

**Facebook Usage Experience of Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) Students  
in Jimma University**

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**Abstract**

This research intended to explore and describe the Facebook usage experience of Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) students in the context of Jimma University. The study mainly relied on in-depth interview with participants of the study complemented by essay report in order to collect data. Transcendental research design was used. The prime motive behind this decision was that transcendental phenomenology is concerned with the human experience as it is lived with the focus of illuminating details, creating meaning, and achieving a sense of understanding the phenomenon of interest. The findings of this study showed that participants of the study spent two hours per day and fourteen hours per week on Facebook; used Facebook for virtual socialization and entertainment; students were exposed to negative emotions as a result of Facebook usage; there are worries because of the spread of hate speeches; there is very limited experience among participants in terms of using Facebook for their academic learning; and there is the knowledge and skill gap in using Facebook for educational purposes. Following the findings of the study recommendation on untreated challenges and future research has been suggested.

**Keywords:** Facebook, experience with Facebook, academic learning using Facebook, virtual socialization

**1. Introduction**

Facebook was launched in 2004 by Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg and some of his contemporaries. Its service was initially only available to Harvard students, but soon expanded to regional universities, the Ivy League and farther colleges before opening up to high school students and global users aged 13 or above (Facebook, 2019).

Individuals who wish to use Facebook have to register themselves online and create a profile by using a valid e-mail address (Cain, 2008). According to Lampe et al. (2007), the elements of a Facebook profile may be classified into four different categories: control elements, referents elements, preference elements, and contact elements. Control elements include fields such as the gender of the user, length of membership in Facebook, and institutional status. Referents elements are based on profile fields that are related to common points of reference among users such as hometown, high school, residence, and concentration (major field of study). Preference elements are based on profile fields that express personal interest and self-descriptive information. These fields include the following: About Me, interests, favorite music, favorite movies, favorite TV shows, favorite books, favorite quotes, and political views. Contact elements contain profile fields that include the following: offline mailing address, e-mail address, instant messenger screen name, relationship status, and birthday. All users can also upload and change their profile pictures (Lewis et al., 2008).

Once an individual has joined Facebook, he or she can search for anyone and view the other user's profiles. A Facebook user can also send a message to any other individual to ask if he

or she agrees to be a Facebook friend (Kolek & Saunders, 2008). Should the request be accepted, each individual would be listed as a friend on the other user's Facebook profile in the form of a hyperlink (Kolek & Saunders, 2008). Users can also join groups or become a fan of the pages of their favorite organization, celebrities, football clubs, or food. This allows users with common interest to get together to support the organization or the celebrity. Facebook can also serve as a source of entertainment due to the availability of games and applications. Some examples of Facebook games and applications include Tower Bloxx, Crazy Taxi, Mob Wars, Scratch and Win, My Fairyland, Facebook for iPhone, and Pet Society.

There are several ways for users to communicate with one another on Facebook. Users can send private messages to other individuals. This capability is similar to emailing (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009), except that messages may only be sent to one recipient at a time (Golder et al., 2007). Messages can be sent to any user even if the sender does not know the recipient's e-mail address (Golder et al., 2007). Users can also make use of the Wall function. A Wall is a space on the profile, somewhat like a notice board or a public forum where users can post short messages or add photographs, music or video clips to share information (Ross et al., 2009; West, Lewis, & Currie, 2009). Facebook users can comment on their friends' messages, photographs and videos. A user can also use the "poke" function to indicate an intent or desire to speak to any Facebook user (Ross et al., 2009). According to Golder et al. (2007), pokes appear as a notification on the recipient's login page (e.g., 'you have been poked by John Peters'), inviting a return poke. There is also birthday calendar where users could remind other people about someone's birthday. This reminder can be seen as a notification found on the right of the user's homepage. The events calendar provides a way for individuals to inform and invite their friends to an external event. Users are to rsvp to the event and the calendar would remind the user when the event is coming up. The chat function allows a user to communicate real-time just like instant messenger with his or her Facebook friends. Instant messaging is a text-based communication tool that allows dyadic synchronous interaction between two individuals, although there are some systems that support multiparty chat (Nardi, Whittaker, & Bradner, 2000).

