

Usage of Social Media in Islamic Republic of Pakistan for Religious Motives: An Appraisal of Facebook

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Abstract

Among the social networking sites, Facebook is most popular and extensively used by people for communication, information, socialization and learning purposes. Therefore the use of Facebook is anticipated for strengthening relationship for religious understanding and purposes. The current study is aimed at finding religious motives for using Facebook among youth by employing Uses and Gratifications Theory. A survey was conducted to find out patterns of Facebook usage and specifically find out religious motives for using Facebook. The results indicated that more than 80% of young people are Facebook users and a significant number of users are heavy users. The preaching to others is a most notable motive or using Facebook and found beneficial for building and maintaining relationship. The degree of gratifications, the students were seeking with regard to religious information was more than 50%. However, this ratio was higher among females as compared to male students. Almost, more than 45% of female students revealed that they shared only religious information and seek the same while using Facebook. Similarly, the frequency of using Facebook was higher among male students as compared to females.

Keywords: Facebook, Communication, Information, Socialization, Learning, Religion, Islam

Introduction

Founded in 2004, Facebook is widely used and well-like social networking site which aims to connect people, friends and families. The virtual link between people expanded and extended globally as now more than 500 million people are Facebook users and among them 93% are young university graduate, average spend 47 minutes per day.¹ In 2005 Facebook became available to high school students and after one year i-e 2006

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¹ Sheldon, Pavica. "The relationship between unwillingness-to-communicate and students' Facebook use." *Journal of Media Psychology* 20, no. 2 (2008): 67-75..

commercial organizations started using it.²

In Pakistan different surveys and report indicate different number of student Facebook users but all the finding suggests growing penetration among young people, particularly in university students. These social networking sites keep the students in contact and build their strong relationship and maintain contact with old friends across the globe.³

However, this study was designed to find out use of Facebook for religious purposes and what advantage or disadvantages are associated with this usage.

NOREF Report (2012)⁴ stated five uses of social media in Pakistan: highlight news which are ignored by traditional media, disseminate information either political or social, promote humanitarian initiatives, advocate social causes and generate communication flow.

Religious Communication and Social Media

In forming moral character and shaping world view, faith plays an integral role in Muslims and absolute faith determined a good human being and strong character. Similarly strong faith keep people resilient but protect them from false teaching.⁵ Various factors are linked with perfection of faith.⁶ The true and strong faith is actual foundation of Islam. Now Muslims scholars disseminate true spirit and teachings of Islam throughout the world by using modern technologies. As the gradual development have great impacts on knowledge sharing and gaining patterns. Similarly it is observed that Facebook has certain effect and exert influence on one's faith and can facilitate to promote his beliefs.

The relationship of one individual with groups and communities in virtual world has already been found by many scholars and has described its negative and positive impacts on users. A survey showed that exposure to negative content build negative thoughts on users particularly on moral values.⁷

The information flood through media has generated various questions for debate and one of them is impacts of social media on religious faith and moral values which are associated with religion.

² Junco, Reynol. "Too much face and not enough books: The relationship between multiple indices of Facebook use and academic performance." *Computers in human behavior* 28, no. 1 (2012): 187-198.

³ Debatin, Bernhard, Jennette P. Lovejoy, Ann-Kathrin Horn, and Brittany N. Hughes. "Facebook and online privacy: Attitudes, behaviors, and unintended consequences." *Journal of computer-mediated communication* 15, no. 1 (2009): 83-108.

⁴ Kugelman, Michael. "Social media in Pakistan: Catalyst for communication, not change." *Oslo: Norwegian Peace building Resource Centre. Retrieved on February 30 (2012): 2014.*

⁵ Filiu, Jean-Pierre. *Apocalypse in Islam*. Univ of California Press, 2012..

⁶ Alwi, Engku, and Engku Ahmad Zaki. *Membangun Modal Insan Melalui Pemantapan Akidah*. Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, 2007.

⁷ Burhan, Norhapizah Mohd, Ab Halim Tamuri, and Norazah Mohd Nordin. "Penerimaan Modul Pembelajaran Digital Berasaskan Strategi Blended Learning (e-CITAC) Dalam Kursus TITAS." *O-JIE: Online Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 1 (2017): 1-16.

