

Social Networking Sites — Friend or Foe of Social Skills in Education

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Abstract

The social networking sites are gaining a lot of popularity as one of the modes of communication these days to remain socially active. Not only do these social sites bridge the social boundaries but they also provide a common platform to communicate and socialise in the offline social set up with other individuals. Social researchers are now baffled at its impact on user's lives and their social life. Some fear that excessive use of Social Networking Sites might diminish human relationships and increase social isolation. Others opine that it will improve people's social skills via networking. The present study tries to find that whether the usage of Social Networking Sites will be 'friend' or 'foe' of social skills in the education and how the role of teacher comes in between to guide the students in this regard. The major findings of study were: (i) there exist significant relationship between Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills of the pupil teachers. (ii) The different levels of Social Networking Sites usage viz. high, average and low were not contributing significant effect on the Social Skills of the pupil teachers. (iii) The different levels of Social Skills viz. high and average level of the pupil teachers were contributing more positively towards the usage of Social Networking Sites. However, at low level of the social skill of the pupil teachers, this relationship was not significant.

With our whole social lives now revolving online, some people seem to think that there is no longer a need for interacting or communicating with the society

as World Wide Web provides more convenient mode of socialisation. The less- threatening social environment that Social Networking Sites offer compared

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to face-to-face interactions may make these sites particularly fascinating for individuals lacking friends or social circle. The emergence of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) simplified the whole process of social interaction and communication. Currently, there are hundreds of SNSs that can draw millions of people to connect on a common platform. Nearly all sites enable persons to avail pre-existing connections and initiate friendships between strangers. With a rush in the number of people who use or have access to the Internet, SNSs are considered a must by them to stay in touch with each other and to develop their social skills (Rajat, 2009).

Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

In the words of William (2009), *it is an online community of Internet users who want to communicate with other users about areas of mutual interest*. The term social network site is usually used to describe this phenomenon and Social Networking Sites also appear in public discourse, and both are often used interchangeably.

Boyd (2007) offers the following definition for today's Social Networking Sites: they include web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users within whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within their system. Similarly, a recent report by Hitwise an Experian Company (2007) states that: social networking websites are online communities of people who share interests and activities, or who

are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. They typically provide a variety of ways for users to interact, through chat, messaging, email.

Examples of SNSs include: Twitter, Friendster, MySpace, Facebook, Orkut and many others.

Reasons for the Rise of Online Social Networking

Ofcom (2008) discussed the following reasons for the rise of online social networking as under –

- the ability to form different networks with people who share such things as location, political views, aspirations, hobbies and so on.
- internet users want to freely create and share their own content without having to undergo that sometimes mundane task of setting up and managing their own websites.
- to express their views, ideology and moods with the internet world and to learn about the views, ideas and moods of others.
- creating any relationships that they choose.
- providing the motivation and purpose to engage in a medium which hitherto held little attraction.
- appeal to the inherent inquisitiveness we have about other people and what they are doing with their lives.
- the desire to learn about and connect with others (whether we know them or not) can provide a lifeline to those who are isolated and disengaged from family, friends and communities.

- Open up the possibility of engaging with public services and organisations in a very different way, and have the potential to engage those who may currently find the public sector distant and impenetrable.

According to Goldner (2008); Raccanello (2011) and Pike (2011), Social Networking profiles present opportunities for imagining different relationships in the real world. There is a positive attitude toward SNS due to the opportunity of obtaining knowledge and the use of SNS as a social utility. As per the various research studies, the increased use of SNS among users' was associated with decreased self-esteem, happiness, satisfaction with life, and increased depression and loneliness.

A study conducted by Carnegie Mellon University concludes that Internet use leads to small but statistically significant increases in misery and loneliness and a decline in overall psychological well-being (Kraut et. al, 1998). Internet users will lose the savvy and skills and patience to conduct social relations in the corporeal world, and that the Internet will intensify the negative effect television has already had on our social skills (Weinstein and Weinstein, 1998).

