

# **Facebook usage among university students and its association with their psychological and social well being**

**Wijewickrama P. S. A., Zafra M. Z. M., Wimalarathna L. A. M. K , Chinniah, T. R**

*Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo*

## **Introduction**

Facebook is a social networking site introduced in 2004, having more than 400 million users up to date. In Sri Lanka, most users are in the age group 18- 24 years. Many studies done in Western countries have found that Facebook has more positive consequences on an individual rather than a negative impact.

## **Objective**

The current research explored the extent of Facebook usage among university students and its impact on their psycho-social wellbeing.

## **Methods**

A cross sectional study was carried out among 288 students of the University of Colombo. Data was gathered through a self administered questionnaire. Extent of Facebook usage, self esteem, life satisfaction, and social health were measured through standardized tools.

## **Results**

Among the participants, 63% were males. 49% were coming from hostel or boarding places. Majority were using the internet mainly for educational purposes. 79% of the students were members of some form of social networking site of which 99% were using Facebook only. The most common purpose of usage was to keep in touch with friends. 17% reported having had to face privacy violations through Facebook. The extent of Facebook usage was higher in males than females. The life satisfaction of the Facebook users was found to be negatively associated with the extent of Facebook usage ( $p = 0.014$ ). There was no significant association between the extent of Facebook usage and self esteem, and social health.

## **Conclusions**

The negative correlation of life satisfaction and Facebook usage could be because dissatisfied students are using Facebook more extensively or because increased Facebook usage reduces life satisfaction. These high frequent users may be in a state of addiction which is negatively affecting their psychological well being. Facebook usage was found to have no significant impact on the social well being of these students, which may be that, as university students, they already have good social interactions, which are not affected by Facebook. Among Sri Lankan university students, extent of Facebook usage was found to be more among males. Extent of Facebook usage was found to be significantly negatively associated with life satisfaction while there was no significant association with social well being.