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The Impact of Social Media Use on the Academic Performance of Students of Private Tertiary Institutions in Ghana: The Valley View University Perspective

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of social media use on the academic performance of students in private tertiary institutions in Ghana. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The Valley View University, Oyibi Campus, Accra, was used as a case study. The population for the study was 2,172. The simple random sampling technique was used to sample 388 students. The questionnaire was used to solicit data for the study. 388 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the students. However, 362 copies were filled correctly and used for the analysis. The data were analysed using the IBM Statistical Product and Service Solutions (IBM-SPSS) version 22.0. The findings revealed that entertainment and relaxation, posting pictures and chatting with friends were students' motivators for social media use. The study found out that the frequent use of social media had negatively affected the academic performance of some students. The study recommended that the Management of the University should motivate students to use the various social media platforms for educational activities rather than non-academic ones. The study also suggested that students should be advised to reduce the number of hours spent on social media platforms.

Keywords: Academic performance, Ghana, Private, Social Media, Technologies, Tertiary Students

Introduction

The world is witnessing a massive information explosion due to the internet and various communication technologies. Numerous social media platforms have emerged as a result of the rapid growth of the internet, allowing billions of people worldwide to access, communicate, share ideas and post pictures regardless of location (Ugwulebo & Okoro, 2016; Daluba & Maxwell, 2013). Through various social media sites, the World Wide Web (WWW) appears to catch the attention of the old and the young in various aspects of human activity. The above statement affirms an earlier revelation made by Kemp (2017) that over two-thirds (2/3), representing 66.7% of internet users, as well as one-third (1/3), representing 33.3% of the world's population, are social media site users. The emergence of various social media networks has revolutionised the activities of teaching, learning, research, as well as the mode of communication and the process of information exchange and dissemination. These activities on the various social media platforms today give credence to the fast development of technology and the internet. According to Jiao et al. (2015), social media are information technology platforms where user communities search for information, share experiences with friends and establish relationships with other users.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Doyle (2012) noted that social media is an online technology tool that permits individuals or groups of individuals to communicate through the internet to exchange information and resources. Individuals or institutions can create social media accounts to share information such as texts, audio, video, pictures, podcasts and other forms of multimedia communication. Social media sites attract the attention of tertiary students and divert their attention to non-academic activities and unnecessary chatting (Kuppuswamy & Narayan, 2010). Students spend 6 to 8 hours daily on social networking sites; the minimum time they spend is two hours daily (Wang et al., 2011). Studies on social media use such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp show benefits like learning avenues, information exchange, for relaxing, meeting places, and chatting with friends during leisure hours, etc. Zhong (2020; Alsaif, 2016; Pardo (2013) posit that most students use social media networking platforms to make friends, satisfy their social media needs and communicate with their teachers and communities. However, Fodeman and Monroe (2009) argued that some students use social media platforms to post embarrassing messages, humiliate, post malicious content, photos, and videos that harm others. The current study examines the impact of social media use on the academic performance of students in private tertiary institutions in Ghana, using VVU as a case study.

1.1 Objectives of the study

- 1. To determine what motivates students to visit the various platforms.
- 2. To find out the impact of social media usage on students' academic performance.
- 3. To establish students' time spent on social media platforms.

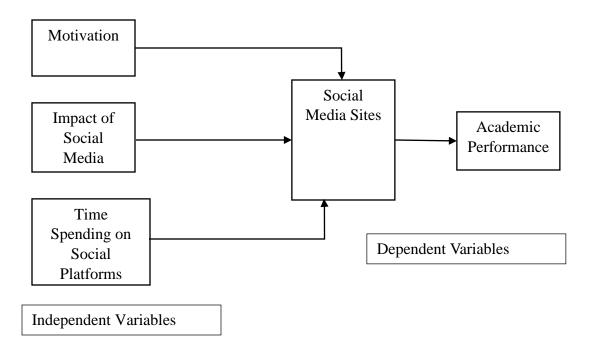


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Sources: Researcher's Construct, 2020

