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IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN GHANA COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to identify the impact of social media usage on academic performance of undergraduate students of Ghana Communication Technology University (GCTU), Accra. The survey method was adopted for this study. The objectives of this study were to find out the purpose of visit to these social media platforms, to analyse the average time spent on these platforms, to discover the effects of these platforms on the academic performance of students and to examine related problems in the usage of the platforms. 800 students were selected as sample for the study. Random sampling technique was employed for sample selection. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 20) was used to analyze the data. From the findings, it was concluded that despite public views concerning the misuse of social media among the youth, most of the students were interested to use social media positively for their academic purposes. The study recommended that counselling programs must be designed for students to understand themselves and manage their study time to avoid social media misuse.

Keywords: Impact, Social media, academic performance, undergraduate, Ghana Communication Technology University.

INTRODUCTION

Social technologies have impacted every aspect of living in the twenty-first century so much that individuals and communities have been affected both positively and negatively. Socially mediated platforms such as Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook, and twitter are formed to create collaborative virtual spaces among different actors. Businesses, learning spaces, and personal relationships are harnessed by social technologies to make the concept of resource sharing a reality. Learners from any socio-economic background can therefore benefit from different components of social technologies. Undeniably, the World Wide Web (WWW) has penetrated deeply in such a manner that all activities, kinds of people notwithstanding financial backgrounds, are entangled by this 'Web'.

Advent of social media technologies has changed the process of teaching, learning, communication, research activities, as well as the exchange of information. All these activities carried out on the various social media platforms today give credence to the fast development in technology and the internet. A study by Ishaya and Azamabel (2021) has it that, social media are collaborative digital-mediated technologies that aid career interest, sharing or communicating of ideas, information and other forms of expression via virtual networks. In another study, Pradeepa, Manjula, Vimal, Khan, Chilamkurti, & Luhach, (2020) listed Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp Messenger, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Tumblr, Google+, Twitter, Reddit, Snapchat, Skype, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Flickr and Kik as the most popular social media sites. Organizations and individuals across the globe share information about their existences to improve visibility and digital presence. In some cases, employers even mandate their employees to join scholarly social sites like Google Scholar and ResearchGate for research or academic connections.

Ishaya and Azamabel (2021) stated that proponents of social networking sites say that online communities promote increased interaction with friends and families. Offer teacher and students valuable access to educational support and materials that facilitate social and political change and disseminate useful information rapidly. However, their study detected that unguarded youthful exuberance has taken over the airspace as unclad, offensive, sexually appealing and sexually abusive pictures are the new strategies inhibiting the students from productive use of the social media. Based on this, one could easily tell that social media can negatively affect academics or social pursuits due to time spent by users in relation to the aforementioned.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Education plays a crucial role in all spheres of human activities due to the enviable role it plays in terms of human development in every aspect of life. Observations by the researchers revealed that students spend excessive time in the use of various social media sites at the expense of their books. If this trend continues, it will not only impede their academic performance but their future life in general. This assertion is supported by Woods and Scott, (2016) when they opined, social media has more adverse effects than positive ones. The increased use of social media has subjected students to use short- handwriting to chat with friends and this they have transferred to their academic writings. In view of this, the study critically observed the impact of social media usage on academic performance of undergraduates in Ghana Communication Technology University (GCTU), Accra.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was done to ascertain the impact of social media usage on academic performance of undergraduates in GCTU. The specifically objectives of the study were:

1. To find out the purpose of visit to social media platforms.
2. To analyse the average time spent on these platforms.
3. To discover the effects of these platforms on the academic performance of students.
4. To examine associated problems in the usage of the platforms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purposes for the use of Social Media

In recent times, the advent of smartphones has increased the use of digital and social media platforms for all manner of reasons. According to Bhandarkar, Pandey, Nayak, Pujary, & Kumar, (2021) social media on a general platform has been shown to assemble information into learning and research, reduce time to provide clear communication and produce access to required information. In similar vein, Alkhalaf, Tekian, and Park, (2018) revealed in their study that, social media facilitates generation of ideas, resource exchange (notes and lectures), provides a clear insight of concepts and improves student engagement in classrooms. A study conducted by Lau (2017), opines that it is suitable in improving academic collaborations, professional development and academic research. The study however, revealed that social media can also reduce cognition and enhance academic distraction which can lead to poor performance in academic engagements.