There is also the News Feed function which gives information to the Facebook user's friends about certain Facebook activities, or gives the user information about his or her friends' activities (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2010; West et al., 2009). Facebook is basically an online social network site in which users can share thoughts, ideas, pictures and other contents with friends and family members, and to connect with either former or new friends, making the platform very popular with university students (Lampe et al., 2006). With 2.45 billion monthly active users as of the third quarter of 2019, Facebook is the biggest social network worldwide (Facebook, 2019).

The social networking site has become a widespread subject for academic research. Its popularity cuts across geographical boundaries, cultures and even generations. It is used not only for leisure but also for communication and even news consumption, especially among teens (e.g. Glynn, et al., 2012). Thus, scholars have sought to understand what motivates users to go on Facebook (Baek et al., 2011; Peluchette & Karl, 2010; Ross et al., 2009), an

enlightening stream of research that has already unearthed so much, but has taken for granted the question of what it is that users actually experience on Facebook.

With the average user spending more than 20 minutes a day on the site, it ranks as the most used site among university students (Lenhart, et al., 2010b; Violini, 2009) - to the degree that it would be difficult to find students who are not Facebook users. Studies have mapped out several uses and gratifications that motivate people to use Facebook, and these efforts have resulted in numerous typologies of motivations. For instance, Debatin et al. (2009) found three dimensions of needs satisfied by social networking sites (SNSs): the need for diversion and entertainment; the need for (Para-social) relationships; and the need for identity construction. Urista et al. (2009) also identified five themes explaining the use of social networking sites: efficient communication, convenient communication, curiosity about others, popularity, and relationship formation and reinforcement. Quan-Haase and Young (2010) found that pastime and social information gratifications were the most important in predicting frequency of Facebook use. Others also found that self-presentation and self-disclosure motivations are also strong motivators for social media use (e.g. Ledbetter et al., 2011; Peluchette & Karl, 2010).

Facebook, however, is a toolkit of different uses that range from passively reading what other users posted to posting different types of contents: text, photos and even videos (Smock et al., 2011). Thus, it is likely that users engage in different activities to fulfill different gratifications. For example, joining a Facebook group is predicted by the following motivations: positively by expressive information sharing and negatively by social interaction motivation (Smock et al., 2011). Writing comments is linked to relaxing, entertainment, companionship, and social interaction motivations (Smock et al., 2011). Sharing news links is linked to education and information-sharing motivations (Baek et al., 2011) as well as to status seeking, socializing and information-seeking gratifications (Lee & Ma, 2012).

These streams of research explain what factors lead people to use Facebook, exploring the effects of demographics, attitudes and motivations. However, they fail to address the fundamental question of what Facebook use is about (Ferrucci & Tandoc, 2015). Therefore, in this study, we will explore the Facebook usage experience of PGDT students in Jimma University.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Facebook is essentially an online social network site in which individuals can share photographs, personal information, and join groups of friends with one another (Buckman, 2005). Although other online sites are also designed to connect people, Facebook is generally considered the leading social networking site used by college students (Educause, 2006; Golder et al., 2007). For example, in the USA, the use of Facebook is now nearly ubiquitous among students, with over 90% participation among undergraduate students as reported in some surveys (Ellison et al., 2007; Stutzman, 2006). It has also become one of the most popular social network site used by British students (Madge et al., 2009).

Advocates of Facebook (Munoz & Towner, 2009) suggested that Facebook positively impacts a university student's life. For example, students can use Facebook to contact other students concerning course assignments, group projects, or teachers can contact their students regarding useful course links. Such suggestions and claims, however, are often made not based on empirical findings (Hew, 2011). On the other hand, critics voice their concerns about the possible negative effects of Facebook use. For example, students may post inappropriate pictures of themselves on their Facebook profile. These pictures may jeopardize their chances of future employment should their profile data be mined by potential employers. Others wondered if students who use Facebook spend fewer hours studying which may adversely impact their academic performance (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010).

In Ethiopia also Facebook is the dominant online social media site. According to March, 2019 report 5,770,600 Facebook active users were registered, which accounted for 5.1 % of the entire population, and people between the ages 25 to 34 were the largest user group which accounted for 3,500,000 people (<https://napoleoncat.com>). Similar results were found by Social Bakers (2014), in which in Ethiopia youths between the ages 25-34 are popular users of Facebook followed by the users in the age range of 18-24 ; this greatly implies how much Ethiopian youth are becoming more close, attached and friendly with Facebook. The age range also shows that the youth frequently use this mega social network site.