Social Skills

A social skill is any skill facilitating interaction and communication with others. The process of learning such skills is called socialisation. Walker (1988) defines social skills as a set of competencies that (a) allow an individual to initiate and maintain positive social relationships, (b) contribute to peer

acceptance and to a satisfactory school adjustment, and (c) allow an individual to cope effectively with the larger social environment.

Often we take our social skills for granted, without realising all the complicated skills we use when we interact with others. Socially acceptable learned behaviours are those that enable an individual to interact effectively with others and to avoid or escape negative social interactions with others (Gresham and Elliott, 1990). Thus Social Skills require that one should go along with other people in a desirable manner.

Major Categories of Social Skills

Gresham and Elliott (1990) have discussed the following major categories of Social Skills:

- communication,
- cooperation,
- assertion,
- responsibility,
- empathy,
- engagement,
- self-control

Variables that Influence Social Skills

There are many variables that determine acquisition of Social Skills such as demographic variables, home context, cultural diversity, educational barriers and individual disability. The variables that influence Social Skills' efficiency are:

- lack of opportunities in terms of social interaction,
- lack of knowledge about skills required for social interaction,
- lack of practice in social skills,
- lack of reinforcement for social skills,

- problem behaviour and
- maladjustment.

Relationship between Social Networking Sites Usage and Social Skills

According to Yang (2003); Silverman (2007); Kord (2008); Helou and Rahim (2010) and Swang (2011) community college students were frequent users of online social networking, more so for general purposes than for academic purposes. Social Networking Sites benefited college students by increasing their sense of belonging, thus placing online social networking as an important variable in the college persistence equation. In the past two to three years, the number of SNSs has increased dramatically. Today, millions of people around the world are actively using social networking sites, integrating their use into their daily lives.

An Educator's Role in Social Networking Sites Usage and Social Skills

In December 2011, the then IT minister Kapil Sibal expressed his serious concern over the usage of Social Networking Sites that can cause threat to national integration (*The Hindu*, 2011). Greenhow (2008) says as teachers, we always want to know where our students are coming from and what they're interested in so we can build on that in our teaching. By understanding how students may be positively using these networking technologies in their daily lives and where the unrecognised educational opportunities are, we can help make schools even more relevant, connected and meaningful to students.

Teachers and Social Networking Sites

For many teachers the use of Facebook and MySpace is seen as a valuable educational tool and an integral part of their private social interaction. However, the exponential growth in the use of Social Networking Sites by students and teachers alike has also presented new legal, ethical and professional challenges for teachers and school administrators. Teachers might argue that their Social Networking Sites are personal websites but they are ultimately very public spaces that leave an electronic trail that can have serious, albeit unintended, consequences for teachers who breach professional codes of conduct and education laws. Teachers face the risk of censored speech, professional misconduct and possible dismissal for posting inappropriate information including comments and pictures on these websites.

Teachers are vested by the public with trust and responsibility, together with an expectation that they will help prepare students for life in society in the broadest sense. As educators they have a professional image to uphold and how they conduct themselves online helps determine this image. As reported by the media, there have been instances of educators demonstrating professional misconduct while engaging in inappropriate dialogue about their schools and/or students or posting pictures and videos of themselves engaged in an inappropriate activity. Some educators feel that being online shields them from having their personal lives examined. But increasingly, how educators' online identities are too

often public and can cause serious repercussions (*Russo et.al, 2010*).

Emergence of the Problem

The present study tried to explore the relationship between Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills of the pupil teachers. As the prospective teachers, they are going to be the future teachers, their knowledge about relationship between Social Networking Sites usage and social skills is needed to make the future students careful and to stay secure. They can be made safe from fake social identities and unlawful activities which may spoil their life while expanding their social life. It is ultimately be the responsibility of the teachers to guide the students about how to use Social Networking Sites for socialization without ignoring their need to explore the world. The basic reason for selecting the prospective pupil teachers were that they are would be teachers. These future teachers themselves are going through the technological transition phase of communication. Thus they are now in a position to understand the pros and cons of Social Networking Sites usage which may affect the future generation of students also.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the usage of Social Networking Sites and Social Skills of the pupil teachers at different levels i.e. high, average and low.
- To study whether there exists any relationship between Social Networking Sites and Social Skills of the pupil teachers.
- To study whether there exists any relationship between Social

Networking Sites usage (being constant) and Social Skills (at high, average and low level) of the pupil teachers.

