



Social media practices among academics: the case of Sri Lankan universities

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Abstract

Introduction. This study examines how Sri Lankan university academics engage with social media for professional purposes, focusing on demographic and job-related factors associated with platform adoption, frequency of access, and perceived satisfaction, as well as the competencies and skills required for effective use. While much prior work emphasises student use, academics' perspectives remain underexplored, especially in South Asia.

Method. A mixed-method approach was employed, comprising a survey of 432 academics from multiple Sri Lankan universities and semi-structured interviews with 22 academics. The survey captured demographic characteristics, platform adoption, frequency of access, and perceived satisfaction, while interviews explored experiences, barriers, and competencies.

Analysis. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations to examine patterns of platform engagement and satisfaction across demographic and professional characteristics. Interview data were analysed thematically to provide insights into academics' motivations, challenges, and perceived skill requirements.

Results. Patterns of professional social media engagement varied by gender, age, discipline, rank, and educational background. Younger academics and women reported higher levels of everyday professional use, and women also reported higher satisfaction with platforms including YouTube, LinkedIn, and ResearchGate, whereas senior academics reported greater engagement with more information-focused platforms such as Academia.edu and Twitter. Key competencies included digital literacy, cybersecurity awareness, research and information literacy, pedagogical integration, and time management.

Conclusions. Social media is increasingly central to Sri Lankan academics' professional work, supporting both pedagogical and professional activities. However, sustainable engagement requires not only individual skills and self-regulation but also institutional support, infrastructure, and ongoing professional development.

Introduction

Social media has an important role in academics' professional practices. It enables them to communicate with students, coordinate classes, and share learning materials, while also allowing participation in research networks and international scholarly communities (Xu et al., 2024). In Sri Lanka, as in many parts of the world, social media has become an integral part of everyday academic life, supporting teaching, research, and scholarly networking (Chandrasena & Ilankoon, 2022; Wahid & Sajiharan, 2019). Recent studies indicate that social media use in Sri Lanka is steadily increasing, with academics and students alike increasingly relying on digital tools for communication, collaboration, and knowledge dissemination (Jayasinghe et al., 2024; Senanayake & Liyanage, 2023).

There are many definitions of social media. In this study, the term is used to describe 'a web-based technological platform for online communication that enables users to connect and interact, share ideas and information, build and engage social networks, and develop online communities' (Chugh & Ruhi, 2019, p. 1). Social media, therefore, includes platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Twitter (X), Instagram, and TikTok, as well as individual blogs, websites, and digital repositories maintained by academic communities. These platforms play a significant role in research and teaching (Zimba & Gasparyan, 2021; Chugh & Ruhi, 2018), but challenges remain around privacy and institutional support (Alwis et al., 2018).

Academics' engagement with social media in higher education

At this point, it is necessary to examine how the literature presents both the positive and negative aspects of academics' use of social media in higher education. A growing body of research highlights the opportunities that social media provides for academics. Greenhow & Galvin (2020) mentioned that social media can improve online education by (a) expanding the context of learning beyond the classroom into wider networked communities, (b) introducing hybrid forms of expertise that include alumni and professional practitioners, (c) combining different types of resources and information, and (d) reshaping academics' roles from knowledge transmitters to facilitators of learning. Such perspectives encourage educators to engage with social media not only as a teaching aid, but also as a tool for professional growth and scholarly collaboration.

Collaborative digital content creation is one area where academics can lead by example. Encouraging students to co-create blogs, websites, podcasts, or videos through platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, or LinkedIn can foster meaningful interaction and creativity (Jordan, 2019; Manca & Ranieri, 2016b). Platforms like Google Drive and Microsoft Teams also enable synchronous and asynchronous collaboration, supporting both teaching and research initiatives. By promoting such practices, academics can help bridge the gap between formal education and the digital literacies required in contemporary society.

Institutions have also increasingly recognised the value of social media in enhancing visibility and outreach. Many universities maintain official Facebook pages and YouTube channels to share events, lectures, and promotional content (Capriotti & Zeler, 2023). These channels allow institutions and individual academics to connect directly with stakeholders, including students, alumni, and the broader public. Likewise, professional platforms such as ResearchGate and LinkedIn give academics opportunities to build scholarly networks, disseminate their work, and improve their international presence (Donelan, 2016).

