

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA WITHIN THE MIB MODULE

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ABSTRACT

This paper intends to explore students' perceptions of social media in the context of the Melayu Islam Beraja education and its challenges in the context of the Melayu Islam Beraja B philosophy. It reports the findings regarding student use of Facebook features and their perceptions of its use within the Melayu Islam Beraja module at the University of Brunei Darussalam. These findings indicate student observations of pedagogical, social, technological and cultural affordances as well as their concerns about using Facebook. Data was gathered by distributing questionnaires. The key idea of the findings is that students find peer-to-peer interactions on Facebook potentially more valuable than teacher-to-student interactions, as it is noted that peer-to-peer activity ranked higher than student-tutor activity. The findings also confirm that the Facebook group has the potential to be used as a complementary space for the Melayu Islam Beraja module as it has important features that can support teaching and learning.

Keywords: social media, perceptions, Brunei, Melayu Islam Beraja, Facebook.

INTRODUCTION

Brunei is endowed with its National Philosophy, *Melayu Islam Beraja* (Malay Islamic Monarchy) which is also known as MIB. At the proclamation of independence on 1 January, 1984, the Sultan declared MIB to be the national philosophy, which must be honoured and practised by all the people of Brunei (Md Zain, 2013). The Sultan speaks of MIB as an integral part of the nation's identity, which is not merely meant to be known but must also be made obvious and always visible, practiced and appreciated, and that identity has to be truly established on Brunei's soil to prevent infiltration of unwanted elements that are not suitable or incompatible with the nation's very own identity (Mohamad, 2006). Whether it reforms to the court, school and university curriculum, economic policy, defence, sports promotion, censorship, administrative procedures, dress requirements, or home design, MIB will be the underlying rationale (Black, 2008).

Abu Bakar (1997) indicates that after independence, pressure to hold MIB education programmes in schools became significant; school plays an important role to equip today's generation with knowledge of the philosophy and the nation's cultural values. In January 1992, MIB was introduced as one of the subjects in the curriculum of government secondary schools as well as non-governmental organisations (MOE Circular, 1995). Under the initiative of the Department of Curriculum Development, Ministry of Education, the MIB curriculum was compiled and then implemented in schools and thereby, MIB officially became one of the subjects in the curriculum of secondary schools in Brunei Darussalam (Abu Bakar, 1997).

In higher education, such as at the University of Brunei Darussalam, the MIB course is taught and managed by the Academy of Brunei Studies. As stated by Abdul Latif (2003), the MIB course at a higher level, which is coded as AB1503, contains aspects of discussions and debates about contemporary issues such as halal food, politics, the social, scientific and economic status of women in Islam, the relevance of tradition in modern times and other areas that contribute to the overall experience of life in Brunei. Abdul Latif (2003) also indicates that at a higher level, undergraduates are required to pass the Malay Islamic Monarchy course and without passing the examination, they cannot be awarded any degree, diploma or certificate; this is, therefore, a compulsory course. After the implementation of the new policy at the University of Brunei Darussalam effective August 2009 (Mundia, 2012), MIB, which had formerly been known as a course, now became a module and was given a new code PB1501. The content of the module does not show much change as it still includes many of the same topics, for example, the definition and concept of MIB, history of the formation and evolution of MIB, norms and values of MIB, MIB as a way of life and its implementation and MIB in the globalisation era (Academy of Brunei Studies, 2010).

This paper intends to explore students' perceptions of social media in the context of MIB education and its challenges in the context of the MIB philosophy. This could provide an understanding of how Facebook and MIB content could influence and constrain one another. These findings could inform teachers about which specific social media are best suited for addressing MIB learning.