This conceptual framework examines the impact of social media use on the academic performance of students of private tertiary institutions in Ghana, using VVU as a case study. The model shows social media factors that positively or negatively influence students' academic performance. These include motivation, time spent on social media platforms and the impact of social media usage. This model also displays independent and dependent variables which influence the use of social media platforms. In this context, motivation, the impact of social media usage and time spent on social media platforms are independent variables, whereas academic performance is a dependent variable. The main contribution that the present conceptual framework adds to the existing theories in the studies of social media use is examining and analysing the association between the usage of social media and students' academic performance.

1.2 Factors that motivate the use of social media

With the emergence of the internet, students are now exposed to a lot of information that influence their behaviour and learning attitude. Various social media platforms are created every day. These platforms persuade students to visit them and post personal information and data rather than for academic purposes. Motivation entices people to put in extra effort to perform what is expected of them. Motivation inspires people to work, sometimes with or without instruction and supervision. Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors can cause people to be attracted to do a certain kind of work; this means that motivation influences human behaviour in various ways.

Massi (2010) revealed that meeting with friends and connecting with others to achieve self-esteem and self-actualisation were the factors that encouraged students to use the various social networks.

Ezumah (2013) identified factors that motivate students to use specific social networking sites such as the degree of interaction, the ease of use of social media platforms, the convenience of uploading and downloading information, and the ability to navigate through the sites. The study further stressed that students spent 12 hours daily on social networking sites. Similar studies by Tuurosong and Faisal (2014) and Tawiah et al. (2014) regarding the use of social media among Ghanaian tertiary students opine that, students visited Facebook and WhatsApp as communication channels. Joinson (2008) listed seven (7) motivations: social relationships, sharing identities, posting photos, sharing content, social research, browsing, and status updates on social networks. The study indicated further that the youth are motivated to spend more time on Facebook for entertainment-related content. There are many reasons associated with social media use. Some users visit these platforms to update themselves on current issues, broaden their knowledge and also use them for business purposes. Others also use social media for socialisation, entertainment, and relaxation. According to Whiting and Williams (2013), the key factors that motivate social media users include socialisation, searching for information, passing time, entertainment, and relaxation. The rest are communication, expression of opinion, information exchange among colleagues, knowledge acquisition, and many others. Solmaz et al. (2013) claimed that all users had social media accounts that allowed them to log into the various accounts daily and spend adequate time on these platforms. According to Reinecke et al. (2014), one of the most important intrinsic factors for using social networking sites (SNS) is entertainment. Studies by Adnan et al. (2015) and Al-Menayes (2015) found enjoyment as a motivational factor that reinforces the use of social networks. Most social media users visit various sites for fun and pleasure in their daily lives (Lin & Lu, 2011). According to Sharma and Verma (2015), young professionals and students consider these platforms appropriate for mental relaxation. Social media users access a variety of platforms and sites intended to provide an environment that helps them transfer their mental fatigue from everyday problems and fears to real life (Orchard et al., 2014).

1.3 The impact of social media usage on students' academic performances

The proliferation of social media has tremendously transformed students' social and academic lives. A lot of studies carried out in this field have confirmed this assertion that social media has impacted the lives of students in higher educational institutions. Students benefit from social media use, which helps them connect to their colleagues during assignments and other academic activities (O'keeffe & Clake-Pearson, 2011). However, the authors identified cyberbully, pornography, Facebook depression, and confidentiality issues as critical challenges concerning social media effects. Indeed, the emergence of social networks provides students with a new learning platform to chat with colleagues, discuss academic issues, exchange information with teachers both within and outside the university environment. A similar study by Davis and Cranston (2008) also revealed the danger associated with using social media for criminal activities, including theft and false contacts, sexual abuse or harassment, and bad publicity. According to Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015), most students visit these sites to chat and download information that negatively impacts their academic performance. Chris (2015) found in Kenyan universities that 50% of male and 58% of female students disagreed with the statement that social media had a negative impact on their studies. However, 32% of male and

