

Facebook Social Learning Group (FBSLG) as a Classroom Learning Management Tool

Jomar M. Urbano, *Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Cabanatuan City, Philippines**

*Corresponding email: jomarmercadourbano@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the step-to-step procedure in creating Facebook Social Learning Group (FBSLG) and the perception of students on using FBSLG as learning management tool. Descriptive method was employed in this study participated by two hundred eighty (280) teacher education students in Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology – College of Education during the academic year 2020-2021 who were purposively selected based on the criteria set by the researcher. Five simple steps on creating FBSLG were discussed by the researcher. Using the adapted survey questionnaire, the data revealed that the students strongly agreed on the four aspects of perception about FBSLG namely: pedagogical affordance, social affordance, technological affordance, and their overall perception on the platform. Some worries of the students on the platform were addressed like the safety of sharing ideas in the FBSLG and some technical difficulties were encountered. It is concluded that the FBSLG is a good platform of conducting classes during this time of pandemic, so the use of this platform to other subjects is highly recommended.

Keywords: Facebook social learning group, learning management tool, learning management system, social media

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INTRODUCTION

In the recent report released by the Datareportal.com of #Digital2020, the World Total Population as of January 2020 is 7.75 billion, and 67% of the population are mobile users, 59% have access to internet with 49% penetration to social media. It is also revealed in the report that Facebook is the Number 1 most used social media platform worldwide.

In a smaller scale, on the result of the survey on the social media use among the 11 Southeast Asian countries: In Brunei, 94% of the population are active social media users, Malaysia at 81%, Singapore at 79%, Thailand at 75%, Philippines at 67% as well as Vietnam, Indonesia at 59%, Cambodia at 58%, Laos at 43%, Myanmar at 41%, and Timor-Leste at 31%. With an average of 63%, more than half of the population in Southeast Asia are active social media users (Kemp, 2020).

And almost 100% of those active users access the social media platforms or websites on their mobile devices. Among the different social media platforms and websites, Facebook has gained popularity among Southeast Asian countries. According to Alexa, Facebook is at Rank 5 in Cambodia, 7th in Myanmar, and 11th in Brunei. Meanwhile, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore social media users placed Facebook in the 3rd spot. Here in the Philippines together with Thailand, and Vietnam, Facebook is the most used social media platform (Kemp, 2020).

The data presented show the power of Facebook as a social media platform. But it also uncovers another beneficial aspect – the potential of Facebook to be an avenue of teaching and learning particularly in the pandemic we are facing right now. Although Facebook was not originally developed for educational purposes, it can also be used as a virtual classroom to impart knowledge and ideas to a considerable number of learners. Being the most accessible social media platform all over the world, Facebook allows student access anytime, anywhere.

Over the years, Facebook has surpassed all expectations and has evolved to meet its growing user base (Mohsin, 2021). According to the study of Raut & Patil (2016) and Singh (2021), variety of software tools, free web applications, and social media platforms like Facebook may enhance learning, communication, engagement, and improve creativity. Another beneficial contribution of using social media in education are the following: instant information, promotes teamwork, improve writing, and develop digital skills (Nilgiri, 2020).

However, in the article written by Ayeni (2021) and Ie Roux & Parry (2017) there are many challenges and negatives effects which are being faced in using social networking site like Facebook, they are as follows: privacy; health Issues, attention distraction, and poor communication skills. In addition, negative impacts on social interactions, behavior, academics, and the health of students in using Facebook were also discussed by Jha et.al. (2016).

Hence, the researcher tried to maximize the use of social media in education by using Facebook Social Learning Group (FBSLG) as a Classroom Learning Management Tool.

Research Questions

The main objective of this study is to determine the perception of students on using Facebook Social Learning Group (FBSLG) as Learning Management Tool. Specifically, this sought to answer the following questions:

1. How to create a Facebook Social Learning Group?
2. What is the perception of the students on using FBSLG in terms of:
 - 2.1 pedagogical affordance;
 - 2.2. social affordance;
 - 2.3. technological affordance; and
 - 2.4. their overall perception on the platform?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The study used the descriptive method of research. According to Creswell (2012), the descriptive method of research is to gather information about the present existing condition. Since this study is focused on the perception or evaluation of the teacher-education students on the FBSLG, it was the most suitable research method to be used.