This is need of hour to nurture real knowledge of Islam for betterment.⁸

With various other type of social networking site such as political, civic, advocacy and social, religious website and groups on social networking sites are formed where people discuss and share their religious views. With higher social media presence, larger influence is anticipated on behaviors and beliefs.

Social Media for Muslims

To spread the true message of our religion Islam, it is dire need to utilize time and technology wisely in the current era when Islam is attached with terrorism and Muslims are tagged as terrorists. Therefore, to convey beautiful message of Islam, Social media can be used effectively and benefits can be achieved. There are numerous platforms and social networking sites, such as blogs, ebooks, podcast etc. which can wisely be used. Through these SNS, different Islamic scholars and teachers can be connected and guide the young people. In this way, they can enhance their knowledge and become true Muslim.

Purposes of the Study

Following are the purposes of the study:

- To examine the usage of Facebook for religious purposes
- To find the impact of Facebook on religious understanding
- To find out the advantages and disadvantages of using Facebook for religious teaching

⁸ Daud, Wan Mohd Nor Wan. "Budaya Ilmu Sebagai Asas Pembangunan Tamadun." *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3 (1990): 51-67.

Significance of the Study

This is the first study which will record the use of Facebook for religious purposes among Pakistani youth. No such study is conducted so far as previously conducted studies mostly aimed at use of social media for social, communication and information purposes.

The rise of Islamic norms and Muslim values public spheres in World Wide Web and it has evolved along with the growth of (ICT) Information and Communication Technologies. As followers of other beliefs, Muslim individuals are excited in distribution their belief, philosophies and ethics at the tick of a button. The arrival of ICTs can be seen as innovative for spiritual and religious development and dissemination as well. As far as other faiths and religious engagements in the universe, Religion of Islam and its lessons are widely circulated and boomed across boundaries through the expansion of new media technology because of social media and the Internet facility. According to Campbell, "The Internet is changing the ways people of faith spread their beliefs and make converts".⁹

The development of Islamic contents is estimated to be even greater at the international level in line with the prompt development of the worldwide Muslim residents. The worldwide Muslim people are estimated to twice by the time 2030, from 1.1 billion in 1990 to 2.2 billion or else 26.4% of the worldwide inhabitants.¹⁰

Previous Studies

Average student use Facebook approximately 30 minutes per day¹¹ and mostly used to communicate with whom they have established off line contacts or relationship. Though social media, they develop peer relationship and identity. A study by Aghazamani (2010)¹² explored students' motivations for Facebook usage. A close-ended questionnaire was distributed among 595 university students and results show male are heavier users of Facebook than female users. The undergraduate students log in more frequently than graduate students. Male Facebook users were found more involved in friendship activity than female. Another study found negative relationship between Facebook use and academic performance.¹³ Lower CGPA was reported by heavy users of Facebook and similar findings were indicated by another study.¹⁴ The relationship between Facebook

⁹ Campbell, Heidi. "Who's got the power? Religious authority and the Internet." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12, no. 3 (2007): 1043-1062.

¹⁰ Rahman, Muhammad Khalilur. "Motivating factors of Islamic tourist's destination loyalty: an empirical investigation in Malaysia." *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management* 2, no. 1 (2014): 63-77.

¹¹ Pempek, Tiffany A., Yevdokiya A. Yermolayeva, and Sandra L. Calvert. "College students' social networking experiences on Facebook." *Journal of applied developmental psychology* 30, no. 3 (2009): 227-238.

¹² Aghazamani, Alimohammad. "How do university students spend their time on Facebook? An exploratory study." *Journal of American science* 6, no. 12 (2010): 730-735.

¹³ Kirschner, Paul A., and Aryn C. Karpinski. "Facebook® and academic performance." *Computers in human behavior* 26, no. 6 (2010): 1237-1245.

¹⁴ Boogart, Vanden, and Matthew Robert. "Uncovering the social impacts of Facebook on a college campus." PhD diss., Kansas State University, 2006.

use and students engagement was explored by Junco (2011). The finding suggested significant negative relationship between CGPA and Facebook use. A study advocated a positive role of Facebook between student and teacher communication.¹⁵ Lenhart and Madden (2007)¹⁶ found that youngsters use social networks for building new relation and maintaining exiting contacts.

