use can impact a person's emotion regulation skills. Result will support revision of policies regulating Facebook use inside school campuses and using it as a platform of instruction.

FRAMEWORK

Emotion regulation is an ability of human beings to express their emotions in productive ways. It consists of people's active attempts to manage their emotional states. People use different strategies to regulate their emotions. Maximum development of emotion regulation occurs when teens are given the opportunity to pursue goals and engage in challenging and collaborative learning experiences (Gross, 2002; Boekaerts and Corno, 2005; Fredricks et al., 2004). One's ability to regulate emotion is crucial to psychological and physical well-being (Ahn et al., 2013). Deficiency in emotion regulation skills negatively affects the affective domain of the students (Gratz, 2008). Knowing that affective domain development is one of primary goals in learning (Sherry, 2005), it is thus imperative not to underestimate the role of emotion regulation in the learning processes.

Emotions are processes that unfold over time, and its response components are interrelated as the emotion unfolds (Gross, 2002). Behaviors can change emotions, often these effects are unintended or incidental or even implicit or outside awareness. It entails the modification of ongoing or newly created

emotional responses through the active engagement of regulatory processes (Williams, 2009).

This study considers the use of Facebook as the students' strategy to regulate emotions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study assessed the frequency of Facebook use and the level of emotion regulation among the high school students in Misamis University. It also aimed to explore significant relationship between students' Facebook use and their level of emotion regulation.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive-correlational research design aimed to describe the relationship between students' frequency of Facebook use and their level of emotion regulation. Descriptive correlational research describes relationships among variables where the researcher has no control over the independent variables (Lappe, 2000). The study randomly surveyed 130 high school students in Misamis University High School Department on August to September 2013.

The study employed demographic profile survey to ask students' frequency of Facebook use a day, gadget used upon visiting Facebook, and Internet connection access. The study also used Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) to assess the students' emotion regulation. ERQ is part of the Social Skills Checklist of the Psychological Services Department of Escambia County School District. The study tested the tool to ascertain its applicability and reliability level. Results showed that the four subscales of the ERQ are within the acceptable level of reliability, to wit: Understanding Emotions (UE) – 0.85, Self-regulation (SR) – 0.73, Flexibility (FL) – 0.73, and Problem Solving (PS) – 0.70.

The researchers preserved the integrity of the respondents by maintaining anonymity of the completed questionnaires. They asked student-respondents, and their parents to sign an informed consent prior to answering of the questionnaires. The researchers computed the descriptive statistics such as counts and percents, mean and standard deviation to describe the frequency of Facebook use and students' level of emotion regulation. The study measured the strength of correlation of the variables using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation test (Pearson's r).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Frequency of Facebook Use and Level of Emotion Regulation

Data (Table 1) revealed that most of the students (60.77%) surveyed visited Facebook 1-2 hours a day on average. A few of them (26.15%) use Facebook for 2-4 hours a day and the least minority (13.08%) hang out with Facebook for 5 hours or more a day.

Misamis University High School students used Facebook for 1 – 2 hours a day. Finding shows that the students have lesser time in socializing friends via Facebook. This finding means that the students do not have the affluence time on Facebook. They can only access the social networking site outside the school or at home because the school regulates its use in the campus. However, the 1-2 hours student engagement in Facebook is already enough for them to express their emotions about academic pressures that have transpired during the day.

The students' level of emotion regulation along the four subscales is at the good level (Table 1). The finding suggests that the high school students can identify their likes and dislikes, can demonstrate affection and empathy towards peers, can refrain from aggressive behaviors, do not exhibit intense fears or phobias, can interpret body language and can vary voice tone to convey messages. In short, the students have the understanding on when and how to express appropriate emotions.

This study found evidence that the students can define their emotions portrayed by different scenarios and circumstances. Since emotions are indicators of how things are going on in people's lives, these students find it easy to understand why things are going upside down. The students regulate their emotions themselves by allowing others to comfort him/her if upset or agitated, by accepting teases without becoming upset and by ending conversations appropriately.

Self-regulated students develop realistic expectations, create goals with specific outcomes, and identify plans to maximize success (Zimmerman, 2008). The students consider best learning to occur when they observe their own behaviors. This means that students learn to decrease negative behaviors and increase positive behaviors. In Facebook, the students cope up in decreasing negative behaviors by posting shout-outs, photos, and by bullying enemies. They also learn to increase positive behavior by liking and appreciating friends' album, posting announcements, and by expressing feelings through comments and posts.