METHODOLOGY

Designing the Survey Content

The questionnaire used in this study was designed to be highly structured and each participant is asked the same questions in the same order. This was done in order to generate frequencies of response amenable to statistical treatment and analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). They also enable comparisons to be made across groups in the sample (Oppenheim, 1992). In addition, they are quicker to code and analyse than word-based data (Bailey, 1994). Muijs (2010) states, unambiguous and clearly worded questions are likely to be more reliable. Muijs also specifies that more items in the questionnaire mean higher reliability, where for most attitude type scales, somewhere between four and ten items will lead to sufficient reliability. However, using close-ended questions may force participants to answer every question even when they consider some response categories inappropriate. Thus, the questionnaire included options such as other (please specify), not applicable and additional comments. The questionnaire in this research contained 7 questions, which could pose an issue to the reliability of internal consistency. Lewis (2010) states that multi-item scales are preferred for assessing people's attitudes because they are more reliable than single questions, which are designed to assess the same attitude. Therefore, in question 4, a Likert scale was used to record students' inclination in rank order from 1 – 8 (where 1 was 'the most useful'; while 8, 'the least useful'). Similarly, for question 5, a 5-point Likert scale was used to indicate the extent to which students agreed or disagreed with each statement. To reassure participants, a cover letter was provided in the first page of the questionnaire, stating the intention of the research. Before the questionnaire was distributed to the students, a pilot study was conducted to enhance the validity, reliability and overall practicability of the adopted questionnaire. The set of questions in the questionnaire aimed to explore how Facebook influenced students' learning experience and to investigate their views regarding the extent to which social media threatens to diminish or to eliminate local cultures in daily life as well as in educational settings.

Data Collection

This study employed Stratified Random Sampling to choose the participants for the questionnaire. Stratified Random sampling, according to Lund and Lund (2015) is a type of probability sampling technique to study particular strata (meaning groups) within the population. In the present study, this involved choosing students of the PB1501 MIB module as the strata to explore students' perceptions of social media use. A questionnaire was circulated amongst 400 MIB students that are expected to take the module every semester at University of Brunei Darussalam. A total of 362 feedback from 90.5% of the students were gathered.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the questionnaire was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to perform descriptive statistical analysis. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were also analysed and coded using MAXQDA software. Thematic analysis was employed as a means of identification, analysis and reporting of the patterns (themes) that characterise the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Facebook in the MIB Module

A majority of the students have implemented Facebook as their complementary space to communicate with their colleagues and teachers. Among the 362 respondents to the question which asked if the respondents were using Facebook in the MIB module, 338 'Yes' answers were obtained. Interestingly, sharing content was identified as the function used by the majority, with 76.5% responding that they uploaded documents. At 66.11% and 63.59% respectively, 'Reading friends' comments' and 'Posting comment' were also high in activity reporting. Other activities that were mentioned are 'Clicking Like Button' (43.70%), 'Turning to an online chat/discussion group when needing help with something' (42.86%), 'Posting status update' (40.62%), 'Checking friends' status update' (40.62%), 'Creating a poll for friends online' (39.22%) and 'Following friends' post' (32.77%). The least selected activities on the Facebook group were 'Uploading video to a video-sharing site (such as YouTube)' and 'Clicking Share button' with only 15.41%. Also, 3.92% selected 'Other' activities for the activities they perform in the Facebook group. These findings confirm that the majority of the students have made use of the main features of Facebook and this has put them in a position of being able to comment on their perceptions of its use.

Perceptions on MIB Module Facebook Group

Question 4 (see Table 1) asked students what they consider to be the most and least useful activities on Facebook, recording their inclination in rank order from 1 – 8 (where 1 was 'the most useful' while 8, 'the least useful'). The results indicate that the activity which students think is most useful is 'Sharing resources and information', then 'Finding information and getting feedback', followed by 'Contacting colleagues'. 'Talking to colleagues' and 'Question and Answer with Colleagues' were also reported as being of significant use. 'Contacting facilitator/tutor/lecturer', 'Question and Answer with facilitator/tutor/lecturer' and 'Talking to facilitator/tutor/lecturer' were the least useful aspects in the MIB Facebook group. Therefore, it is noted that peer-to-peer activity was ranked higher than student-tutor activity.

Table 1: Facebook Usage

Q4. What was the biggest use you make of Facebook in PB 1501 (MIB) module teaching and learning? Please tick (✓) your preference in rank order from 1 – 8