- To study whether there exists any relationship between Social Skills (being constant) and Social Networking Sites usage (at high, average and low level) of the pupil teachers.

Hypothesis

Ho.1: There exists no significant relationship between Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills of the pupil teachers.

- **Ho.1 (a):** There exists no significant relationship between Social Networking Sites usage (being constant) and Social Skills (at high, average and low level) of the pupil teachers.
- **Ho.1 (b):** There exists no significant relationship between Social Skills (being constant) and Social Network-ing Sites usage (at high, average and low level) of the pupil teachers.

Delimitation of the Study

The present study was confined to the pupil teachers of selected college of education of Union Territory of Chandigarh.

Tools Used

- Social Networking Sites usage Questionnaire (SNSQ) developed and validated by the investigators themselves with the objective of getting appropriate information about the usage of social networking

sites among pupil teachers. The questionnaire consists of 21 items. The questionnaire was constructed after studying the available literature on social networking sites usage. The face validity and content validity of the questionnaire were ensured by taking experts opinion. The response of each respondent was scored as per the five point scale. The scoring for the positive items on five point scale was 5, 4,3,2,1 and for negative items it was 1,2,3,4 and 5. The value of obtained chi-square for each item was used as discrimination value of each item for reliability purpose. Based on the discrimination value, all the items were found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance. To estimate overall reliability of the questionnaire, Spearman-Brown Prophecy formula was used. The split-half reliability coefficient of SNSQ was found to be 0.71 and thus the questionnaire was presumed to be reliable for the present study.

- Another tool of the study was Social Skills Questionnaire (SSQ) which was adapted from Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) by Gresham and Elliot (1990) and validated by the investigators themselves. The objective of the Social Skills questionnaire was to seek opinion regarding the Social Skills through the simple and straight statements. In order to list the items around the social skills; a theoretical background was borrowed from Gresham and Elliott (1990). The social skills questionnaire

developed by Gresham and Elliott (1990) was concerned with three age groups. As the present study was not focused on these three age groups, only the relevant items were taken from the Social Skills questionnaire and where necessary, modified version of items was used. For Social Skills questionnaire, some items were modified (i.e. Item no.'s - 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 15, 16, 22, 27, 34, 36 and 39) and rest of the items were taken as it is from the original SSQ questionnaire (grades 7 to12) by Gresham and Elliott (1990). The investigators also interviewed many professors from colleges of education to have an in-depth knowledge of their opinions towards social skills. Beside this the items were constructed on a 5-point rating scale type instead of 3-point rating scale as used in the original version of Social Skills questionnaire of Gresham and Elliott (1990). Based on the discrimination value, all the items were found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance. To estimate reliability, Spearman-Brown Prophecy formula was used. The split half reliability coefficient of SSQ was found to be 0.76 and thus the questionnaire was presumed to be reliable for the present study. The face validity and content validity of the questionnaire were ensured by taking experts opinion.

Sample and Design of the Study

A random sampling method was used to select the sample. Out of the selected college of education, the list of 300

pupil teachers taken as population was entered into spreadsheet and random number was assigned to each pupil teacher then it was sorted by random number. The first n pupil teachers on list consist of random sample of size n on our population. Thus, sample of 102 pupil teachers was drawn randomly from the selected educational institution of the Union Territory of Chandigarh i.e., Government College of Education. The students were compared with regard to the criteria that they were all doing B.Ed. course.

Procedure of Data Collection

All the pupil teachers from the selected educational institution were given the questionnaire on Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills. The questionnaires were then collected from the pupil teachers after they had filled it up. The questionnaires were scored according to the prescribed scoring keys and the data thus obtained was subjected to statistical analysis.