Muslim norms and Islamic spiritual engagements incorporates all the social struggles and circumstances connecting anthropological endeavors in interconnecting with information, accepted wisdom and knowledge on the Islamic structure of references; the *al-Quran* and *al-Hadith*.¹⁷ Social engagements and dealings among Muslims in religious and spiritual activities form a part of the everyday communicative practice in succeeding a superior understanding of the Islamic believes and perception of “*ilm* – knowledge that is practiced individually, within the family and with the collective *ummah*.” Therefore, for Muslim personalities to inaugurate and preserve their Islamic devotion and faith, they should constantly revive and upturn their spiritual awareness and basic understandings of Islamic beliefs.

The development of the social media with Internet and ICT has provided real resources of religious and spiritual declaration as well as engagement due to its interactivity and hypermedia affordability. Though, as cited by Hamada (1999)¹⁸ in one of the initial research studies on the effect of the Information communication technology in addition to Internet on the Muslim society living in Malaysia. The researcher concluded that the internet websites were first used as one way communication channels to convey information about Islamic believes.

Chawki (2010)¹⁹ concludes in his study the effects of religiosity on the Internet consumption in Turkey. The findings of his study revealed that the most common activity that people engaged in while online is information seeking, especially among moderates and staunch believers.²⁰ Furthermore, Muslim community’s online engagement can be evident in several practices of Islamic spiritual events for instance listening and watching of religious and spiritual speeches besides other contacts of daily lifespan. The consumption of social media and ICT is almost prevailing particularly because people have the Islamic believes and fundamental feelings in different areas of the

¹⁵ Roblyer, Margaret D., Michelle McDaniel, Marsena Webb, James Herman, and James Vince Witty. "Findings on Facebook in higher education: A comparison of college faculty and student uses and perceptions of social networking sites." *The Internet and higher education* 13, no. 3 (2010): 134-140.

¹⁶ Lenhart, Amanda, and Mary Madden. "Social networking websites and teens: An overview." (2007).

¹⁷ Sardar, Ziauddin. "Paper, printing and compact disks: the making and unmaking of Islamic culture." *Media, Culture & Society* 15, no. 1 (1993): 43-59.

¹⁸ Hamada, Basyouni Ibrahim. "The initial effects of the Internet on a Muslim society." *Journal of International Communication* 6, no. 2 (1999): 50-70.

¹⁹ Chawki, Mohamed. "Islam in the Digital Age: Counselling and Fatwas at the Click of a Mouse." *J. Int'l Com. L. & Tech.* 5 (2010): 165.

²⁰ Sanaktekin, Ozlem Hesapci, Yonca Aslanbay, and Vehbi Gorgulu. "The Effects of Religiosity on Internet Consumption A study on a Muslim country." *Information Communication & Society* 16, no. 10 (2013): 1553-1573.

universe.^{21,22,23,24,25,26} Today, ICT and Internet has become a virtual archive for Islamic awareness²⁷ since the medium is predictable for its loading ability. The cyber media and cyberspace delivers access to uncountable recordings and tapes of *al-Quran* and *al-Hadith*, in addition to compilations of holy books from several Islamic scholars along with everyday info with regards to prayer timings and soundtracks of *adhan*.²⁸ Even though the lack of interactivity during the primary days of the cyber media and Internet as well²⁹ acknowledged that the modern technology is estimated beneficial to religious conviction and its people as every Muslim is highly stimulated to steadily recommence and rise one's awareness and basic understandings of Islamic believes³⁰ over and done with cyber media that they have access to.

Identification and Persuasion through Social Media

The religious organizations and scholars can use Facebook in different ways such as identification and persuasion. The identification means that users can build such profile which indicates them as religious person and second means that through Facebook other people can be persuaded religiously. Both identification and persuasion both are to an extent interrelated actions. In other words, Facebook is like spectrums which give help people to identify and persuade at the same time.

The profile page built by users give other information and users can select religion and can display on the page. Another way of knowing is number of likes, as the "I'm Muslim and I'm Proud of It" was liked by 6.6 million. These groups are evident example of community building and through social network. By showing religion, one individual can easy find and meet people of same religion and beliefs. On the other side, persuasion actions are related with expansion of religious belief. They post religious comments,

²¹ Hirschkind, Charles. "Experiments in devotion online: the YouTube khuṭba." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 1 (2012): 5-21.