	being the most useful				being the least useful				N/A	Total	Average Rating
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
Sharing resources and information	53.91% 193	15.92% 57	6.42% 23	5.03% 18	5.03% 18	2.23% 8	2.51% 9	5.59% 20	3.35% 12	358	2.34
Finding information and getting feedback	42.58% 152	19.05% 68	10.08% 36	5.60% 20	8.68% 31	2.52% 9	2.24% 8	5.88% 21	3.36% 12	357	2.63
Contacting colleagues	42.74% 153	16.48% 59	11.73% 42	6.98% 25	6.98% 25	3.35% 12	3.07% 11	4.75% 17	3.91% 14	358	2.64
Talking to colleagues	38.27% 137	13.69% 49	12.85% 46	10.89% 39	8.94% 32	2.79% 10	3.35% 12	4.19% 15	5.03% 18	358	2.80
Question and Answer with colleagues	36.97% 132	16.25% 58	13.17% 47	7.84% 28	8.40% 30	5.04% 18	3.92% 14	4.20% 15	4.20% 15	357	2.86
Contacting tutor	21.29% 76	6.16% 22	8.68% 31	9.52% 34	14.29% 51	8.96% 32	7.28% 26	10.64% 38	13.17% 47	357	4.14
Question and Answer with tutor	14.85% 53	10.92% 39	9.52% 34	9.80% 35	14.85% 53	7.28% 26	9.24% 33	9.80% 35	13.73% 49	357	4.24
Talking to tutor	18.26% 65	6.46% 23	9.55% 34	7.87% 28	16.57% 59	6.74% 24	7.58% 27	12.92% 46	14.04% 50	356	4.32

*lower scores indicate higher use

Question 5 (see Table 2) explored opinions on how Facebook influences students' learning experience and opinions. Respondents were presented with 20 statements relating to the essential use of Facebook in teaching and learning and the probable downsides of Facebook in teaching and learning, particularly with regard to MIB philosophy. Findings show that respondents' views on Facebook were mixed but consistent across the sample. Important features of Facebook included the fact that content can be viewed many times, that students are able to offer their own views on Facebook, that Facebook can remind respondents of due dates, that it can connect students and lecturers and that there is flexibility in using Facebook. Possible drawbacks respondents agreed with included worries concerning internet connection speed and the fact that some people lack internet access. Respondents were less worried that Facebook might not offer deep learning or that use of Facebook might weaken MIB values and beliefs.

Table 2: Scores for Opinions on Facebook

Q5. Please tick (✓) from 1 to 5 to show how much you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Total	Average Rating
a) I can go over the material as many times as I want using Facebook.	31.92% 113	42.09% 149	22.60% 80	2.54% 9	0.56% 2	0.28% 1	354	1.97
b) I think I can discuss my ideas, give my opinion, share my findings with the Facebook community	20.82% 73	54.80% 194	22.88% 81	0.85% 3	0.28% 1	0.56% 2	354	2.05
c) I think that working with Facebook means that I can work when and where I want.	26.55% 94	43.79% 155	24.01% 85	4.52% 16	0.56% 2	0.56% 2	354	2.08
d) I find that Facebook can make a positive contribution to upholding Brunei National Philosophy – MIB	22.88% 80	37.39% 132	35.98% 127	2.55% 9	1.13% 4	0.28% 1	353	2.22
e) I think Facebook changes the way students and lecturers communicate	16.38% 58	47.18% 167	30.79% 109	4.24% 15	0.85% 3	0.56% 2	354	2.26
f) I enjoy the flexibility of Facebook because it allows me to go at my own pace	11.90% 42	49.58% 175	35.41% 125	2.83% 10	0% 0	0.28% 1	353	2.29
g) I think Facebook helps me to remember due dates for assignments and dates for exams	24.29% 86	36.44% 129	22.32% 79	13.28% 47	2.26% 8	1.41% 5	354	2.32
h) I seem to spend lots of time just trying to connect to the internet...then feel pressured because of the internet speed	26.27% 93	31.07% 110	24.29% 86	11.58% 41	4.80% 17	1.98% 7	354	2.38
i) I think that Facebook can be used effectively in an educational setting	12.43% 44	44.35% 157	34.18% 121	6.78% 24	1.98% 7	0.28% 1	354	2.41
j) I think it is unfair to use Facebook in education... considering students who have no internet access.	19.77% 70	31.38% 111	35.03% 124	9.04% 32	3.95% 14	0.85% 3	354	2.46
k) I see that Facebook can enhance civic involvement and strengthen community ties	6.50% 23	42.94% 152	43.79% 155	5.37% 19	0.56% 2	0.85% 3	354	2.50
l) I think Facebook offers useful educational materials	7.91% 28	31.07% 110	52.28% 185	6.50% 23	1.13% 4	1.13% 4	354	2.61
m) I receive support from academic and members of the Facebook community in response to my requests for help and encouragement	8.19% 29	33.90% 120	44.63% 158	8.19% 29	1.98% 7	3.11% 11	354	2.61
n) I can make more effective use of my time when I am learning using Facebook	12.99% 46	23.45% 83	45.78% 162	14.41% 51	3.11% 11	0.28% 1	354	2.71
o) I can find lecture topics and speakers' hand-outs in Facebook	12.75% 45	30.03% 106	30.59% 108	17.85% 63	5.38% 19	3.40% 12	353	2.72
a) I find that learning with Facebook does not offer deep learning	8.50% 30	23.51% 83	48.44% 171	16.15% 57	2.55% 9	0.85% 3	353	2.81
b) I like the way the responsibility for my learning is on me...I am more in control using Facebook.	9.32% 33	19.49% 69	52.26% 185	15.54% 55	2.82% 10	0.56% 2	354	2.83
c) I think facilitators/lecturers are more contactable using Facebook	8.22% 29	21.25% 75	42.21% 149	15.88% 56	7.65% 27	4.82% 17	353	2.93
d) I think that Facebook can weaken MIB values and beliefs	6.78% 24	16.67% 59	43.50% 154	25.71% 91	6.21% 22	1.13% 4	354	3.08
e) I can find Book/ Bibliography /References in Facebook	2.28% 8	6.21% 22	33.82% 119	35.88% 127	15.54% 55	6.50% 23	354	3.60