Social media also supports academics' personal and professional development. It allows them to build communities of practice, exchange knowledge with colleagues globally, and stay updated with developments in their disciplines (Chugh et al. 2021; Veletsianos, 2016). For teaching, it creates opportunities to overcome classroom isolation, facilitate peer-to-peer engagement, and encourage leadership skills among students through the creation of online academic communities (Sobaih et al., 2016).

However, alongside these benefits, significant concerns emerge. Social media can blur professional and private boundaries, raising ethical questions about data privacy and online identity management (Manca & Ranieri, 2013). Time commitment and workload pressures remain barriers for academics who already balance heavy teaching and research responsibilities (Murire & Cilliers, 2017). There are also risks of information overload, misinformation, and predatory practices, which can undermine the credibility of academic engagement online (Shahbazi & Bunker, 2024). In Sri Lanka, infrastructural challenges such as unreliable internet connectivity and uneven access to devices further complicate widespread adoption (Jayasinghe et al., 2024).

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that while social media offers powerful tools for academic innovation, collaboration, and visibility, its promotion within higher education must be accompanied by careful consideration of ethical, institutional, and infrastructural challenges. Clear policies, professional development, and support systems are essential if academics are to use and promote social media in sustainable and meaningful ways.

The use of social media in universities: The case of Sri Lankan academics

Most studies on social media use in education have been conducted in developed contexts such as Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany (Balakrishnan et al., 2017; Kapidzic, 2020; Sutherland et al., 2020). In contrast, research from South Asian countries remains comparatively limited. Within Sri Lanka, existing work has largely concentrated on student use, while studies examining academics' professional engagement are rare. One of the few investigations focusing on academic communities in Sri Lanka found that privacy concerns were a primary barrier to using social media for educational purposes (Alwis et al., 2018).

Globally, research highlights how different platforms serve distinct academic purposes. For instance, YouTube has been identified as an accessible medium for sharing educational resources and video-based learning content (Greeves & Oz, 2024), while platforms such as ResearchGate and LinkedIn are widely used to enhance scholarly visibility, promote collaboration, and facilitate international networking among academics (Donelan, 2016; Vivakaran & Neelamalar, 2018).

A growing body of evidence from other developing countries also demonstrates that social media can improve the quality of teaching and learning by offering interactive, low-cost tools that support communication among academics, students, and administrators (Jayasinghe et al., 2024; Sobaih et al., 2016). Moreover, social media groups and online communities foster professional growth by enabling participation in seminars, workshops, and collaborative research initiatives (Sutherland et al., 2020). Collectively, these findings highlight the potential of social media to support both pedagogical innovation and professional identity development. However, despite this promise, empirical research on how higher education academics use social media for professional purposes remains scarce, particularly in South Asia. To address the gaps in existing scholarship, this study is guided by two research questions:

RQ1: which demographic and job factors are associated with professional social media use and satisfaction among Sri Lankan university academics?

RQ2: what competencies and skills do Sri Lankan academics consider necessary for effective professional use of social media in higher education?

Methodology

The case study of Sri Lankan academics was designed to investigate the use of social media in higher education and to contribute to the emerging literature on academics' digital practices in developing contexts. A mixed-method approach was adopted (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interview insights to provide a more comprehensive understanding of academics' practices, competencies, and challenges.

A structured questionnaire, aligned with the research questions, was distributed between May and June 2024 to approximately 6000 academics across 17 state universities in Sri Lanka via institutional email distribution, with targeted follow-up through departmental contacts. The survey was created and administered via Qualtrics. In some instances, it was also shared directly with academics (for example, through departmental channels) to encourage participation. The survey yielded a voluntary, self-selected, non-probability sample of 432 academics. The first author's university granted ethical approval for the study. The instrument began with an introductory consent item and demographic questions (e.g., gender, discipline, years of academic experience). It then included multiple-choice items on platform usage, frequency, and purposes (e.g., teaching, research, professional networking) alongside open-ended items that allowed respondents to elaborate on their experiences and concerns. In this study, 'professional social media use' refers to academics' self-reported platform adoption and frequency of access, and their perceived usefulness and satisfaction in relation to education, teaching, and research; the survey did not specifically measure active content creation (for example, posting or producing original content).