Duration on social media platforms

Social media activities require data with increased speed to minimise time spent. Reasons being that educational lectures, embedded videos and assignments with feedbacks are shared on a common platform, and this is based on the fact that current students prefer interactive web based, self-directed learning compared with in-person lectures (Yancey, 2017). In view of this, the study continues that an average social media usage is between 50 minutes and 1.5 hours daily. Some existing studies as cited by Shi, Yu, Wang, Cheng, & Cao (2020) posit that “users spend an average of four hours on the Internet per day (CNNIC, 2019). Reasons for this could be the advancement of technology, which has brought about the development of multiple user-friendly and attractive social media platforms which impart extensive information to the users. Another study by San Miguel (2010), portrayed the connection between time spent on social media precisely Facebook and the academic performance of scholars. His study revealed that “more time on Facebook equals slightly lower grades.” The study continued that, the habitual Facebook users’ GPA was between .0 to 3.5, while the non-Facebook users’ GPA hanged around .5 - 4.0. Evidently, the findings showed that, the habitual Facebook user studies for 1 – 5 hours per week, while the non-Facebook 11-15 hours per week. Overspending of time on social media platforms can impede academic performance negatively. Consequently, Khan (2009), asserts that social media users occasionally experience poor performance academically.

Effects of social media on the academic performance of students

Looking at the above situation, it is clear that social media has its negative and positive effects on the academic performance of students. Englander, Terregrossa, & Wang (2010), revealed that social media is negatively related to academic performance of students and may be more crucial than its advantages Shi, Yu, Wang, Cheng, & Cao (2020) again points out that many students are

merging user-generated content with social networking features. They continue that social media can be used for building and maintaining social ties, sharing information, communication, and entertainment. Particularly, social application features, such as pop-up messages and push notifications, multipurpose functions, and self-disclosure. Salo, Pirkkalainen, & Koskelainen, (2018) revealed that social media expose university students to unwarranted information, recurrent e-mails, and social request. The authors further identified some challenges with regards to the use of social media as depression due to overload of information, they tend to lose control of the situation. To support this view Karr-Wisniewski & Lu, 2010; Maier, Laumer, Eckhardt, & Weitzel, (2015) describe it as social media overload, a situation when people respond to an irresistible number of social support demands required by their online contacts thereby losing focus of themselves. Other researchers like Choney, (2010), MehMood & Taswir, (2013), Kist (2008), Jacobsen & Forste, (2011) as cited in Owusu-Acheaw, (2015), also stipulate that the use of technology such as social media is one of the vital factors that can affect the educational performance of students positively or adversely.

Iqbal, Zeb, & Hussain (2018) in a study on impacts of social media usage on the academic performance of university students at Azar Kashmir revealed that, using social media for academic activities ‘significantly affects the educational performance, in a positive way, of the students who were measured using the cumulative grade-point average (CGPA). In the same vein, Abdulkareem, Mishkhal, Saleh, & Alqayyar (2020) posit that many students used social media as a helping tool for understanding some problematic subjects with their courses and created groups to share information. The study continued that respondents who used social media sites as educational tools mentioned that it had positive impact on their performance. On the other hand, Asemah,

Okpanachi, & Edegoh, (2013) and Okereke & Oghenetega (2014) argued that the use of social media had a negative effect on students' academic performance.

Related problems in the usage of social media platforms

A survey on Social media and their use in learning: A comparative analysis between Australia and Malaysia from the learners' perspectives of existing research asserts that privacy issues, cyberbullying, and public exposure of information influenced students' perceptions of the use of social media in higher education. The study further revealed that little is known about how these problems affect people of diverse cultures and norms (Balakrishnan, Teoh, Pourshafie, & Liew, 2017). Privacy concerns is plausibly the abuse of social media by students. Such abuses may range from cyberbullying, stalking, and infringement of privacy, in the view of Aydin, (2012). In a study by Kolhar, Kazi, & Alameen, (2021), they posit that persistent social media use for non-academic purposes, addiction of social media usage, disruption from learning, a lack of sleep, and reduced social interactions were reported by the respondents as the associated effects of social media usage on their part. The study in extension mentioned that ever since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, technological teaching/learning approaches have been implemented. This has prolonged the time spent online, use of mobile gadgets and computers by students and as a result have caused longer sitting hours and reduced physical activities. These deviations could expose students to high possibilities of developing metabolic syndrome and non-communicable diseases. Furthermore, it may have adverse effect on their mental health, resulting in isolation and depression.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population was made up of two thousand seven hundred (2700) levels 300-400 students. A sample of eight hundred (800) was selected randomly out of the total population of two thousand seven hundred (2700). Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, students had lectures online, so the few available on campus within the space of four month were sampled. The stratified random sampling technique was used for selecting the respondents for the study. Close-ended questionnaires were used to gather data from students and data collected were analysed using frequency and percentage counts. In all, 800 copies of questionnaire were distributed. 730 out of the 800 distributed to students were completed and returned i.e. is 91.25 % return rate. Out of the 730 received, 30 (4.11%) were not answered well to be analysed. Data was analysed using simple frequency counts and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Demography of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	413	59
Male	287	41
Total	700	100

Source: Field Data, 2021

Table 1 shows that out of the 700 participants of the study, 413 (59%) were females and 287 (41%) were males.