Participants

The respondents of the study were the two hundred eighty (280) teacher-education students in Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology – College of Education during the 1st semester or A.Y. 2020-2021. Purposive sampling was used with the criteria that the student must be enrolled to the subject taught by the researcher.

Instruments

The survey questionnaire used in this study was adapted from the study of Wang et.al. (2011) which is composed of four (4) aspects of perception namely: pedagogical affordance, social affordance, technological affordance, and their overall perception. This survey questionnaire was minimally revised for contextualization. To determine the instrument's reliability, the revised survey questionnaire was administered for pilot testing to a group of teacher-education students, equivalent criteria to the actual participants, and to determine also the consistency of their responses, the internal consistency method, Cronbach alpha was used to compute the reliability coefficients of 0.90.

Data Gathering Procedure

This research endeavor was employed from July 2020 up to March 2021. It started when the researcher created Facebook Social Learning Groups (FBSLG) for the subject Human Reproduction and Genetics following the procedure of Facebook (2021) together with the personal knowledge of the researcher. Signed communication letters related to conduct of the study and data collection were also prepared.

The created FBSL's were critiqued by the co-faculty members of the researcher for their comments and suggestions. One of the suggestions was to make a video tutorial so seasoned teachers, who are not tech-savvy can follow as it is also one of their struggles in online classes, and this situation was not new as it is also evident in the study of Núñez (2021). Such comments and suggestions were then incorporated in the revision of the procedure and content of the FBSLG's.

The FBSLG was introduced to the students at the beginning of the classes via Zoom. The FBSLG was utilized by the students during the 1st semester of A.Y. 2020-2021. Due to the pandemic, Google Forms were used to collect the data for pilot testing of the survey-questionnaire and actual data collection from the participants.

Data Analysis

Mean was used as statistical tool to determine the perception of the student on using the FBSLG. Four-point Likert scale was used with its corresponding verbal description:

- 3.26-4.00 – Strongly Agree
- 2.51-3.25 – Agree
- 1.76-2.50 – Disagree
- 1.00-1.75 – Strongly Disagree

Ethical Consideration

When conducting the research, ethical factors were taken into account. The target participants' permission is requested in the first section of the online survey, along with information about the study's objectives. It was made clear that even if they participated, their identities would be kept secret after the responses were analyzed as per Data Privacy Act of 2012. Each class representative received a link to the online survey for simple distribution. For taking part in the study, the participants got no incentives.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This portion contains detailed presentation and discussion of data analysis and the findings of this study. The findings are presented under the following two (2) major headings: “How to create a Facebook Social Learning Group?” and “Perception of the students on using FBSLG as a Classroom Learning Management Tool”.

How to create a Facebook Social Learning Group?

Figures 2-6 show the Five (5) Simple Steps on How to Create Facebook Social Learning Group. This procedure was crafted based on the personal explorations of the researcher on the platform and through video lessons.

Step 1: Log in to your Facebook account. (See figure 2)

Figure 2. Logging in to Facebook Account

Step 2: Creating a Group. Click “Create” and Choose “Group.” Type the name of the group. In my case, I write the Course Code and Course Title as the Group Name. (See figure 3)