Interview participants were recruited from the questionnaire respondents. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to volunteer for a follow-up semi-structured interview by leaving their email address. Those who provided an email address received an invitation to participate, and 22 academics from a range of disciplinary backgrounds volunteered and were interviewed. These interviews provided deeper insights into the meanings attached to social media use, the barriers academics face (e.g., infrastructural limitations, privacy risks, and workload), and the skills they consider essential for effective integration of social media in higher education. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom or Teams and lasted 30 to 45 minutes each. The combination of surveys and interviews allowed for triangulation, enhancing both reliability and richness of the findings. The interviews guided an exploration of academics' insights regarding professional identity, pedagogical innovation, and institutional support.

This mixed-method design was chosen to capture not only broad patterns of use, but also the contextual differences of Sri Lankan higher education, aligning with practice-oriented frameworks that emphasise the interplay of cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political factors shaping academic practices. These dimensions collectively influence how educational technologies are integrated and enacted in institutional settings. While this contextual perspective provides an important interpretive lens, it does not constitute the central analytical focus of this paper.

Findings

Demographic and job-related factors associated with professional social media use and satisfaction among Sri Lankan university academics (RQ1)

The first research question examined which demographic and job-related factors are associated with professional social media use and satisfaction among Sri Lankan university academics. The analysis revealed patterns across gender, age, discipline, rank, experience, and educational background.

Gender

Female academics exhibited greater professional engagement on social media, with over 50% of women reporting everyday use, compared with 39.8% of men. Women demonstrated marginally more satisfaction on several platforms, specifically ResearchGate (mean satisfaction score 4.39), YouTube (4.15), LinkedIn (3.86), and WhatsApp (3.75), suggesting higher perceived usefulness in these tools for academic activities. Male participants assigned the highest ratings to YouTube (4.1) and ResearchGate (4.08). Women reported greater overall satisfaction (3.52) than men (3.35). Platform satisfaction for education, teaching and research is illustrated in Table 1.

Satisfaction with the platform	Female mean satisfaction score	Male mean satisfaction score	Mean difference of Female Vs Male	Female mean score over weighted mean	Male mean score over weighted mean
Facebook for education	3.12	3.00	0.12	-0.40	-0.35
Facebook for teaching	2.89	2.94	-0.05	-0.63	-0.41
Facebook for research	2.81	2.55	0.26	-0.71	-0.80
YouTube for education	4.15	4.10	0.05	0.63	0.75
YouTube for teaching	4.06	4.04	0.02	0.54	0.69
YouTube for research	3.60	3.48	0.12	0.08	0.13
LinkedIn for education	3.86	3.57	0.29	0.34	0.22
LinkedIn for teaching	3.49	3.25	0.24	-0.03	-0.10
LinkedIn for research	3.55	3.38	0.17	0.03	0.03
ResearchGate for education	4.39	4.08	0.31	0.87	0.73
ResearchGate for teaching	3.93	3.84	0.09	0.41	0.49
ResearchGate for research	4.07	3.79	0.28	0.55	0.44
Twitter for education	2.89	2.93	-0.04	-0.63	-0.42
Twitter for teaching	2.83	2.82	0.01	-0.69	-0.53
Twitter for research	2.75	2.75	0	-0.77	-0.60
Academia for education	3.54	3.23	0.31	0.02	-0.12
Academia for teaching	3.47	3.14	0.33	-0.05	-0.21
Academia for research	3.56	3.22	0.34	0.04	-0.13
WhatsApp for education	3.75	3.51	0.24	0.23	0.16
WhatsApp for teaching	3.63	3.35	0.28	0.11	0.00
WhatsApp for research	3.66	3.32	0.34	0.14	-0.03
Average weighted mean	3.52	3.35			

Table 1: Social media platform satisfaction

Age

Academics under 44 years of age reported higher levels of use across multiple platforms, with 65.4% utilising YouTube and 77.3% engaging with Instagram. Their interest in TikTok was the highest at 77.7%, while their interest in Academia.edu was the lowest at 54.1%. In contrast, senior academics (44 and above) reported greater use of platforms associated with professional and information-focused engagement, including Academia.edu (45.9%), Twitter (42.5%), WhatsApp (41.7%), and LinkedIn (37.1%). Younger academics reported stronger use of social media for entertainment (mean = 4.36), relaxation (4.35), skill development (4.15), and teaching and learning (4.05), while senior academics reported higher use for discovering new ideas (4.07), maintaining connections with friends (4.05), and educational purposes (3.97).