Even though Facebook in Ethiopia is the dominant social media site, particularly among Ethiopian youths, for what purpose and to what extent it is dominating their lives and social circle is not well studied. However, few studies, for example, Kumlachew, 2014, on his study entitled, " Challenges and Opportunities of Facebook as a Media Platform in Ethiopia" concluded that:

*Most Facebook users in Ethiopia tend to share more contents merely than really discussing and commenting on it, also Facebook educational value for Ethiopian users is low. Moreover, the majority of users in Ethiopia do not use Facebook for updating themselves on the current socio-Economic and political situation of the country. They rather tend to use it more for personal socialization affairs. In sum, it is also reported as a venue of trivialities that cause addiction (Sileshie Semahagn, 2014).*

Therefore, having this into consideration, there is a need for more studies to validate and add to the findings in different contexts. Hence, the main purpose of this study was to explore and make sense of Jimma University Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) students' experience in using Facebook, in general, and its attributes towards their social circle and learning, in particular.

### **Basic Research Questions**

In order to achieve the research objectives, the following basic research questions were raised to be answered in the course of the study. These are:

1. How do university students engage with Facebook?

2. What information do PGDT students share on Facebook?
3. What do students write in their Facebook profile?
4. How much time do PGDT students spend on Facebook each day?
5. What do PGDT students like the most about using Facebook?
6. What bothers PGDT students the most about using Facebook?

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The research team follows transcendental phenomenological approach, as we are interested in the life experience of Jimma University PGDT students Facebook usage that purposely provide participants in-depth descriptions of their Facebook life world. Few researches in this area had, until currently, been carried out outside academic environment. Thus, this study will set out to describe the PGDT students Facebook usage experience from their own perspective through the use of phenomenological transcendental processes.

## **1.3 Scope of the Study**

This study is delimited to the investigation of the Facebook usage experience of PGDT students in Jimma University. It is also delimited to the specifically designed secondary school teachers training program known as Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) in Jimma University during the 2019/2020 academic years. The reason for the focus on PGDT students is that these students are prospective secondary school teachers who will join the teaching profession and expected to demonstrate professional commitment and work ethics (MoE, 2011). Facebook is chosen due to the assumption that its usage is dominant among university students.

## **1.4 Ethical Considerations**

There will be some important ethical issues that the researcher needs to consider before and during phenomenological research unless, as Wendy Walker (2007) argues, failure to address such issues means putting at risk the rights of research participants. Accordingly, the researcher worked hard to have co-operative and open-ended dialogue between the researcher and research participants. In other words, the researcher had to have tension free environment following certain ethical procedures. Therefore, the following were ethical procedures that were considered:

- **Proper self-introduction**

Proper self-introduction and the purpose of the research were explained to the research participants. Munhall (1988) suggests that the question to be asked from an ethical perspective is: ‘Toward what goal and for what end is the research being done?’

- **Informed consent**

Potential participants were informed that their involvement in the interview would last approximately one hour and, with their consent, a tape recorder would be used to help collect data accurately. ‘Continually informing and asking permission establishes the needed trust to go on further in an ethical manner’ (Munhall 1988).

- **Confidentiality and anonymity**

A further ethical consideration related to the researchers’ responsibility is to give assurances of confidentiality and anonymity (McHaffie 2000). Similarly, data will be used and reported in such a way that no one is able to identify the source (Behi and Nolan 1995).

- **Authenticity of data**

Munhall (1988) argues that describing the experiences of others in the most faithful way possible is the most critical ethical obligation of the qualitative researcher. An important strategy in meeting this responsibility in phenomenological research is the notion of ‘bracketing’. The aim of bracketing is to suspend or set aside one’s beliefs about the phenomenon being studied in order to avoid influencing both the collection and interpretation of data (Oiler 1982, Knaack 1984, Cohen 1987, Jasper 1994) as cited in Wendy Walker, (2007).

### **Trustworthiness**

In hermeneutic phenomenology, researchers assume that their prior knowledge, experiences, and biases are fully bracketed. This is known as epoché (Wertz et.al 2011). Epoché entails bracketing prior knowledge, or setting aside theories, hypotheses, measuring instruments, and prior research (ibid). Therefore, in order to address the concept of epoché in this study, the researcher kept reflecting preconception knowledge throughout all stages of the data collection, analysis, and throughout the interview process.