38% of female students agreed that social media had adversely influenced their study habits. Undeniably, students addicted to social media always replicate in their academic writings the exact words or expressions they use when chatting with their colleagues on various social media platforms. For example, they use words like 'txt' for 'text', 'bicus' or 'becos' for 'because', 'thru' for 'through, 'dat' for 'that', 'luv' for 'love', 'lmk' for 'letting me 'know', '@' for 'at', 'walkin' for 'walking', 'wekin' for 'working' and many others. Horton et al. (2012) affirmed that using Facebook affects how students spell certain English words. Wood et al. (2014) added that text message language negatively affects students' grammatical construction. Alwagait et al. (2015) studied the effect of social media usage on students' scholastic performance in Saudi Arabia. According to the findings, there is no relationship between students' week-by-week use of social media and their average grade points. According to their research, students' academic performance was negatively impacted by poor time management. However, Asemah et al. (2013) and Okereke and Oghenetega (2014) contend that social media use adversely influences students' educational performance. This counter-argument by the researchers can also be attributed to the lack of restrictions on the use of social media in the learning environment or the failure of parents to monitor their wards at home. The use of Facebook diverts Saudi students' attention during their studies, negatively hindering their academic output (Akram & Albalawi, 2016). Tariq et al. (2012) posit that students' use of social networks consumes their time and negatively affects their academic activities. Students spend more time on the Facebook platform than on their studies, leading to poor academic performance (Tarawneh, 2014). Students can use these technologies to improve their academic performance. However, they should be mindful of the number of hours they spend on these platforms since technologies can negatively and positively affect their studies and social lives.

1.4 Time spent on social media platforms by students

Time management is an essential asset in all areas of human activity, like any other commodity such as land or gold. Therefore, students should use their time wisely and focus on their learning rather than spending too much time on non-academic activities. Kalpidou et al. (2011) conducted a study on the relationship between Facebook and the well-being of university students. According to their findings, students spent 60 to 120 minutes per day on the Facebook platform. Pempek et al. (2009) observed that students spent an average of 30 minutes per day on the Facebook platform as part of their daily work. It indicates that students cannot stay away without visiting these platforms. It also shows the level of addiction to various social media platforms, which eventually affects their performance in school. Kolan and Dzandza's (2018) study on the impact of social media on the scholastic execution of students in Ghanaian universities revealed that out of 197 respondents, 17 (8.6%) spent 0 to 30 minutes on social media platforms, followed by 31 (15.7%) who consumed 30 minutes to 1 hour, 50 (25.4%) indicated 1 hour to 2 hours, and 99 (50.3%) spent 2 hours and more on these platforms. Junco (2012) found out that 10% of students spent half an hour (1/2 hour) or more on social media platforms, followed by 35% who indicated two hours (2 hours) per day on social media platforms, while 25% spent more than two hours (2 hours) and above on social media platforms. Iordache et al. (2015) undertook a comparative study on Facebook use by students in Romanian and Lithuanian universities. The findings showed that students spent most of their time on Facebook, with 66% spending between 30 minutes and 3 hours daily. Junco and Cotton (2012) established that students spent an average of 1 hour and 40 minutes daily on the Facebook platform. Cavus and Bicen (2010) report that respondents spent less than 1 hour on the internet a day, followed by 6% who spent 1 hour a day,

10% spent hours on the internet in a day, 15% spent 4 hours, and 65% spent more than 4 hours online daily. The majority of the respondents spent excessive time on the internet every day. This amount of time spent by the students may be due to the type of activities they carried out, or because they were addicted to social media, as Cetin (2009) pointed out that students visit the Facebook platform to entertain themselves.

Ada and Anyebe (2017) indicated that students of the Federal College of Education in Nigeria spent excessive time chatting on social networks at the expense of their studies. Okundia (2016) also asserted that the majority of Nigerian students visit at least one social media site every day. Every student's time management needs to be good so that it does not affect their academic performance or their social lives. The study of Ndaku (2013) highlighted that, students spent more time on social networking sites than on their academic exercises, as this phenomenon negatively affected their educational performance.