*lower scores indicate higher use

The most commonly used activities of the Facebook group highlighted in Question 4 corresponds to the finding in Question 5. For example, students stated that they upload file documents in order to share resources among the Facebook members. Students also stated that they post and read friends' comments in order to gain information and get feedback, which helped with the production of presentation slides and facilitated the exchange of opinions regarding MIB topics. To further explore students' perceptions, open-ended responses are discussed in the next section.

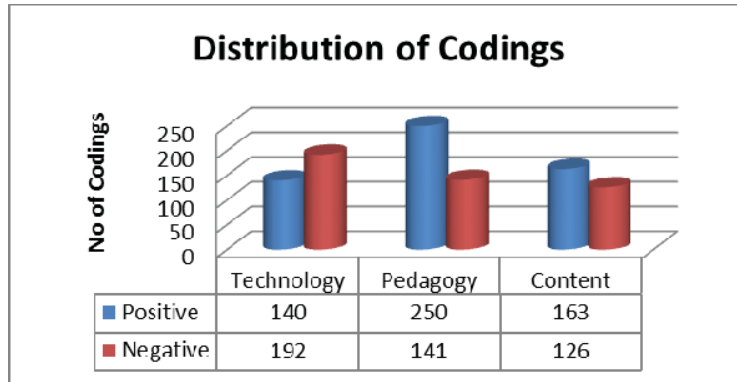


Figure 1: Distribution of TPACK Codings

Question 6 aimed to prompt participants' opinions concerning the positive and negative cultural impact of Facebook on Brunei's National Philosophy, MIB using an open-ended questions. It aimed to investigate in what way technology such as Facebook affects Brunei's National Philosophy. In total, there were 329 responses to this question. Figure 1 displays the distribution of positive and negative perceptions according to Technology, Pedagogy and Content codings. It illustrates that 'Pedagogy Positive' codings register the highest with 250 codings, followed by 'Technology Negative' which collected 192 codings, then, 'Content Positive' with 163 codings. 'Pedagogy Negative' (141), was 1 coding higher than 'Technology Positive' (140), and lastly, the fewest codings (126) were registered for 'Content Negative'. These show that Facebook (technology) has considerably more negative feedback, rather than positive feedback, from the students. However, when it comes to applying Facebook in education (pedagogy and content), it is better received by the students.

The interpretations of the answers are presented according to specific themes as follows:

Pedagogical Affordances

Pedagogical affordances refer to the extent to which the Facebook group could be successfully used as a complementary space for MIB. In this study, the students cited Facebook as a tool to help them communicate with their colleagues, assist them to share MIB information, documents and ideas and discuss MIB knowledge among themselves in order to acquire new information.