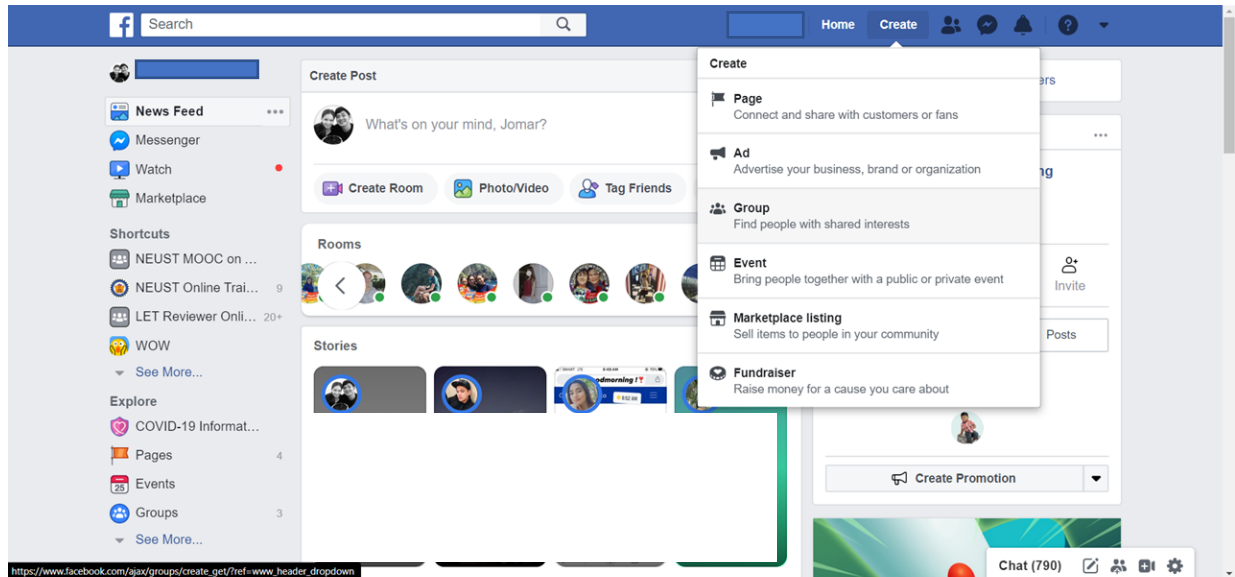


Figure 3. Creating a group

Step 3: Changing Group Type to Social Learning. After Creating the Group, change the group type to “Social Learning.” To do this, go to “...More” and Click “Edit Group Setting.” In the setting, you can see “Group Type,” Just click “Change” and choose “Social Learning,” then click “Save.” (See figure 4)