## **2. Methodology**

Qualitative methodology was employed in this investigation. Specifically, a phenomenological research approach to investigate how PGDT students experience Facebook was used. Phenomenology is a philosophy resting on the basic assumption that the only way of knowing is through experience, so that knowledge emerges only out of our experiences (Moustakas, 1994). How we know the world depends on how we experience it. Therefore, phenomena “are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge” (Moustakas, 1994:26). If we are to better understand the reasons and implications of Facebook use, we must first understand what it is that users experience when they use Facebook. Indeed, the goal of phenomenology is to describe “what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007: 58).

Several scholars consider phenomenology also as a methodology (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). As a methodology, phenomenology has been used in a variety of studies seeking to understand the essence of experiences across a variety of fields, although its use is most widespread in education and health research ( Jamjoom, 2010; Rose, 2011; Schulz &



Rubel, 2011). The initial step for researchers is to identify a phenomenon—the “object” of human experience (van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenological studies have ranged from describing the experiences of two individuals to documenting the common experiences of a group of 30 persons (Creswell, 2007). These descriptions are usually based on in-depth interviews and even multiple interviews of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

Creswell (2007) classified two types of phenomenology as a qualitative methodology: hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990) and transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). While hermeneutic phenomenology is an interpretive process, with the researcher making interpretations, transcendental phenomenology is “focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on the description of the experiences of participants” (Creswell, 2007: 59). This study, will employ Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental approach to understand the experience of using Facebook.

## **2.1 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

A phenomenological framework requires a relatively homogenous group of participants (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, in a phenomenological study, participants should have experience with the same phenomenon. Hence, considering this we chose to interview students from PGDT program purposefully using purposeful sampling because of our professional proximity and with the assumption that the interviewees have significant and meaningful experiences of the phenomenon being investigated (i.e. Facebook).

Phenomenological samples do not usually have a large number of participants, as the data collection process requires in-depth study of human experience. Phenomenological studies have ranged from describing the experiences of two individuals to documenting the common experiences of a group of 30 persons (Creswell, 2007). However, such studies need enough participants to offer different experiences of the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994). For this phenomenological study, six (6) students were taken from PGDT program. Participants were randomly selected in order to ensure that diverse perceptions of the phenomenon of interest will be heard.

## **2.2 Data Collection Instrument**

In this study we utilized two methods common to phenomenology: the semi-structured interview and an essay method. Creswell (2007) stated that because of phenomenology’s goal of uncovering the essence of an experience, the interview is usually the main method of gathering data. In addition, since phenomenology is interested in the descriptions of the experience, an essay method, where participants are asked to describe their experiences in their own terms and in their own private locations are also important to gather data. A combination of both methods will ensure that participants can articulate their experiences in their own words, safe from being observed, in their essays and that the researcher, also has the chance to probe particular responses during the interviews.

### **2.3 Data Collection Procedures**

In this study, for the data collection I contacted one PGDT instructor in order to facilitate my communication with the PGDT students. Subsequently, I visited PGDT classes and since, my goal is to describe the essence of the experience of being on Facebook, I selected 6 participants who use Facebook on a regular basis and who use it for a variety of reasons.

### **2.4 Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed following the phenomenological approach. After acquiring comprehension of the entire data set, the researcher read each interview; essay reports and brief memos were generated from the individual interviews and essay reports. The entire data set was also read line-by-line several times before coding. The first coding was conducted on individual basis as part of its understanding of the statement given by interviewees concerning the phenomenon. Then common codes come out. Also unique codes were presented, discussed and given meaning. The coding process continued till no more new experience comes out about the phenomenon or until saturation point reaches. Accordingly, 71 codes generated on the first coding process. The next step in the data analysis process was phenomenological subtraction of codes to form the first families and eliminate redundancies or similar codes. Therefore, a total of seven families were identified and clustered (based upon similarities). The researcher continued to analyze the transcripts and memos and regroup families until the final major themes or super families identified. Subsequently, four general themes and one sub-theme were identified for final discussion. Next, based on the four general themes identified, the result of the study along with the existing literature was discussed.

ATLASTi7 software was employed in the whole process of data analysis. ATLAS Ti7 is a qualitative research tool that can be used for coding and analyzing transcripts and field notes, building literature reviews, creating network diagrams, and data visualization.