Statistical Techniques

- Means and Standard Deviations were worked out to study the general nature of sample.
- Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation was calculated to find out the relationship between the Social Networking Sites and Social Skills usage of the pupil teachers.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Frequency Polygons of Scores on Social Networking Sites Usage and Social Skills

The scores of Social Networking Sites usage of pupil teachers in relation to Social Skills were depicted through frequency polygon in order to compare the nature of distributions. The frequencies were converted into percentages as shown in the Table 1. Inverted cumulative frequencies (Inv. cum. f.) and their cumulative percentages (Inv. cum. per. f.) were also obtained and depicted simultaneously.

Table 1

Total Scores of Social Networking Sites Usage and Social Skills of the Pupil Teachers

			<i>Social Networking Sites Usage</i>				<i>Social Skills</i>			
<i>Class Interval</i>	<i>Upper Limit</i>	<i>Mid Point</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Per. f</i>	<i>Inv. cum.f.</i>	<i>Inv. cum. per.f.</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Per. f</i>	<i>Inv. cum.f.</i>	<i>Inv. cum. per.f.</i>
170-190	190	185	2	1.96	2	1.96	-	-	-	-
150-170	180	175	3	2.94	5	4.90	-	-	-	-
130-150	170	165	16	15.69	21	20.58	-	-	-	-
110-130	160	155	15	14.71	36	35.29	-	-	-	-
90-110	150	145	12	11.765	48	47.05	3	2.94	3	2.9
70-90	140	135	22	21.57	70	68.62	16	15.69	19	18.6
			N= 102	N=100			N=102	N= 100		

Frequency polygons were plotted with the exact mid-point of class intervals on the “x-axis” and corresponding percentage frequencies on the “y-axis” as presented in Figure 1. It may be observed from Figure 1:

- Social Networking Sites Usage:** The frequency polygon drawn on the scores of Social Networking Sites usage was a unimodal curve. The modal value of the highest peak point of the distribution falls on the scores of 140. The coefficient of skewness and kurtosis of Social Networking Sites usage of the pupil teachers was 0.147 and 0.646 respectively.
- Social Skills:** The frequency polygon drawn on the scores of Social Skills was also a unimodal curve. The modal value of the distribution falls on the score of 120. The coefficient of skewness and kurtosis of Social Skills of the pupil teachers was (-) 1.33 and 4.33 respectively.

Inverted Ogives of Scores for Social Networking Sites Usage and Social Skills

Inverted percentage cumulative curves were drawn with the upper limit of class interval on the x-axis and the corresponding cumulative percentage frequencies on the y-axis. The inverted ogives thus prepared have been shown on the graph in Figure 2. It may be observed that from the Figure 2 that:

- For Social Networking Sites Usage:** In the Social Networking Sites usage, 75% of the pupil teachers attained more than 140 scores. About 50% of pupil teachers attained equal or more than 160 scores and 25% of the pupil teachers attained more than 175 scores.
- For Social Skills:** In the social skills, 75% of the pupil teachers attained more than 130 scores. About 50% of pupil teachers attained equal of 140 scores and 25% of the pupil teachers’ attained equal or more than 148 scores.