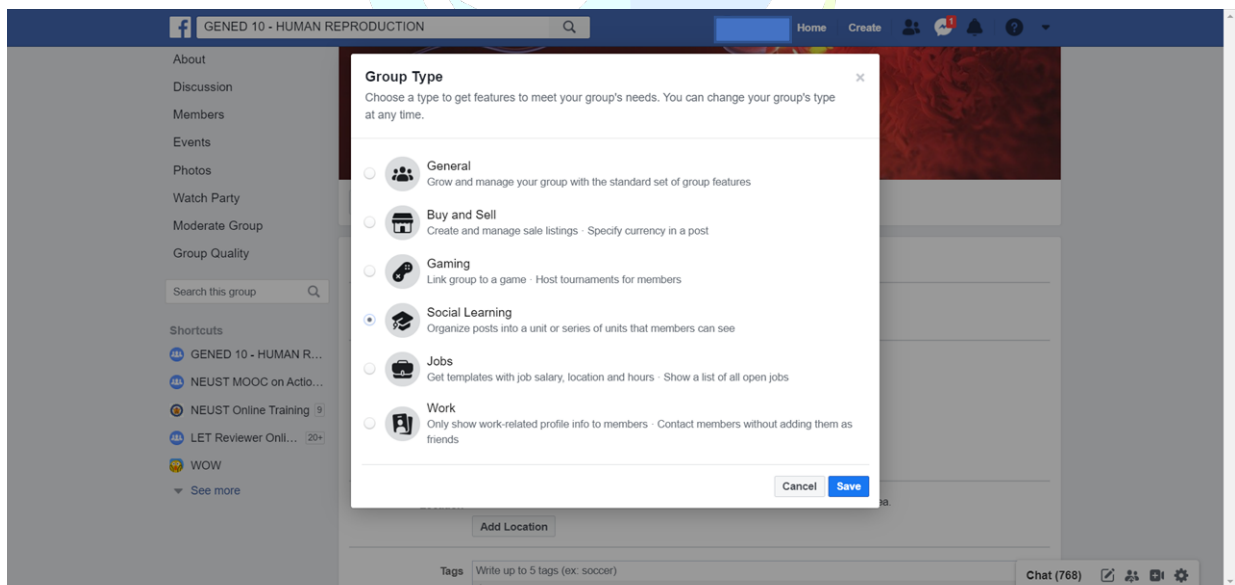


Figure 4. Changing Group Type to Social Learning

Step 4: Changing the Landing Tab. In the setting, you can now see the “Landing Tab,” set it to “Units” to have a more organized presentation of your course content. You can also write the description of the Group or the Course you are teaching. After reviewing and changing the options in the setting, just click Save. (See figure 5)

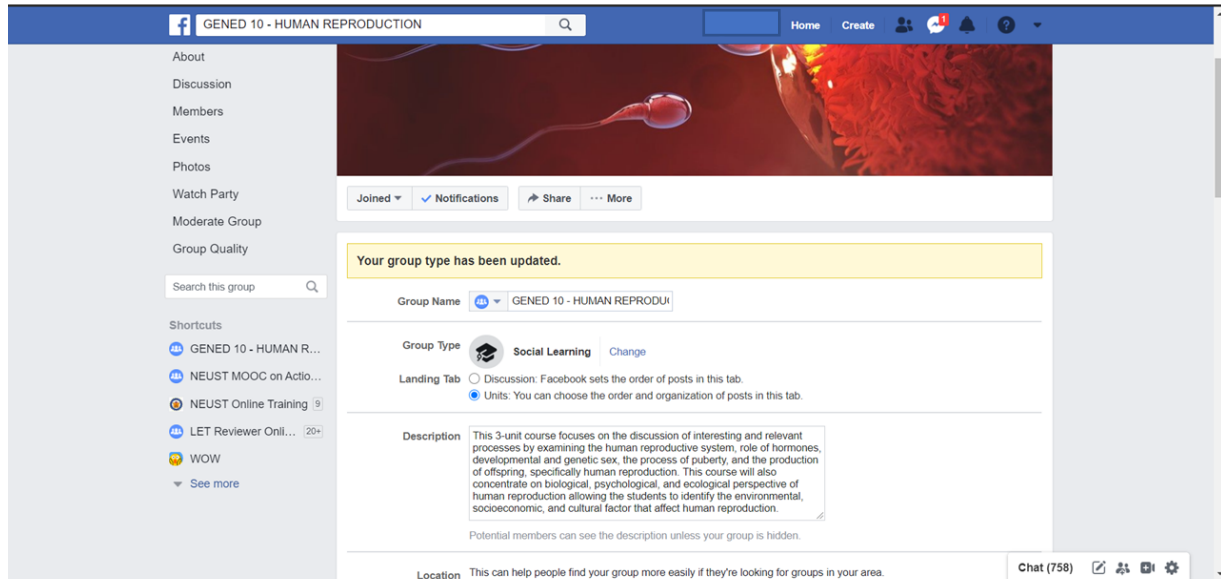


Figure 5. Changing the Landing Tab

Step 5: Adding and Organizing the Course Content. To do this, just go to “Units” Tab, click “Create Unit” then write the “Unit Name and Description,” and click “Create Unit.” After creating the Units, you can now post topics under each unit, these can be Text, Files like documents or Videos and Links. You can also create multiple choice type of quiz and create events like Messenger Room Meetings or Watch Party. (See figure 6)