Discipline

Disciplinary differences were observed in platform use and perceived academic value. Academics in STEM disciplines reported higher use of Twitter (37.5%) and LinkedIn (36.4%) to enhance research visibility, but academics in the humanities and social sciences preferred Academia.edu (27.1%) and TikTok (22.2%) for social media engagement. Satisfaction patterns were broadly consistent: STEM academics assigned the highest academic value ratings to YouTube (4.12) and ResearchGate (4.15), while social science scholars considered Academia.edu (3.65) and WhatsApp (3.62) most beneficial for scholarly work. In addition, science-based academics formed the single

largest disciplinary subgroup of users of ResearchGate (19.90%), Facebook (18.8%), WhatsApp (17.9%), and YouTube (16.2%) relative to other disciplines.

Rank and experience

Academic rank and experience shaped patterns of social media use. Experience was measured by the number of years academics reported using social media. Among respondents who reported using social media for more than 10 years, senior lecturers formed the largest group (50.8%), followed by probationary lecturers (20.7%), with professors and senior professors combined accounting for 16.9%. Rank differences were also evident in daily professional use. Probationary lecturers reported the highest everyday professional use (59.3% within rank), followed by professors (47.5%) and senior professors (44.4%), while senior lecturers reported a lower level of everyday professional use (39.1%). Across all ranks, daily personal use was more common than daily professional use: 78.6% of academics reported using social media every day for personal purposes, compared with 45.4% who reported daily professional use.

Education

Educational background was also associated with platform engagement and satisfaction. PhD holders reported higher use of Twitter (60%), WhatsApp (46.4%), and Academia.edu (46.4%) than academics with master's degrees, who reported higher use of YouTube (36%), Instagram (36%), and Facebook (25%). Satisfaction patterns indicated that PhD holders rated ResearchGate most highly (4.11), while master's qualified academics rated YouTube most highly for educational purposes (4.20).

These characteristics collectively influenced not only the frequency of social media use but also the types of platforms preferred and the purposes for which they were employed. The findings reveal that professional engagement with social media among Sri Lankan academics is uneven, shaped by intersecting demographic and institutional factors such as gender, age, discipline, rank, and educational background. Overall, the data suggest that social media participation is not uniform but stratified by experience, academic position, and access to professional networks, potentially reflecting broader patterns of digital inequality and institutional culture within higher education.

Competencies and skills considered necessary by Sri Lankan academics for effective professional use of social media in higher education (RQ2)

The second research question explored the competencies and skills Sri Lankan academics consider essential for the effective professional use of social media in higher education. The findings suggest that such use requires a diverse mix of technical, informational, pedagogical, and personal abilities.

Digital literacy and infrastructure awareness

Participants consistently emphasised that foundational digital literacy remains an essential competency for effective professional use of social media. Many academics highlighted difficulties in navigating technological and infrastructural constraints, including weak internet connectivity, outdated devices, and limited access to reliable software. As one participant reflected, *'Recently my mobile is outdated, so I cannot log in to my Facebook account... my phone no longer supports the latest app update. Therefore, nowadays I am not using it'* (P6).

Connectivity issues were frequently cited as barriers to both teaching and learning. As P1 explained, *'We have Wi-Fi facilities in our university, so students can log in, and use social media at any time. But sometimes our internet connection is very limited'*. Similarly, P5 described how inconsistent access disrupts digital learning activities: *'Sometimes we have Wi-Fi and connection issues. Imagine asking students to take an online preposition test when some don't have proper devices'*. P8 echoed these concerns, noting that *'Internet issues, especially weak signal strength, make it difficult to log in to social media'*. These accounts illustrate how technological limitations

intersect with digital competence, shaping academics' ability to integrate social media into professional practice.

Cybersafety and privacy skills

Participants frequently referred to hacking, scams, and unwanted content, highlighting the need for cybersecurity awareness. One participant described how *'Both the Instagram and the Facebook account hacked; I lost access'* (P12), while another noted the vulnerability of students to predatory practices: *'Some student actually... got mail from American journals... but those are not real, those are kind of a spam. We have to have some awareness on that as academics'* (P3). These experiences illustrate why safeguarding personal and professional data, and guiding students toward credible sources is viewed as an essential competency.