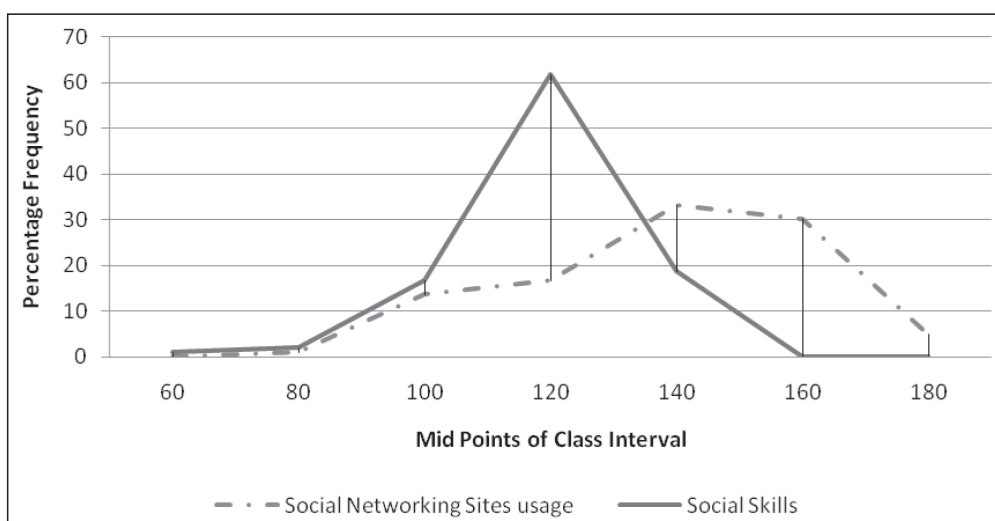


Figure 1 : Frequency polygon showing the distributions of scores of Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills of the pupil teachers.

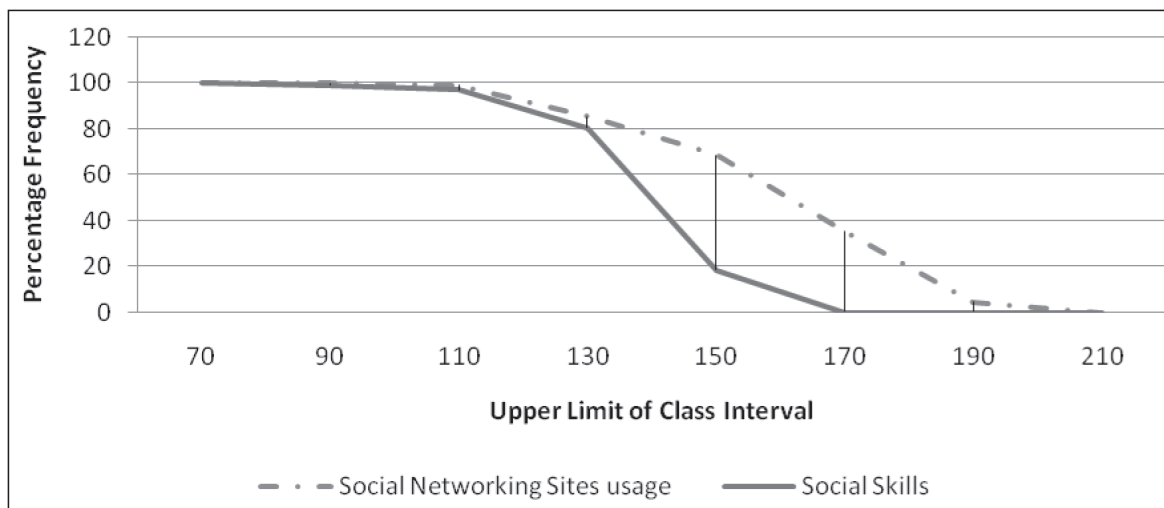


Figure 2 : Inverted Ogives showing distributions of scores of Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills of the pupil teachers

Mean Scores for Social Networking Sites Usage and Social Skills

The Mean and Standard Deviation of the scores for Social Networking Sites and Social Skills were computed and have been recorded in the following Table 2. The table reveals that the mean scores for Social Networking Sites usage of the pupil teachers were higher than their Social Skills.

Table 2: Mean Scores of the Pupil Teachers in Social Networking Sites Usage and Social Skills

Social Networking Sites usage	Social Skills
MEAN=139.22	MEAN=119.62
N=102	N=102
S.D.=21.44	S.D.=18.33

Correlation between Social Networking Sites Usage and Social Skills of Pupil Teachers

On the basis of the scores of Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills, the pupil teachers were further

divided at three levels i.e. high, average and low separately. The formation of three levels was in accordance with Kelly’s strategy as discussed here:

- All the pupil teachers scoring sheets were arranged in the descending order on the basis of their total scores obtained in both the variables i.e. Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills.
- The first 27% cases formed the group of high level and the last 27% cases formed the lower group in both the variables i.e. Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills.
- The remaining 46% cases comprised the group of average level in both the variables i.e. Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills.