Social Affordances

Social affordances are concerned with the extent to which the Facebook group could arrange for a secure, safe and welcoming atmosphere in which the students could conveniently converse and interact with one another. The students identify Facebook as a tool to help students to keep in touch with each other. A study by Minocha (2009), which incorporated the adoption of Facebook as a pre-induction supportive instrument, has ascertained that it is significantly useful in enhancing the degree of social cohesion. Woodley

and Meredith (2012) have also suggested that Facebook facilitates the interconnection between students and people. The intent of the interaction might be for the provision of emotional, social and academic support, in which they demonstrate that secluded or shy students obtain larger benefits from Facebook. Such perceptions were evident in some of the open-ended responses and students highlighted the ubiquitous nature of the tool in providing that support:

*"They students can **keep in touch** through Facebook despite being in different places at different times"*

*"The positive impact is the fact that Facebook is a very efficient medium for people to **stay in touch with each other**, anywhere and anytime".*

The equalising effect of Facebook was also observed:

*The positive impacts are, firstly it helps students who are **shy to speak up** during a discussion, to have their say on Facebook*

Technological Affordances

Technological affordances explore the extent to which the Facebook group could be used devoid of technical problems. Woodley and Meredith (2012) found that Facebook gave students an avenue for an efficient interaction platform thereby enabling enhanced degrees of student engagement. The mobility of access was further identified by Idris and Wang (2009) and developments in mobile technologies mean uploading photos and notes, identified by the students in this study as a major affordance, is ever more convenient. In this study, students specifically identified the affordance of convenience, which was not only a matter of not having *'to meet lecturers personally or even colleagues'*, but also emphasised the asynchronous dimension – *'no need to wait until the person is online in order to send them message'*. The sharing of documents was again mentioned, with digital access replacing the usual practice of photocopying.

*"Facebook **allows share documents** (e.g. essays, slides, etc.) with colleagues so easier for us to study MIB on our own time. (**No need** to ask our friend to **photocopy**)"*

The benefit of mobile application was furthermore cited, not simply because it provides flexibility of time and place but also because it *'can help and tell you notification'*.

Cultural Affordances

Cultural affordances refers to the extent to which the Facebook group could provide an MIB environment in which the students could conveniently implement and instil the spirit of MIB in their interaction with one another. The most common responses were with regard to Facebook being capable of disseminating MIB philosophy. Facebook, according to participants, could be used as a platform to explain to a broader audience its intrinsic nature, its status in Bruneian society and the benefits it imparts, as illustrated in the following quote:

*"Facebook can help **spread the MIB concept to a wider audience**, so others can understand better why Brunei uses MIB as its National Philosophy. The culture can be understood better with the help of Facebook".*

Other cultural affordances are Facebook's capability to increase MIB knowledge, bring about MIB awareness and encourage information sharing. Students considered that Facebook helped them increase their MIB knowledge and awareness of cultural and religious information that was shared in the Facebook group. Student stated in their answers:

*"Positive impact is that we are **able to share and get to know our own culture**. As a non-Muslim, I understand a little bit more regarding the Muslim festivals when my friends are posting stories about them".*

*"People post videos on Islamic/cultural matters, this may encourage those who always use Facebook to click on it and thus, may **teach/remind them the teaching/values of Islamic culture**"*

Facebook also has the capability to strengthen relationships among people, which is one of the values enshrined in the MIB philosophy. Students stated that:

*"The positive impact is that it **allows to strengthen relationship, the familial and friendly ones** and this is an aspect of the MIB philosophy, which is to keep close ties among people"*

*"Facebook **strengthen relationship between races**".*

Students Concerns

Students expressed their concerns about using Facebook as a complementary tool in the MIB course. Their concerns relate to pedagogical, social, content, technology and cultural aspects.

Pedagogical concerns

The most common concerns among the students regarding Facebook were the probability that Facebook can lead people to being distracted from their daily learning activities. They also mentioned the possibility of promoting procrastination among users. Hence, students reflected that Facebook caused them to waste much of their time doing other things than studying and getting distracted while studying could result in inattention. Furthermore, the likelihood of students misusing it for '*chatting about inappropriate matters*', '*debating on confidential issues*', or '*reading or posting unnecessary gossip*' was cited by students as the negative side of Facebook that was their main concern.

Social concerns

The non-verbal communication between teachers and colleagues also became a matter of concern for students as they felt that they might experience '*loss sense of personal communication with colleagues and lecturers*' because of relying too much on virtual space. They indicate that communicating through a machine is not nearly the same as being face to face with someone and in a way, students and teachers will lose face-to-face communication abilities.