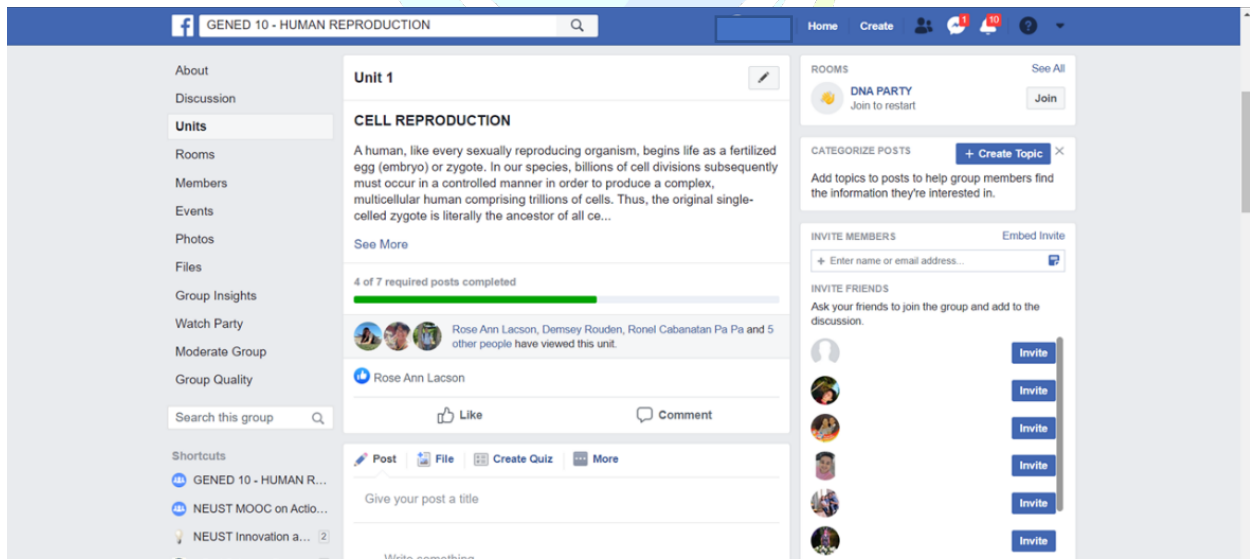


Figure 6. Adding and Organizing the Course Content.

Perception of the students on using FBSLG as a Classroom Learning Management Tool

Table 1 shows how the teacher-education students perceive the FBSLG in terms of four (4) aspects of perception: pedagogical affordance, social affordance, technological affordance, and their overall perception on the platform.

Table 1. Students' Perception on using the FBSLG as a Classroom Learning Management Tool

Pedagogical Affordances	Mean	Verbal Description
1. I could sense what my classmates and the teacher did by viewing the posts on the 'units tab'.	3.82	SA
2. I could share learning resources in any format such as videos, link, PowerPoint or word file in the FBSLG.	3.77	SA
3. FBSLG enabled us to have online discussions with classmates.	3.85	SA
4. The weekly learning activities were well organized by using the units tab.	3.94	SA
5. The FBSLG was successfully used as a learning management tool in this course.	3.79	SA
Average	3.83	SA
Social Affordances	Mean	Verbal Description
6. The FBSLG was a safe environment for sharing ideas and resources.	3.34	SA
7. The FBSLG provided a friendly environment for social interaction with my classmates and teacher.	3.81	SA
8. The FBSLG enabled us to communicate at our convenience	3.91	SA
9. I know my classmates better through the use of FBSLG.	3.78	SA
10. I feel close social relationship existed in the Facebook group.	3.75	SA
Average	3.72	SA
Technological Affordances	Mean	Verbal Description
11. I did not meet technical problems when I was using Facebook.	3.52	SA
12. I could easily join the Facebook group and weekly sessions.	3.88	SA
13. I found it easy to get the FBSLG to do what I wanted it to do.	3.76	SA
14. I can easily create new threads and reply to others in "Discussions Tab or Unit Tab".	3.79	SA
15. I could easily upload and download resources in other formats (PPT, DOCX, PDF).	3.80	SA
Average	3.75	SA
Overall	Mean	Verbal Description
16. I like the idea of using the FBSLG as a learning management tool.	3.92	SA
17. I plan to use the Facebook group in a similar way in the future.	3.90	SA
Average Weighted Mean	3.91	SA