2.0 Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used in this study. The Oyibi Campus of Valley View University in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana was used as a case study. The population of the students was 2,172, comprising 1,036 females (48%) and 1,136 males (52%). The simple random sampling technique was used to select 388 students; therefore, the sample size was 388. Three hundred and eighty-eight (388) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the students. However, three hundred and sixty-two (362) copies were completed correctly and considered relevant for the analysis. The software adopted for data analysis was Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. The results are displayed in frequency tables, percentages, and raw figures.

3.0 Results and Discussions

The presentation of the findings of the study was done based on the research objectives. Table 1 shows that out of 362 respondents, 187 (51.7%) were males, and 175 (48.3%) were females.

3.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Males	187	51.7
Females	175	48.3
Total	362	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

3.2 Factors that motivate the use of social media

The researcher sought to find out from the respondents what factors motivate the use of social media. Their responses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Factors that motivate the use of Social Media

Factors that Motivate the Use of Social Media	Frequency	Percentage (%)
For entertainment and relaxation,	92	25.4
Posting pictures and chatting with friends		
To discuss academic issues with friends	32	8.8
Sending assignments to lecturers	48	13.3
A place for meeting family members	67	18.5
Searching for new friends	59	16.3
To share information with colleagues	64	17.7
Total	362	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

The first objective of this study was to examine factors that motivate the use of social media. Table 2 established that 92 (25.4%) of the respondents use social media for entertainment and relaxation, posting pictures, and chatting with friends. 67 (18.5%) revealed their motivation for using social media as a place for meeting family members, and 64 (17.7%) indicated that they use social media to share information with colleagues, whereas 59 (16.3%) stated that they use these platforms to search for new friends.

3.3 The Impact of Social Media Usage on Students' Academic Performance

This section displays the results provided by the respondents regarding the impact of social media usage on students' academic performance.

Table 3: Impact of Social Media Usage on Students' Academic Performance

Impact of Social Media	Frequency	Percentage (%)
My academic performance has been impacted positively by social media use	72	19.8
Social media has had a negative impact on my academic performance	107	29.6
It has facilitated my communication with my colleagues and lecturers	85	23.5
It delays the time for the submission of assignments	68	18.8
It has enhanced group discussions	30	8.3
Total	362	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

The impact of social media on students' academic performance cannot be overlooked because these effects have both positive and negative sides. This section of the study was to find out the impact of social media usage on students' academic performance. Table 3 established that a significant number of the respondents, 107 (29.6%), conceded that social media had affected their academic performance negatively, followed by 85 (23.5%) who admitted that social media had facilitated their communication with colleagues and lecturers. 72 (19.8%) of the respondents expressed that their academic performance had been impacted positively by social media use while 68 (18.8%) of the respondents stated that social media delayed the submission of their assignments.

3.4 Time spent on social media platforms by students

This part of the study sought the views of the respondents on the time spent on social media platforms by students. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Time spent on Social Media Platforms by Students

Time Spent on Social Media	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Platforms			
30 minutes - 1 hour	85	23.5	
1 - 2 hours	75	20.7	
2 - 3 hours	43	11.9	
3 - 4 hours	102	28.2	
4 hours and above	57	15.7	
Total	362	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Regarding the time students spent on social media platforms, the results indicated that out of the 362 respondents, 102 (28.2%) spent 3 to 4 hours on social media platforms, followed by 85 (23.5%) who spent 30 minutes to 1 hour, whereas 75 (20.7%) indicated 1 to 2 hours. These results show that many students spend excessive time on these platforms at the expense of their studies. This situation does not augur well for their academic pursuits.