Table 2: Purpose of Using Social Media Platforms

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage
Academic purposes	400	57
Non-academic purposes	300	43
Total	700	100

Source: Field data, 2020

Table 2 shows that, out of the total respondents of 700 students, 400 (57%) use social media platforms for academic purposes, 300 representing 43% use the platforms for non-academic purposes. This shows that many more students use the platforms for academic purposes than those who use them for non-academic purposes. Using social media platforms for academic purposes means that it would impact their academic performance positively. This finding confirms Abdulkareem, Mishkhal, Saleh, & Alqayyar (2020) whose study revealed that many students used social media as a helping tool for understanding some problematic subjects with their courses and created groups to share information, as respondents in the study who used social media sites as educational tools mentioned that it had positive impact on their performance.

Table 3: Average time spent on these platforms daily.

Average Time	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 30 minutes	85	12
1 - 2 hours	275	40
2 – 3 hours	105	15
3 - 4 hours	120	17
5 hours or more	115	16
Total	700	100

Source: Field Data 2020

Objective two presented in table 3 solicited from respondents the average time they spent on social media platforms. Out of the total 700 respondents, 275 representing 40% specified they spent between 1 - 2 hours on social media platforms every day. 120 respondents, representing 17% responded they spent between 3 - 4 hours daily on these platforms. The least time spent on social media platforms is represented by 85 (12%) respondents. Other periods spent on these social media platforms by respondents are presented in table 3. This finding confirms studies cited in Shi, Yu, Wang, Cheng, & Cao (2020) that “users spend an average of four hours on the Internet per day (CNNIC, 2019).

Table 4: Effects of these platforms on the academic performance of students.

Effects on academic performance	Frequency	Percentage
Positively affect academic performance	482	69
Negatively affect academic performance	218	31
Total	700	100

Source: Field Data 2020

In table 4 above, when respondents were asked about the effects of social media platforms on their academic performances, 218 respondents, representing 31% revealed that it affects them negatively, whereas 482 respondents, representing 69% said it affects them positively. This finding shows that despite the negative influence of social media platforms, its positive impacts could outweigh the negatives if users would make a conscious effort to go for usage of social media platforms instead of the negatives. This finding supports Iqbal, Zeb, & Hussain (2018) whose study revealed that using social media for academic activities ‘significantly affects the educational performance, in a positive way, of the students who were measured using the cumulative grade-point average (CGPA). It however, contrasts the study of Englander, Terregrossa, & Wang (2010), which suggested that social media is negatively related to academic performance of students and may be more crucial than its advantages.

Table 5: Problems in the usage of the platforms.

Problems	Frequency	Percentage
Invades personal privacy and security	206	29
Wastes internet data	112	16
Psychological and emotional constraints	214	31
Overload of unsolicited information	90	13
Encounter more non-academic information	78	11
Total	700	100

Table 5 presents information on problems respondents faced when using social media platforms. Out of the 700 respondents 214 (31%) revealed that there were emotional and psychological constraints attached to the habitual use of these platforms, 206 (29%) respondents were faced with the issues of security and privacy of their personal affairs. 90 (13%) encounter overload of unsolicited information and 78(11%) encounter more non-academic information than academic ones. This finding confirms the study by Aydin, (2012) that privacy concerns is plausibly the abuse of social media by students and that such abuses range from cyberbullying, stalking, and infringement of privacy. It also confirms Salo, Pirkkalainen, & Koskelainen, (2018) revealed that social media expose university students to unwarranted information, recurrent e-mails, and social request.

CONCLUSION

Perceptions are that social media platforms are used for non-academic purposes. However, this study has revealed that 57% of GCTU students were using it for academic purposes and this shows

that more students of GCTU continuously benefit from social media platforms. The study further revealed that 69% of respondents have their academic performance affected positively by social media platforms. In this technological era that the youth of today cannot do without social media, the study uncovered that time spent on these platforms' accounts for the success or failure of the users. The adverse effects that could cause individual disorders i.e. psychological or emotional, could be reduced or curbed if frequent training and counselling sections are organised in this regard. These practices will go a long way to keep students on track whenever they are using these platforms. Further studies could be conducted on the health implications of frequent usage of social media platforms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In a snapshot of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Social media webpages should be expanded with pages created to enhance academic activities and avoid setbacks in the students' academic performance
- Counselling programs must be designed for GCTU students to understand themselves and manage their study time to avoid interruptions from social media.
- For Government and other regulatory bodies, a policy for all social media platform suppliers to monitor and block youth who overspend time on these platforms.
- Educational Stake holders must enforce such policies with stringent supervision.
- Parents and caretakers must always monitor and guide wards on all their activities on social media platforms for better academic rewards.

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