## **3. Discussion of Findings of the Study**

All participants used different Social Network Sites (SNS). These sites included Facebook (FB), Telegram, YouTube, Google Plus, and IMO; however, for this study, students' Facebook experience has been investigated. Accordingly, all participants logged onto Facebook daily and their life experience on Facebook had been analyzed and discussed under four major themes: Purposes or Reasons for using Facebook, Time Spent on Facebook, Use of Facebook for Academic Learning, and Worries of Using Facebook. Consequently, what follows are results from the interviews and essay records. The exhaustive themes are displayed below, yet these major themes are not uniquely distinct from one another; instead, they have logical relationships.

### **Theme 1: Purposes or Reasons for Using Facebook**

Would be teacher students of Jimma University's first experience of Facebook or their introduction with Facebook was somehow different. For example, for the question, "Who was helping you to open a Facebook account? Is it you or somebody else?" They replied:



**KN:-** “My friends who have opened Facebook account before me and I collaboratively opened my Facebook account. They showed me the whole process and I took a lesson from that and I opened my account for the very purpose of introducing myself with new people and strengthening my socialization.”

The second respondent also replied for the same question as:

**CHJ:-** “After I completed my preparatory school, I was assigned to the University of Gondar which is very far from my home village. I was born and live in Arsi. I was looking for somebody to change me to a nearby university. Therefore, to look for that person I found Facebook as a tool facilitating my wish; that was the incident I opened my Facebook account and I was handling it by myself: there was an internet café around so, that gives me easy access or knowhow about how to open the Facebook account.”

Although reasons for the would be teachers first introduction to Facebook is varied, after a proper introduction with this mega social media site what they have accomplished with Facebook is almost similar and the followings are major activities or purposes that all six students are using Facebook for:

- Instant messaging, whenever they are online
- Frequently updating and sharing videos and photos on Facebook
- Visiting Facebook to make new friends
- Staying connected to friends and family
- Staying updated on new developments, particularly the country’s political situation
- Improving my social skills
- Watching online videos with more focused on music, sport news, and funny videos.
- Tracing current and/or timely information

Examples:-

**IY:-** *The very purpose that I use Facebook account was just to introduce and talk with people.*

**IZ:-** *I use FB for real and true information about the timely events.*

**KN:-** *I use Facebook to track news(breaking news).*

**RZ2:-** *I use FB for chatting with my friends*

**ZR1:-** *I am always trying to involve myself in these ever-changing technology and environment by updating myself with the current information*

**KN:-** *Most importantly recent and/or up-to-date information take my attention and I am mainly attracted to them.*

**TD2:-** *I check my Facebook account for the purpose of greeting my friends and in order to get new information about the situation around us.*

**Theme 2: Time Spent on Facebook**

**How much time do you spend on Facebook per/day?**

Respondents	Time Spent on Facebook			How many times did you visit Facebook per/day?			
	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	Once	Twice	Three times	All day Online
R1	√					√	
R2	√			√			
R3		√			√		
R4		√			√		
R5	√				√		
R6	√				√		

As the data speaks, on average all participants spend two hours on Facebook and they visit Facebook two times per day. It is also asserted in the first major theme, the research subjects logged onto Facebook basically for two major reasons: for socialization purpose, and for recreational activities. In spite of all these, the research subjects perceived that the time they spend on Facebook is not taking or sharing the time they use to handle other activities or business, for instance, their academic activities.

Examples:

Q, Do you have any experience you may get off your duty because you were on Facebook?

KN- *No I'm still ok with that. By the way, if I have some business that requires my attention, I handle it within my schedule, with this regard Facebook does not make me lose my duty until now.*

ZR1:- *I use Facebook if I'm only off from my education; it doesn't share the time I spend for my academic learning.*

ZR2:- *my academic learning is my priority; so, I use Facebook after handling my businesses on my education.*

Although, students replied the time they spent on Facebook didn't share or take their time for handling other business, particularly the time they spent for their academic activities, Facebook still takes a considerable amount of their time. The fact that university students spending two hours of their precious time on Facebook, not even for searching new knowledge, cannot be ignored. As it was notified in the time displacement theory, people

have a limited amount of time to do a particular thing (Mutz, Roberts & van Vuuren, 1993). Therefore, it implies that increased amount of time on a particular activity will displace other activities. Furthermore, as it was also noted by Neuman (1991), when people increase the time they spend online engaging in social and/or recreational activities, time sacrifices will have to be made in other areas, such as time spent on studying, reading, and doing homework. Although the research subjects perceived they are programmed about the how and when to use Facebook the researchers believe, and as also asserted by the time displacement theory, Facebook shares their time for other activities, in general, and the time they spent for their academic learning, in particular as would-be teachers in the near future. Sometimes users cannot stop themselves from using Facebook to excess; allowing it to take up more and more of their time and thoughts, without any concrete outcome-like many addictions (Crandell et al.2008). So, they lack being critical and they need to be strict in using Facebook.