LEGEND:	Verbal Description
3.26-4.00	Strongly Agree (SA)
2.51-3.25	Agree (A)
1.76-2.50	Disagree (D)
1.00-1.75	Strongly Disagree (SD)

Pedagogical affordances

Pedagogical affordances are those present in the FBSLG that determine the qualities of learning possible in practices learners localize themselves (Moravec, 2020). Table 1 shows the descriptive data about the perception of students to FBSLG as learning management tool. The respondents 'strongly agreed', with an average mean of 3.83, that the 'units tab' provided a useful platform for sharing information and

resources. They also agreed that sharing of learning resources in any format such as videos, link, PowerPoint or word file in the FBSLG is possible. The FBSLG also enabled them to have online discussions with classmates. The weekly learning activities were well organized by using the units tab and they agreed that the FBSLG was successfully used as a learning management tool in their course. This implies that in terms of pedagogy (art of teaching), FBSLG can be used as an improvised yet effective platform of delivering the lessons. The result of the survey supports the statement of Raut & Patil (2016) and Singh (2021), that online platforms may enhance learning, communication, engagement, and improve creativity.

Social affordances

Social affordances refer to the extent to which the FBSLG could provide a safe and friendly environment in which the students could conveniently communicate and interact with one another. The students basically believed that the FBSLG provided a friendly environment for social interaction with my classmates and teacher, FBSLG enabled us to communicate at our convenience, and give them opportunity to know their classmates better. This result supports the study of Nilgiri (2020) that online platform promotes teamwork, and the result contradicts the statement of Ie Roux & Parry (2017) that the use of online platform may cause poor communication. Also, they feel that close social relationship existed in the FBSLG. However, the perception of other students was slightly low on Q6 (M=3.34), they were worried that their academic postings could be viewed by their Facebook friends through the automatic notification which can be an unsafe environment for sharing ideas and resources, which is also evident on the study of Ayeni (2021) related to privacy issues. These worries were addressed by making the FBSLG setting as a private group so other people cannot view any contents in the group.

Technological affordances

Technological affordances investigate the extent to which the FBSLG could be used without technical difficulties. The low mean average (M = 3.52) on Q1 indicates that the students encountered certain technical problems. One of the technical problems mentioned by the student is the glitches on sending quiz responses. This problem was addressed by integrating third party platform like Google Form via link. For other criteria under this aspect, students strongly agreed, this supports the data released by the Global Research (2021) commissioned by Dell Technologies, that post-millennials – those born after 1996 and known as Gen Z – have a deep, universal understanding of technology who are tech-savvy, and online platforms in education promotes creativity among students (Singh, 2021) and develop digital skills (Nilgiri, 2020).

Based on their overall perception, students like the idea of using FBSLG in the class. Reasons mentioned by the students are the factor that Facebook has a user-friendly features and very accessible to them, and in fact, they can access it using free internet data. They also consider to use FBSLG in their future classes as they are professional teachers in the making, but taking into consideration the negative impacts of the online platforms mentioned by Jha et.al. (2016).

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the study, it can be concluded that:

1. There are five (5) simple steps on creating FBSLG. First, log in to the facebook account. Second, creating a group. Third, changing group type to social learning. Fourth is changing the landing tab to units tab. And lastly, adding and organizing the course content.
2. Students perceived that FBSLG is a good platform of delivering the lessons during these trying times where face-to-face classes are limited. They also believe that FBSLG could be a safe place to teach and learn. In terms of technological affordance, aside from the fact that they are millennials who are tech-savvy, using the platform is easy to them since they always use it in a regular basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results on result of the study, recommendations were made:

1. Facebook is a social media where system updates in the platform is regularly implemented, so it is recommended to update also the procedure on creating the FBSLG and discuss the new features.
2. Since students perceived FBSLG as an effective and efficient platform to conduct classes, it is highly recommended to use it in other subjects.

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