Here, high (H)level of Social Networking Sites usage means its more use; average (A) means its moderate use and low (L) means its minimum use by the pupil teachers. In Social Skills,

high (H) level means good social skills whereas average (A) means fair social skills and low (L) means poor social skills of the pupil teachers.

To calculate inter correlation, the raw scores obtained by the pupil teachers were taken by the investigators and the relationship between the variables was calculated as per the Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation formula (Garrett and Woodworth, 2008) as shown in Table 3.

Findings

- Table 3 reveals that the coefficient of correlation between Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills of the pupil teachers has come out to be 0.36 which is significant at 0.01 level of confidence. There is positive correlation between Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills of the pupil teachers. Positive correlation implies that if the scores of the pupil teachers in Social Networking Sites usage are high

then their corresponding scores of social skills are also high and *vice versa*. Since the obtained value is not close to + 1.0, the relationship is not so strong. Even though, the means of the two groups were significantly different. Thus, the hypothesis Ho.1 that there exists no significant relationship between Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills of the pupil teachers was rejected at the specified level.

- Table 3 reveals that the correlation coefficient between the scores of Social Networking Sites usage's level (at high, average and low) and Social Skills (being constant) were 0.24, (-)0.026 and 0.288 respectively. These values were not significant even at 0.05 level of confidence. This suggested that the mean of their respective groups were not significantly different. Thus, the hypothesis Ho.1 (a) that there exists no significant relationship between Social Networking Sites

Table 3
Correlation Values between Social Networking Sites Usage and Social Skills of the Pupil Teachers

S. No.	Variables	N	Combined Mean	Coefficient of Correlation	Significance
1.	SNS and SS	102	129.426	0.36	S**
2.	SNSH and SSH	28	145.517	0.24	n.s.
	SNSA and SS	46	130.043	-0.026	n.s.
	SNSL and SS	28	111.553	0.288	n.s.
	SS and SNS				
3.	SSH and SNS	28	139.282	0.48	S**
	SSA and SNS	46	129.771	0.37	S**
	SSL and SNS	28	117.714	0.27	n.s.

where S** - Significant at 0.01 level of confidence

n.s. - Not Significant at 0.05 level of confidence

SNS - Social Networking Sites being constant

SS - Social Skills being constant

usage (being constant) and Social Skills (at high, average and low level) of the pupil teachers was accepted at the specified level.

- Table 3 shows that the correlation coefficient between the scores of Social Skills (at high and average level) and Social Networking Sites usage (being constant) were 0.48 and 0.37 respectively. Both the values were significant at 0.01 level of confidence. Thus, there is a positive correlation between Social Skills (at high and average level) and Social Networking Sites usage (being constant). But, since the value is not close to + 1.0, the relationship is not strong. This however suggested that the means of their respective groups were significantly different. Thus, the hypothesis Ho.1 (b) that there exists no significant relationship between Social Skills (being constant) and Social Networking Sites usage (at high and average level) of the pupil teachers was rejected at the specified level. But the correlation coefficient between the scores of Social Skills at low level and Social Networking Sites usage scores (being constant) was 0.27 which was not significant even at the 0.05 level of significance. This suggested that the means of this particular group were not significantly different. Thus, the hypothesis Ho.1 (b) that there exists no significant relationship between Social Skills (being constant) and Social Networking Sites usage (at low level) of the pupil teachers was accepted at the specified level.