²² Echchaibi, Nabil. "Hyper-Islamism? Mediating Islam from the halal website to the Islamic talk show." *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* 1, no. 3 (2009): 199-214.

²³ Hashim, Noor Hazarina, Jamie Murphy, and Nazlida Muhamad Hashim. "Islam and online imagery on Malaysian tourist destination websites." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12, no. 3 (2007): 1082-1102.

²⁴ Wahab, Norazlina Abd, and Abdul Rahim Abdul Rahman. "A framework to analyse the efficiency and governance of zakat institutions." *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research* 2, no. 1 (2011): 43-62.

²⁵ Bunt, Gary R. *Virtually Islamic: Computer-mediated communication and cyber Islamic environments*. University of Wales Press, 2000.

²⁶ Campbell, Heidi. *When religion meets new media*. Routledge, 2010.

²⁷ Kort, Alexis. "Dar al-Cyber Islam: Women, domestic violence, and the Islamic reformation on the World Wide Web." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 25, no. 3 (2005): 363-383.

²⁸ Bunt, Gary R. "Interface dialogues: And the online fatwā." *ISIM Newsletter* 6 (2000): 1.

²⁹ Ess, Charles, Akira Kawabata, and Hiroyuki Kurosaki. "Cross-cultural perspectives on religion and computer-mediated communication." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12, no. 3 (2007): 939-955.

³⁰ Solihin, Sohirin Mohammad. *Islamic Da'wah: Theory and practice*. Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2008.

pictures and videos to influence others.

Motives for using Facebook

The basic characteristic which influences action of people to gratify their needs is known as motive. It is defined as “Mood Management”.³¹ The known motivations for internet use include entertainment, information seeking, diversion, and relaxation.³² Since Facebook is now a major source of information, communication and socialization, therefore, same definition is applied to motives for using Facebook.

The students use Facebook for different motives³³, therefore, religious motive is used for present study for using Facebook.

Methodology

For current descriptive survey research, self-administered questionnaire was distributed among university students to obtain required information. As the survey research can investigate problem in realistic setting and comparatively easy method to obtain correct responses and information.³⁴ A total of 359 students including (189 males and 170 female) of the universities participated in the study. A convenient sampling technique was applied to draw the sample from the population. The SPSS was used for data analysis and frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to answer research questions.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Profile of Facebook Users

Profile of Facebook Users	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	189	52.6
Female	170	47.4
Total	359	100.0
Age group		
19-21 years old	138	38.4
22 years old and above	221	61.6
Total	359	100.0
Personality Type		
Extrovert	201	55.9
Introvert	158	44.1

³¹ Zillmann, Dolf. ". Mood Management: Using Entertainment To Full Advantage." In *Communication, Social Cognition, and Affect (PLE: Emotion)*, pp. 163-188. Psychology Press, 2015.

³² Nelson, Dorothy Wu. "Millennial Social Networking Behavior from a Uses and Gratifications Perspective." (2015).

³³ Sheldon, Pavica. "Student favorite: Facebook and motives for its use." *Southwestern Mass Communication Journal* 23, no. 2 (2008).

³⁴ Berger-Schmitt, Regina. *Social cohesion as an aspect of the quality of societies: Concept and measurement*. ZUMA, 2000.

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Total	359	100.0
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The above table 1 highlights the profile of Facebook users who are participants of the current research. Out of 359 students, 189 were male and 170 were female students. According to results, 61.6% Facebook users are of age 22 years old and above and 55.9% participants were extrovert. For profile, two personality types were mentioned, which affect the socialization and communication behaviors. The introvert is known as shy and less communicative whereas extrovert socializes and share their thoughts and ideas.

According to Type and Social Media Report by the CPP, Inc. extroverts consider social media a good way to meet new people, interact professionally and share similar interests.