### **Theme 3: Use of Facebook for Academic Learning**

Under this major theme students' experience of Facebook for their academic learning is exclusively analyzed. This theme used to verify, "Do the research subjects have or have not experienced Facebook for their education? And do they know the academic benefits of Facebook?"

As many research findings indicated, Facebook is not only a widely used social media platform among the youth but also it is a mega site that enables students to virtually handle their academic businesses. For example, as Chu and Muehlaemann (2008) realized, the majority of graduates used Facebook to communicate with other students about their course, assignment, lectures, and classes. Similarly, online learning environments, such as Facebook, provide access to educational experiences that are more flexible in time and space than classroom teaching and learning (Niu L., 2019). Furthermore, Facebook as the most popular social networking service has received much attention from educators and researchers. The high popularity of Facebook has made it a top choice for educators interested in utilizing social networking sites for teaching and has been transforming the way students are taught (Shaltry, Henriksen, Wu, & Dickson, 2013), as cited in Niu, L. (2019). In spite of the fact that Facebook can easily be used for educational purposes, would be teachers' experience of Facebook for academic purposes is very limited. In particular, speaking of their experience using Facebook concerning their field of study is rare; they instead used it to develop their English language skill.

Examples:

**RZ2:** *I obtain important information for my own skills, knowledge, and how to communicate with others/communication skills.*

**ZR1:** *FB supports my study to develop some communication skills, and to develop some writing skills.*

**CHJ:** *I use it to talk with people in English.*

*CHJ: There is an English language group that helps me to improve my English language skill, so I use that group to practice my English. I use to talk with people using English with the group and that also attracts me.*

*ZR3: I ask friends some vocabulary and grammar usage; practice them with my friends, answering mathematical questions /problems together with my friends*

#### **Sub-theme:- Knowhow of Academic Benefits of FB**

This limited experience of using Facebook for academic purposes, as reflected by the informants, is mostly related to their limited awareness of the academic benefits of using Facebook. For instance:

*KN: "I don't have the skill and knowledge on how to use other Facebook features. I just use Facebook only to talk with my Facebook friends and because of that I didn't write and attend anything related to my academic learning. I am more attracted by the information that makes me relaxed and laugh."*

*KN: "I don't think it has something to do with my education, certainly not till now. Talking with my Facebook friends or watching videos doesn't mean that I'm using it for my education or Facebook gives something important to my education".*

Although the experience was very limited, some use Facebook as an informal learning platform.

*TD 1: I use Facebook to support my study by logging to different education-related pages, liking video conference pages, some authors' pages.*

*CHJ: Yes, I use Facebook for my education; for instance, I use it to attend lectures.*

#### **Theme 4: Worries of Using Facebook**

Facebook also exposes users to negative emotions that might hypothetically continue even after using it. Accordingly, this theme tried to verify what makes the research subjects worried or expose them to negative emotion while they are using Facebook, and if they continue or keep on logging in after they experience the negative emotion?.

Under the first theme, while the research subjects were asked for what major reasons they are using Facebook, they instantly replied that they used it to stay updated on new developments, particularly the country's political sphere and to trace current and/or timely information. During these incidents, they get exposed to negative emotions and several times. One major reason stated repeatedly by all participants for their worries and experiencing a negative emotion was the exposure to gossips or fake news and calls to rise against some groups on the basis of their ethnic differences, commonly known as "Hate Speeches". Some examples as reflected by informants of the study about how they experience negative emotions while using Facebook are presented below:

Q: What do you think bothers you the most about Facebook?

