



Social media in nurse education: Utilization and E-professionalism

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To explore faculty and student utilization of social media and its professional implications in nurse education.

Methods: A descriptive study. Five hundred six Bachelor of Nursing students, 112 Practical Nursing students and 74 faculty members were invited to complete a questionnaire of 28 questions relating to social media.

Results: Three hundred thirty-seven students and 29 faculty responded. Students spent significantly more time using social media compared to faculty and both groups used it mainly for personal use. However, almost twice as many students used social media for educational purposes than did faculty (58.5% vs 27.6%, $p < 0.001$). While almost 96% of students used social media to talk about academic related problems, only 28% of faculty did so ($p < 0.000$). Almost 60% of faculty expressly disagreed with using social media to discuss academic related problems.

YouTube and text messaging were popular platforms for educational purposes. While Facebook was also a popular educational site for students (95% used it for informal learning; 67% for formal learning), it was much less commonly used by faculty (45% used it for informal learning; 17% for formal learning).

More students than faculty felt that they were aware of privacy features, and of the professional behavior expected when using social media. In addition, more students (90.7%) than faculty (71.43%) used these privacy features ($p < 0.000$). However, 100% of students compared to only 13.79% of faculty reported that they had posted information that they would not want a prospective employer/member of academic staff to view ($p = 0.003$).

Conclusion: There is a high reported usage of social media among students and faculty. Utilization of public platforms, while potentially beneficial, can have professional implications if not used appropriately with both personal and academic use. Developing best practice approaches for using social media in nurse education is essential to ensure that faculty and students are informed of e-professionalism.

Social media is defined as a “form of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content” (Social media, 2017). The prevalent use of social media precipitates the need for an improved understanding of its use in nurse education (Green and Hope, 2010; Roland et al., 2011; Schmitt et al., 2012). Buzzetto-More (2012) reported students desire innovative avenues for self-expression and information sharing throughout the learning process. According to the National League for Nursing (2011) > 80% of nursing students are Millennials who view technology as a part of their everyday life (as

cited in Peck, 2014). With the increased use of social media by the student population, faculty are faced with the challenge to use technology to better capture diverse learning styles and engage the student population (Bassell, 2010; Green and Hope, 2010; Roberts et al., 2012; Roland et al., 2011; Whitty and Anane, 2014). However, with the increased utilization of social media comes the concern of whether nursing faculty and students are aware of appropriate use, as it can benefit or hinder one's professional image (Jain et al., 2014; Kind et al., 2014).

Professionalism has been a longstanding component of nursing practice. However, where once potential unprofessional conduct may

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have been witnessed on a relatively small scale, today it is witnessed on a much larger scale when combined with the increased use of social media and public platforms (Greyson et al., 2010). As a result, students and faculty must be aware of e-professionalism when utilizing social media. E-professionalism is defined as “the attitudes and behaviours (some of which may occur in private settings) reflecting traditional professionalism paradigms that are manifested through digital media” (Cain and Romanelli, 2009, p. 67). Key components of e-professionalism include such factors as being able to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate electronic conduct and the utilization of privacy settings.

Students and faculty may need support and guidance surrounding e-professionalism. Westrick (2016) highlights student dismissal as a negative consequence to student misuse of social media. An investigation of nursing schools in the United States revealed that over 75% were aware of unprofessional online conduct by their students (Marnocha et al., 2015). Conduct deemed unprofessional is not limited to nursing students. Recently, a registered nurse in Saskatchewan was found guilty of misconduct by her professional association by posting online comments about the quality of care received by her grandparents (“Nurse guilty,” 2016). Levati (2014) noted conduct among registered nurses on Facebook that could be deemed unprofessional such as posting pictures related to alcohol consumption or expressing dissatisfaction with practices at work.

Education of students and faculty with respect to e-professionalism is paramount to ensure that professional standards of nursing conduct are maintained. This starts with an awareness of current knowledge surrounding social media use in nurse education, e-professionalism, and appropriate use of privacy features. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore faculty and student utilization and e-professionalism with social media use in nurse education.