Research and information literacy

Beyond technical skill, academics emphasised information and research literacy. They described how platforms like ResearchGate, LinkedIn, and Google Scholar are becoming indispensable for visibility and knowledge sharing. Yet, they also stressed the need to filter content reliably and engage consistently. *'I did not know what to do, what to share and how to update... Later on, when I started my academic career, I thought I should create a ResearchGate account for myself'* (P6). Others shared frustrations with poor scholarly exchange, such as P1's account: *'I'm sending two times, three times request [for articles] ... but nobody is going to reply to me'*. These examples highlight both the potential and the gaps in academic networking skills.

Time management and self-regulation

Academics recognised that while social media offers value, it also risks distraction and overuse. Developing disciplined time management strategies was seen as crucial. As P1 explained, *'I have given like one hour to use social media... you need to prioritise otherwise it will have a bad impact on you'*. Similarly, P5 advised, *'Social media is wonderful... but please use them wisely with the button in your hand'*. Such reflections emphasise that self-regulation is not merely a technical skill, but also a personal competency for sustaining productivity.

Pedagogical integration

Many academics are embedding social media into their teaching practice. YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger were frequently used for coordination, teaching materials, and motivating students. One participant noted, *'I started a YouTube channel for my lecture recordings'* (P7) while another highlighted innovative uses: *'A student actually gave a research project where he proposed to teach English through WhatsApp'* (P4). However, these practices require both technical skill and sensitivity to personal and professional boundaries. As P16 explained, *'I have limited the things that I share in Facebook because a lot of students are in my profile as friends. I see not adding them is rude, but it's not nice either'*. This balancing act reflects the dual challenge of pedagogical creativity and boundary management.

Continuous learning and adaptability

Participants consistently acknowledged that digital tools are evolving, requiring ongoing learning. Some rely on informal resources for their learning, as P1 stated: *'I am using TikTok to get some insights about the new technology... a small tip about how to do citations, how to use the new software'*. Others reflected their growth, with P6 recalling, *'At that time, I was not much aware... Later on, I thought I should prepare... create a ResearchGate account also for myself'*. Yet, they also called for structured institutional training to reduce fear, especially among older or non-academic staff: *'Non-academic staff need to be trained a lot more, almost monthly, until that fear of technology goes'* (P4).

Institutional Support

Finally, academics emphasised that individual competencies alone are insufficient without institutional investment in infrastructure, policy, and professional development. As one participant noted, *'We have Wi-Fi facilities in our university... but sometimes our internet connection is very limited'* (P1), reflecting persistent infrastructural gaps that hinder consistent digital engagement. Another participant highlighted the importance of capacity building, stating: *'I do strongly believe that academics should have more training, and they should be taught on how they can improve'*(P22).

These findings indicate that successful engagement requires more than familiarity with platforms; it depends on a blend of technical, informational, pedagogical, and personal competencies. Participants emphasised the importance of digital literacy, cybersecurity awareness, and research skills, alongside the ability to manage time, integrate social media into teaching, and adapt to rapidly changing digital environments. These insights illustrate that professional use of social media is as much about building capacity and resilience as it is about mastering technology.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that Sri Lankan academics are integrating social media into their professional and pedagogical practices in structured and meaningful ways. The findings reveal that demographic and job-related factors, such as gender, age, discipline, rank, and educational background, shaped both usage and satisfaction. Women and younger academics, in particular, reported more frequent and diverse use, whereas senior academics reported greater engagement with information-focused platforms such as Academia.edu and Twitter, and doctoral-level academics reported stronger engagement with academically oriented platforms that support research visibility and networking. These patterns align with a global study by Manca & Ranieri (2016a), highlighting that age, rank, and discipline often determine adoption rates and platform preferences. However, a study by Mansour (2015) illustrates that there is no substantial difference in social media usage concerning participants' demographic data. In South Asia, similar demographic effects have been noted among academic populations (Alwis et al., 2018), but this study adds evidence from academics themselves, showing how institutional rank relates to professional digital practices.

Consistent with the present findings, prior research indicates that doctoral-level scholars engage more actively with academically oriented digital environments that support research collaboration and professional networking (Kang & Pak, 2024; Sakurai et al., 2012). In contrast, studies on master's students highlight a preference for interactive, multimedia-based platforms that promote applied and flexible learning experiences (Williams et al., 2018). Together, these findings suggest that educational background shapes not only the extent but also the form of online engagement, with PhD holders prioritising scholarly exchange and master's students favouring accessible, practice-oriented learning tools (Barrot & Acomular, 2022; Jordan, 2019). The Sri Lankan case, however, suggests a more integrated model in which these functions coexist, enabling academics to construct a layered digital presence that strategically balances pedagogical and professional objectives.