Discussion of the Results

The analysis of data of the present study led to the rejection of hypothesis Ho.1 that there exist no significant relationship between social networking sites usage and social skills of the pupil teachers. This suggests that use of the Social Networking Sites have an effect on the Social Skills of the pupil teachers. The results seemed to support the research literature, which was reviewed and it was observed from Raccanello's (2011) study that online social networking texts are superficial and embellished but also representative of identity, and they influence prejudgements of others online; students manufacture an online identity to connect with others and social networking enhances envisioning real-world encounters but is also a significant and powerful influence on imagining new and different relationships.

The results based on Ho.1 (a) was partially consistent with the studies conducted by Yang (2003); Silverman (2007); Goldner (2008); Cachia (2008); Helou and Rahim (2010), Swang (2011); Raccanello (2011); Pike (2011) and Hampton (2011); who painted a rich and complex picture of the role that digital technology plays in people's social worlds. When further analysis of the present study was done by keeping the Social skills as constant, it was found that social networking sites usage was not affecting the social skills i.e. Social Skills were not getting better due to usage of Social Networking Sites usage. Grant (2011) indicated no significant relationship between Computer Mediated Communication usage and social skills for these students.

However, hypotheses Ho.1 (b) was consistent with the findings of the researches conducted by Dam- Baggen and Kraaimat (1986); Ingman (1999); Kolb and Hanley –Maxwell (2003) and Chen's (2006) which reflected that the Social Skills training resulted in a decrease in social anxiety and an increase in social skills. A study by Wong et. al (2011) suggested that there is a significant difference between the intensity of SNS use and the attitude towards SNS. There is a positive attitude toward SNS as the opportunity of obtaining knowledge and the use of SNS as a social utility. Thus, in the present study when Social Networking Sites usage was kept constant, Social Skills influenced Social Networking Sites usage of the pupil teachers but vice – versa was not found there.

These findings were further supported by Walz (2009) suggest that the use of Social Networking Sites may benefit college students by increasing their sense of belonging; beneficial social tools for all individuals; increases the proficiency in offline social and communicative behaviours. Another study by Krishnan (2011) illustrated that networking websites acted as inclusive channels for social interaction and as online companions to users' offline social structures. The results by Olson (2011) indicated that community college students were frequent users of online social networking, more so for general purposes than for academic purposes.

Educational Implications of the Study

Though the present study was done on pupil teachers, on the basis of results obtained from this study, we can

sensitise the teachers, administrators, educational institutions, students and parents about the integration of Social Networking Sites usage and Social Skills in education on the following counts:

1. The proper usage of Social Networking Sites can provide networking communication among students, peers, parents and teachers.
2. Innovative and creative ideas can be exchanged.
3. Guidance on vocational as well as on personal aspect of the student can be provided by the teachers and counsellors.
4. One can keep in touch with alumni and can get professional help from them.
5. In teaching-learning process innovative strategies or thoughts from time to time can be shared with other teachers.
6. Awareness on critical issues like socio-economic, political, cultural etc. can be taken up by the teachers, students and administrators.
7. Teaching and evaluation can be made strong by using feedback through SNS usage.
8. Students can develop their communication skills.
9. It can become an educational tool for the teachers to assess the progress of the students.
10. It can provide radical attitude formation among students on various socio-economic, political and cultural issues.
11. It can become a strong support system for needy students.
12. A channel for seeking information from experts.

13. Administrators can respond to problems arising in the field of education.
14. Time management skills can be enhanced by utilising SNS with considerable thought.

Crux

The recent havoc created by the Social Networking Sites and SMSs in India among North Eastern people put everyone in a surprise to what to do with the irregularities or irresponsibility of these sites. Not only they endangered social life of an individual but they can throw a nation into an imaginary war of

thoughts. The intention of using Social Networking Sites was initially based on socialisation and interaction purpose, now holds the capability of derailing the whole world and life of an individual. The dilemma is how to hook this foe (SNS usage) which we in our total amusement considered as a friend. For teachers, the task is more challenging as they have to guide the students where the usage of Social Networking Sites can remain as a friend to the development of their social skills and where it can act fatal in term of foe. For this they themselves must know where the red line is which no one should cross.

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