KN: *There are many irrelevant things that mainly give you wrong information like for example, they might say something will happen or something happened, but that something doesn't exist in the real-world so, that bothers me much and I wish those things disappear from Facebook.*

CHJ: *I'm not happy with politics-related news. For example, false information is released from one of the campuses and after that students of the other campuses immediately react to that information and many things happen then, but after a while, the information is found to be wrong and nothing we can do for all the loses because of the spread of the fake news. In short, politics-related false information bothers me much.*

TD1: *What bothers me most about using Facebook at the university level is different propaganda going on which makes students divert from their education/ learning.*

ZR2: *I worry when some information/propaganda or burning issues of politics, which are not good for people who live together in our surroundings, is posted and when I read some information which is not true and from an unknown source. I am also worried when I observe information that aggravates disturbances among people.*

Governments, international organizations, and even Facebook itself have an understanding that hate speech is such an expansive and contested term that they should put in place legal prohibitions against it in their criminal law. According to Carlson, (2017), countries put in place legal prohibitions against hate speech that generally focuses on incitement to hatred toward people based on their fixed identity characteristics. Similarly, the European Union defines hate speech as the public incitement to violence or hatred directed to groups or individuals on the basis of certain characteristics, including race, color, religion, descent, and national or ethnic origin (Council of the European Union, 2008). Facebook also prohibited hate speech since the company developed its first Terms of Service in October of 2005 (Facebook, 2019b). The company defines hate speech as “a direct attack on people based on protected characteristics - race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, sex, gender, gender identity, and serious disability or disease” (Facebook, 2019b). Correspondingly, Ethiopia proclaimed against hate speech under Proclamation No. 1185 /2020 “Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation”.

Whatsoever the legal ground is, the spread of hate speech and its consequences continue, particularly in the Ethiopian context. It is a general truth that the spread of hate speech using social media in general and Facebook in particular continues, and its negative impact increases. With this in mind, would-be teachers were asked their position regarding whether they will continue using Facebook or not. Some replied they still use and/or log onto Facebook and they will continue to use it, yet they have their coping mechanism. For example,

KN: *“Up to me I'm reserving myself from posting wrong information and news on Facebook, but I did not decide yet to stop using Facebook because of the spread of*

*false information on it. I can say I'm still not taking any step to stop using Facebook”.*

And some said they still use Facebook, but because of the continuation of the spread of hate speech, they start to think they shall stop using Facebook. For example, CHJ said:

*CHJ: Mostly politics-related news filled the Facebook page. If some tiny thing happened, the air will be jam full by it and that makes me think about using Facebook. If things continue this way I will stop using Facebook.*

#### **4. Conclusion and recommendations**

##### **4.1 Conclusion**

This study primarily focused on would-be teacher students' experience of using Facebook. Accordingly, the phenomenon of interest had been phenomenologically examined by four major themes and one sub-theme. Facebook these days is one of the mega social media sites that are widely used and popular among the youth and college students. This is also true among Ethiopians, too. For the sake of this study, would-be teacher students that use Facebook and their experience from it were examined. Based on this major question phenomenological analysis was conducted. Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- Despite the fact that participants' first experience with Facebook varies, after proper introduction with it, they use it more or less for the same reason i.e., virtual socialization and entertainment.
- There is very limited experience among participants in terms of using Facebook for their academic learning.
- There is also the knowledge and skill gap in using Facebook for educational purposes.
- Participants of the study spent two hours per day and fourteen hours per week on Facebook on average just for socialization and entertainment purposes. Although they reflected that they are programmed in using Facebook for 14 hours, their precious time being spent on Facebook cannot be ignored unless they manage to use it for their academic learning, too.
- Besides, participants entertain themselves using Facebook. Facebook also exposes them to negative emotions and worries because of the spread of hate speeches through it.

##### **4.2 Recommendations**

In this era of information, social media in general and Facebook as a mega social media network, in particular, governing the world in many aspects, proper administration shall always be a great concern. Accordingly, based on the conclusion drawn for this study the following recommendations have been suggested:

- A virtual platform like Facebook can be an effective and optional teaching strategy that helps learners in academic gains. Thus, this will be the time to start to think using



Facebook as part of the education system besides the traditional face-to-face classroom learning-teaching process.

- Joint efforts among different stakeholders (school authorities, teachers, students, and the Ministry) are needed to solve the knowledge and skill gap as well as wrong perceptions about using Facebook for educational purposes.
- Although the legal ground is established about the spread of hate speech using mainstream media or social media networks like Facebook, its execution does not yet bring profound effect. Hence, a holistic effort is required.

### **Recommendation for future research**

Even though it was not the intention of this study, the research subjects point out that they use Telegram and IMO to address their academic activities more than Facebook. Therefore, it requires scholars' attention and more in-depth researches shall be done in these areas.

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