4.0 Discussion of Findings

4.1 Factors that motivate the use of social media

This study highlights the impact of social media use on the academic performance of students in private tertiary institutions in Ghana, using the Oyibi Campus of VVU as a case study. The findings established factors that influenced social media use by students as an avenue for entertainment and relaxation, posting pictures, and chatting with friends. This result corroborates the work of Adnan et al. (2015; Al-Menayes, 2015; Reinecke et al., 2014; Lin & Lu, 2011; Whiting & Williams, 2013; Cetin, 2009). Their findings revealed that one of the most important intrinsic motivations was entertainment. The rest are enjoyment, fun making, pleasure, excitement, exchange of information, and communication among colleagues. Furthermore, Tuurosong and Faisal (2014; Tawiah et al., 2014) opined that tertiary students in Ghana were motivated to visit the Facebook and WhatsApp platforms as communication channels. The above assertion suggests that different reasons encourage students to join their colleagues on various social media platforms and online communities.

4.2 The Impact of Social Media Use on Students' Academic Performance

The findings disclosed that a significant number, 107 (29.5%) of the respondents, admitted that social media platforms negatively influenced their scholastic execution. This finding is in line with the previous study by Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015), which revealed that social media platforms negatively affected students' academic performance. The finding again supports Wood et al. (2014) and Tariq et al. (2012), whose results revealed that text message language affects students' grammatical construction and academic activities since frequent use of social networks consumes their time. However, Chris (2015) found that most students disagree that social media is detrimental to their academic performance. It implies that these platforms are like a double-edged sword. They cut both front and back; the onus lies on the individual using them.

4.3 Time spent by students on social media platforms

The study revealed that 102 (28.2%) respondents spent 3 to 4 hours on social media platforms daily. This result supports Iordache et al. (2015), whose comparative study at Romanian and Lithuanian universities showed that students spent most of their time on Facebook. However, the finding does not conform to that of Kolan and Dzandza (2018). Their results revealed that out of 197 respondents, 17 (8.6%) spent 0 to 30 minutes on social media platforms. In contrast, similar findings by Junco (2012) also found out that 10% of students spent half an hour (1/2 hour) on social media platforms, which is inconsistent with the current study's findings.

5.0 Conclusion

The study was limited to Valley View University, Oyibi Campus in the Greater Accra Region. The study has given insight into the use of social media by students. The findings revealed factors that influence social media use by students; these include entertainment, posting photos, chatting with friends, relaxation, among other factors. According to the results, students spend excessive hours daily on various social media platforms; this phenomenon may negatively affect their academic performance.

6.0 Research implications

The study offered relevant information on the fight against the alarming rate of use of various social media platforms and their threats to students' academic performance. The results would help contribute to the existing literature in this field. It also fills the gap and serves as a reference point for future studies. The study further revealed the negative effect of social media platforms on students' academic performance, which would help various university management, policy makers, parents and other stakeholders find effective measures to curb the excessive use of these platforms.

7.0 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The current study focused on VVU, the premier private University in Ghana. There is the need for future studies to expand the scope and use more universities instead of a single institution. Future researchers can also embark on studying students' attitudes and perceptions of social media platforms. The debate on social media use among students is ongoing in the Ghanaian context. This current study recommends further studies in this area.

8.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1. The Management of VVU should educate students on the negative effect of social media on their academic performance.
- 2. Students should be motivated to use the various social media platforms more for their academic activities than non-academic activities such as entertainment, chatting, and others.
- 3. Policies should be enacted by the University authorities to regulate the use of social media on campus, especially during lectures.
- 4. Parents, opinion leaders, University Management and other stakeholders, should advise students to reduce time spent on social media platforms.
- 5. Students should be advised to concentrate more on their studies rather than spend too much time on social media platforms.
- 6. Awareness programmes such as orientations, forums, seminars, and workshops should be carried out on campuses to educate students on the harmful effects of social media.
- 7. Student platforms can be used as a medium of communication to enlighten students on the negative impact of social media use.
- 8. The study recommends that all students should turn their mobile phones off or on silent, and keep them in their bags during lectures to avoid distractions.

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