Table 2: Patterns of Facebook Usages

Usage of Facebook		
	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	359	100.0
No	0	0.0
Total	359	100.0
Information Source about Facebook		
Friends	169	47
Family	102	28
Internet	59	16
Media (Electronic & Print)	29	08
Total	359	100.0
Duration of Using Facebook		
1-6 months	91	25
7-12 months	81	22
01 year – One & half year	21	05
One & half year – 2 years	47	13
Two & half year – 3 years	67	18
More than 3 years	52	14
Total	359	100.0
Frequency of Facebook Usage		
Once per day	12	03
Twice per day	58	16
Three times per day	99	27
Four to six times per day	101	28
More than 6 times per day	89	24
Total	359	100.0
Time Spent on Facebook		
Less than 30 minutes	21	05
30 - 60 minutes	77	21
61 - 90 minutes	49	13
91 - 120 minutes	69	19
More than 120	143	39
Total	359	100.0

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Importance of Using Facebook		
Very Important	111	30
Important	68	18
Less important	51	14
Not important	98	27
Not important at all	31	08
Total	359	100.0
Place to Use Facebook		
Personal Room	117	32
University Labs	36	10
Internet Café	41	11
University Library	69	19
Others (e.g. home, office, friend's place)	96	26
Total	359	100.0
Time to Use Facebook		
Morning	89	24
Afternoon	31	08
Evening	37	10
Night	89	24
Others (e.g. free time)	113	31
Total	359	100.0
Facebook Friends		
Less than 100	27	07
101-200	51	14
201-300	81	22
301-400	63	17
401-500	47	13
501-600	21	05
More than 600	69	19
Total	359	100.0

Table 2 shows up the pattern of Facebook use among the university students who participated in the current study. All the participants were found users of Facebook and two sources of information about Facebook dominate others i-e friends and family. Majority of students are using Facebook for last two years and spending more 120 minutes per day and log in four to six times per day. A remarkable number of participants indicated Facebook most important as the study was based on university students and earlier studies also found same results. Free available time and personal room are also found positively related with Facebook use. The table also indicates that students are having a good number of friends on Facebook.

Table 3: Religious Motives

Religious Motives	Level of Agreement (%)*						Overall (%)	Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5	6			
To share Quran Verses	6.7	7.5	18.1	25.8	22.4	24.4	69.8	4.19	1.47

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To share Ahdees	6.4	7.7	15.7	27.1	19.7	23.4	69.3	4.15	1.46
To share Islamic lessons	8.7	6.0	15.1	28.4	22.1	21.7	68.1	4.08	1.47
To share Islamic videos	15.0	8.7	19.7	25.4	14.4	17.7	61.0	3.61	1.59
To motivate people to do good things	6.0	5.7	13.4	27.4	23.4	24.1	71.3	4.25	1.43
To share information on religious values	6.7	5.3	15.4	26.1	21.7	24.7	70.6	4.22	1.45

*1= strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=slightly disagree; 4=slightly agree; 5=Agree; 6=strongly agree

Table 43 illustrates the religious motive for using Facebook among the participants of the study. Six responses categories were formulated and two motives outnumber other mentioned religious motives. One is “To motivate people to do good things” (71.3%) and second is “To share information on religious values” (70.6%).

The results also show that university students use Facebook for religious motives, i-e to share Quran Verses, to share Ahdees, to share Islamic lessons and to share *Islamic* videos 69.8%, 69.3% and 68.1% respectively. According to above mentioned table and finding, the least use religious motive was “to share *Islamic* videos” (61.0%).

The results support that students are agreed in using Facebook for religious motives and they share religious information through social media.

Conclusion

The current investigation found that majority of university students are Facebook users and extrovert that means that they share openly. They have been using Facebook for last two years and use it more than one hour per day. They also sig in Facebook at least three times per day and average they have more friends on Facebook. In religious motives, two are prominent, one is “to motivate people to do good things: and second is “To share information on religious values”. This shows that students understand and wish to preach Islamic values and teachings through Facebook.

The finding suggested that technology particularly social media can facilitate religious scholars to spread true teaching of religion and can motivate youth by enhancing their understanding about religion. This communication process can diminish barriers and online communities can bring people together where usually disagreement occur due to different ideology.

Recommendations for Future Research

On the basis of finding and conclusion, the recommendations are to find out to what extent Facebook provide accurate religious information and to what extent available information on Facebook is credible and reliable. Moreover, to investigate that either the usage of Facebook dies impacts the religious knowledge and understanding or not. Last but not the least, to explore the purposes of sharing religious information, to what extent it is shared for social purposes and religious purposes.