Content concerns

The content of Facebook that offers inappropriate images to be viewed by users was the negative impact of Facebook that worries students. They said that revealing pictures that were uploaded frequently could be seen in the Facebook. Furthermore, the obtainability of unreliable information, incorrect views and the spread of false, abusive and humiliating information found on Facebook were also cited as the harmful impact of Facebook in the MIB course. The students observe the harmful and false information that is available as '*a bad influence that could interfere with the MIB image as the national philosophy*'. In addition, depending too much on the reliability of Facebook information that is available as educational resources, could also provide a negative impact on students' attitude in terms of their indolence in searching for further sources of knowledge.

Technology concerns

Privacy concerning friends following their personal life was also among the feedback from the respondents in terms of the adverse aspects of Facebook. Privacy is probably the biggest controversial issue Facebook has confronted within the major concerns regarding the privacy and security issues that have been associated with its use (Freishtat and Sandlin, 2010; Woodley and Meredith, 2012; Friesen and Lowe, 2012; Jaffar, 2014). In relation to the learning process, academic information can easily be accessed and corrupted by hackers, thus reducing the quality of the academic process which it was meant to boost. People have tendencies to share pictures and pieces of information with specific groups of people. In this context, students are likely to feel uneasy about their lecturers being able to invade their personal spaces in the social media. Another concern in relation to technological constraints, is the burden for students who do not have internet access because of its cost, and this leads to the occurrence of inactive members in the Facebook groups.

Cultural concerns

Students also observed that Facebook could weaken the Bruneian Malay language. '*Students discuss in "English" on Facebook instead of making use of the "Malay" language*' was cited by the students as a negative impact of Facebook to MIB philosophy, as mostly using English in their discussion could '*weaken their ability to speak Malay which is the official language of Brunei*'. They also quoted that using the language of SMS that was frequently found in Facebook could '*damage the Malay language*'. They are concerned about the negative impact of Facebook on one's morale and values. They mentioned that the recurrent use of bad and harsh language such as profanity '*lead to morals and values weakening*'. They also considered that using Facebook inappropriately could also increase '*moral and social collapse*' among Facebook users. Furthermore, the students viewed that the characteristic of social media that allow openness to express opinions which might be controversial or threatening could result in dissension. As a final point, students also specified the threats of Facebook that might contribute to a harmful impact on MIB Philosophy in terms of its ability to expose foreign culture material and the availability of a negative influence on MIB. These concerns raised by the students shed light on distinctive issues of Facebook in relation to MIB learning and the issues of potential challenges and threats to MIB philosophy. The way that technology was implemented by students could lead to good or bad effects. Thus, supervision and facilitation on the part of teachers are important to lead students to maintain an appropriate attitude while using Facebook.

CONCLUSION

This paper explores the use of Facebook groups among MIB students based on their experiences in the MIB course and investigate students' perceptions of the potential challenges of social media in the context of the MIB philosophy. The key idea of the findings is that students find peer-to-peer interactions on Facebook potentially more valuable than teacher-to-student interactions, as it is noted that peer-to-peer activity ranked higher than student-tutor activity. The findings also confirm that the Facebook group has the potential to be used as a complementary space for the MIB module as it has important features that can support the teaching and learning, particularly as content can be viewed many times, and Facebook can remind respondents of due dates, connect students and teachers, provide a place for students and lecturers to communicate as well as holding discussions and sharing MIB module information. Other than the pedagogical affordances, there are social, technological and cultural affordances which allow members to communicate and interact with one another using Facebook which has convenient communication tools, is an efficient medium and is also capable of disseminating MIB philosophy. However, this paper also reveals that using the Facebook group as a complementary space has a number of

constraints as well, particularly concerning MIB philosophy. The strong social connectivity of Facebook enables students to easily communicate and interact with colleagues and the teacher; however, it fails to provide a safe technological, pedagogical, content, social, and cultural environment for students. For instance in relation to the MIB Philosophy, foreign culture exposure where the students are exposed to information that is contradictory and has a negative MIB influence is potentially the greatest cultural concern and needs to be addressed. Another case in point is the technological concerns in relation to privacy issues as Facebook is a social networking site, in which its ability to provide complementary tools for learning is still indistinct. Another aspect from which Facebook may not be a safe environment is that of content trustworthiness, as it could have unreliable information or incorrect views and could promote the spread of false news. Additionally, the pedagogical challenges of Facebook are its distracting features and how it can be easily misused and promote procrastination, which leads to students wasting a lot of their time in pursuing non-educational activities.

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