Table 1. Frequency of facebook use and the students' level of emotion regulation

Variables	f	%	Understanding Emotion		Self-regulation		Flexibility		Problem Solving	
			M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Frequency of FB Use										
1 – 2 hours	9	60.77	2.44	0.515	2.62	0.502	2.83	0.569	2.69	0.501
3 – 4 hours	34	26.15	2.74	0.403	2.90	0.609	2.85	0.520	2.87	0.449
5 hours or more	17	13.08	2.67	0.623	2.81	0.556	2.87	0.591	2.73	0.890
Overall	130	100.00	2.55	0.519	2.72	0.549	2.84	0.556	2.74	0.554

Notes: *Emotion Regulation Scale: Very Good (3.26 – 4.20); Good (2.51 – 3.25); Poor (1.76 – 2.50); and Very Poor (1.0 – 1.75).*

Correlation between Students' Facebook Use and their Level of Emotion Regulation

The results (Table 2) of the test of correlations between the frequency of students' frequency of Facebook use and their level of understanding emotions yielded a highly significant mark or moderate correlation ($r = 0.632$; $p = 0.007$). Further analysis of the data (Table 1) reveals that the students who used Facebook for 2-4 hours a day had a higher level of understanding emotions ($M = 2.76$) than that of students who used Facebook for 1-2 hours

($M = 2.44$). This finding supports the idea that when students increase their time socializing in Facebook, they get better opportunities of understanding their emotions.

This finding of the study strengthens the argument on allowing the use of Facebook. The ability to understand emotions serves fundamental roles in decision-making and reasoning. In facing moral decision-making, we may consider other people's emotions resulting from physical pain. The ability to interpret emotional cues is important in maintaining psychological functioning. Further, a coordinated understanding of emotional state can lead to appreciation of the relationship between how others perceive and think about one's actions. The finding supports further evidence that Facebook use can inhibit social adjustment just like understanding one's emotion (Yang & Brown, 2013).

Data (Table 2) also show a significant marked or moderate correlation ($r = 0.481$; $p = 0.040$) between students' frequency of Facebook use and their level of self-regulation. This could mean that somehow by increasing the time of Facebook use, the level of self-regulation among student-users will improve.

The comparison of the means (Table 1) between the groups of 1- 2 hour and 2-4 hour Facebook users reveals that the later group had a higher level of self-regulation ($m = 2.90$). This finding implies that when students maximize their time socializing in Facebook for 2- 4 hours a day, they will be able to achieve better self-regulation.

It is evident that the students manage their emotions to achieve positive goals such as maintaining good relationships, learning, etc. Furthermore, they are well-equipped in terms of monitoring their own learning, providing own feedback and performance evaluations, and viewing errors and criticism as opportunities to learn rather than as reasons to give up (Perry and Vandekamp, 2000).

The students also involved in the development of constructive behaviors that affect learning. They adapt the processes to support the realization of personal goals. With the advent of internet, specifically the Facebook, the students taught themselves to become self-regulated learners by the integration of social sites for learning purposes.

Table 2. Correlation between frequency of Facebook use and students' emotion regulation

Variables	Understanding Emotion $r(p)$	Self-regulation $r(p)$	Flexibility $r(p)$	Problem Solving $r(p)$
Frequency of Facebook Use	0.632(0.007)**	0.481(0.040)*	0.043(0.623)	0.107(0.225)

Notes: (1) ** Highly Significant at 0.01, * Significant at 0.05.

(2) r -value interpretation is based on Calmorin&Piedad (2009)

r - value	Description
0.00 - 0.20	- negligible
0.21 – 0.40	- low or slight
0.41 – 0.70	- marked or moderate
0.71 – 0.90	- high
0.91 – 0.99	- very high
1.00	- perfect

CONCLUSIONS

The study advances the idea that high school students use Facebook for about 1-2 hours a day, and they have a good level of regulating emotion. The students' frequency of Facebook use is associated with their good level of understanding emotion and self-regulation. The higher the frequency students use Facebook, the better their level of understanding and regulating emotion become. The study concluded that Facebook use could be a mechanism in understanding emotion and self-regulation among high school students. Hence, banning Facebook inside the school campus is not commendable. The study recommends revision of policies regulating Facebook use in academic institutions.

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