At the same time, the study highlights the challenges associated with increased social media use. Concerns over distraction, overuse, and the pressures of constant connectivity echo broader global debates about digital overload in academia (Tarafdar et al., 2020). Privacy and cybersecurity issues, including scams, hacking, and misuse of personal data, were prominent, echoing findings in other developing contexts where infrastructural limitations intensify digital risks (AlMudahi et al., 2022). In Sri Lanka, weak connectivity, outdated devices, and limited institutional support amplify these challenges, creating uneven access and adoption across groups of academics.

The competencies identified by participants point to the multidimensional nature of effective professional engagement with social media. Digital literacy and cybersecurity awareness are

baseline requirements, but academics also emphasised research and information literacy, echoing calls in the literature for critical evaluation skills to navigate misinformation and predatory publishing practices (Beall, 2016; Nicholas et al., 2020). Pedagogical integration emerged as equally critical, with academics using platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp to foster interactive learning. Although university academics use learning management systems, participants reported that WhatsApp remains considerably more popular. This supports findings from Manca & Ranieri (2017), who argue that pedagogical competence is necessary for turning social media into a transformative educational tool rather than a mere communication channel. The Sri Lankan case highlights how these competencies extend beyond teaching into boundary management, with academics negotiating professional presence while avoiding overexposure to students.

Adaptability and continuous learning were also emphasised, reflecting the dynamic nature of the digital landscape. Informal learning, such as using YouTube tutorials, currently fills many gaps, but participants expressed a strong demand for formalised training and clear policies. Prior studies have highlighted similar needs: without institutional investment, benefits of digital adoption tend to accrue disproportionately to younger and more digitally fluent academics, leaving senior staff marginalised (Salajan et al., 2010; Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2016). Although the study focused on academics, several participants noted that institutional capacity constraints extend beyond teaching staff. In particular, non-academic personnel were often described as lacking confidence and experiencing fear when using digital tools, highlighting the broader institutional challenges that influence how academics themselves engage with technology.

Taken together, these findings contribute to the growing body of research on social media in higher education by providing an in-depth view from the South Asia region, where empirical studies on academic staff remain scarce (Senanayake & Liyanage, 2023). They suggest that while Sri Lankan academics are embracing social media as a powerful tool for teaching, networking, and professional growth, the sustainable and equitable use of it depends on addressing infrastructural gaps, strengthening institutional policies, and investing in ongoing skill development. In this context, social media holds potential to strengthen higher education in Sri Lanka by fostering knowledge sharing, student engagement, and international collaboration. Yet, as global scholarship warns, these opportunities can only be realised if risks related to distraction, inequity, and digital vulnerability are actively managed (Kimmons et al., 2017; Manca, 2020).

Conclusion

This study provides one of the first systematic examinations of professional social media use among Sri Lankan university academics. The findings reveal that social media has become embedded in both teaching and professional development, though patterns of use are shaped by demographic and job-related factors such as gender, age, discipline, rank, and educational background. These patterns highlight the dual role of social media as both a pedagogical and scholarly tool in higher education.

At the same time, the study highlights that effective use requires a diverse set of competencies, including digital literacy, cybersecurity awareness, information evaluation, pedagogical integration, and time management. Sri Lankan academics are already developing these skills through informal learning and adaptive practices, but disparities across generations and ranks point to the need for structured institutional support. Investment in infrastructure, targeted training, and clear policies on ethical and professional use are crucial for ensuring that benefits are equitably distributed.

By situating the Sri Lankan case within global debates, the study contributes to a growing body of work that sees social media not as an optional add-on but as an essential component of contemporary academic practice. For Sri Lanka, the challenge is to leverage these platforms strategically and ethically, so they encourage dynamic knowledge sharing, inclusive student

engagement, and stronger international collaboration. Addressing issues of distraction, inequity, and digital vulnerability will be key to realising this potential.

Although this study provides valuable insights into academics' professional use of social media in Sri Lankan higher education, it has several limitations. The use of a voluntary, self-selected non-probability sample limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised to the broader academic population, and self-reported data may reflect perceptions rather than actual behaviours. In addition, the cross-sectional design captures practices at a single point in time, without accounting for changes in technology use or institutional policy. Future research employing longitudinal or comparative approaches across different contexts would provide more insight into how academic social media practices evolve.

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