1. Literature Review

Students are using social media for both personal and educational use (Baggett and Williams, 2012; Kim et al., 2011), but the types of social media being used vary according to purpose. Clauson et al. (2013) reported that students most commonly used wikis, social networking, and video sharing to enhance their learning and help them feel connected. Facebook has been viewed by students to be useful for communication, and engagement in the academic setting (Buzzetto-More, 2012).

Not all studies support the use of social media in education. Brown and Groff (2011) found that students preferred to receive information from traditional means such as online course management systems. Hamade (2013) identified that student use of social media precipitated engagement in social, political, and cultural activities, but also could interfere with other activities such as school work. In contrast, Hrastinski and Aghae (2012) found that students used a hybrid of social media types combined with more traditional forms of education. Students used social media to seek and share information, but reported that it could be best used in conjunction with face-to-face meetings.

A common concern related to the use of social media in health care professions is the impact on professionalism (Greyson et al., 2010; Osman et al., 2012). Westrick (2016) highlighted the need for education and school guidelines surrounding social media and e-professionalism with nursing students. Cain and Romanelli (2009) expressed the importance of educator modeling e-professionalism with students in relation to social media use. Students, faculty, and other health professionals use social media in their personal and work environments, and sometimes the boundaries between them overlap (National Council of State Boards of Nursing [NCSBN], 2011). Hall et al. (2013) identified Facebook as the social networking site that was used most frequently by students. While the majority of students reported that social media was used primarily for personal reasons, 76.5% utilized it to discuss academic-related problems. Social media use included a large portion of

social networking that could potentially represent unprofessional attitudes. E-professionalism is not only a concern for students but for faculty as well. Peck (2014) underscored the legality of increasing social media use in nurse education, with emphasis on the need for protection of student privacy. She also expressed the need for education on student professional conduct and confidentiality while using social media. Similarly, Kind et al. (2014) supported the idea of best practice tips to maintain professionalism and examined strategies to facilitate integration of social media into health education.

Students and faculty have varied knowledge levels related to the utilization of social media and e-professionalism in nurse education. Research on faculty use of social media in nurse education reveals that they often differ from students in their use of social media (Brisson et al., 2015; Kazley et al., 2013; Roblyer et al., 2010). Veletsianos et al. (2013) disclosed that instructors using a social media platform had differing expectations from each other, and experienced a variety of frustrations while using it. This highlights that unfamiliarity with the use of social media in nurse education could be a barrier to its effective use (Norris and Gimber, 2013). In addition, a lack of information regarding e-professionalism in social media makes it unclear whether or not students and faculty are aware of the potential impact on nurse education, and the profession. These identified gaps in the literature regarding student and faculty utilization and awareness of e-professionalism with social media use in nurse education warrant further exploration.

2. Method

This descriptive study was designed to investigate the use of social media by faculty and students in nurse education, and begin to explore related professional implications. Findings would provide information on familiarity and reasoning for using different platforms, as well as current knowledge of e-professionalism. These findings could impact future use of public platforms, awareness, and e-professionalism in nurse education.

2.1. Setting and Sample

A convenience sample of 506 Bachelor of Nursing (BN) students in four years of an undergraduate program, 112 Practical Nursing (PN) students in a 16 month program and 74 faculty at a Canadian nursing school were invited to participate in the study. The final sample consisted of 337 students (54.5%) as well as full-time, part-time, permanent and sessional faculty (39.2%). Paper based surveys were used to capture students who attended class on that day as it was anticipated this would result in a higher participation rate. Faculty members were emailed a link to the survey via Survey Monkey with three reminders for completion to maximize the response rate so that non-response bias would be less of an issue.

2.2. Procedure

Ethics approval was obtained from the provincial Health Research Ethics Board. The survey in paper format was administered to the students in class. Prior to survey completion a detailed script was read to the students outlining the purpose of the study. Consent was implied by completion of the survey. Surveys were collected by the same instructor and submitted to the research office for data analysis. The survey was distributed to faculty through email with an embedded SurveyMonkey link.

3. Instrument

A survey by Hall et al. (2013) which explored pharmacy students' use and views on social networking, was adapted to fit the nursing student and faculty population. This original survey was internally

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