

The Impact of Social Media on Academic Performance among Accounting Students in Malaysian Universities

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Abstract

Purpose:

The aim of this research is to study the impact of social media usage on academic performance among accounting students in public and private universities

Design/methodology/approach: The variables measured were number of hours spent on social media, frequency of access to social media, Non-academic usage of social media, educational use of social media and social media addiction. Data of the study is obtained by distributing 341 questionnaires to accounting students in one of the private and public universities.

Findings: The result shows that frequency of access found to have significant negative relationship with academic performance. It indicates that frequent access to social media might lead to poor academic performance. Interestingly, the findings of the result also revealed that non-academic usage of social media are found to have significant positive relationship with accounting students' academic performance. It implies that non-academic use of social media would increase the students' academic performance.

Research limitations/implications: This study is conducted using small sample from selected population. Hence, the results may not represent a definite academic performance of all public and private universities' students in Malaysia.

Practical implications: This study may benefit the educators and students. The educators might have some insights on how social media put a great influence on their students' academic

performance. As for students, this study may alarm their awareness on the possible effects that social media has over their academic performance

Originality/value: This research is performed to narrow the gap and discrepancies of the past researches and provides current evidence on the relationship between the social media and academic performance of accounting students.

Paper type: Research paper

Keywords: Social media, Social network, Academic performance, Accounting education

Introduction

Social media is now a critical part of the way and platform to fast communicate especially during a pandemic era of COVID-19. The pandemic has caused an increase in social media usage for educational and sharing of information (Zarzycka et al., 2021). This is happened as people need to stay at home and social media is used to ensure they are stay connected with the latest information (Saud et al., 2020). It has been a key piece for disseminating new information and removing geographic boundaries. Social media is commonly defined as a website and application that enable users to create and share contents. Wang et al. (2011) define social media as a relationship that exists between networks of people. In general, it aids users to be better informed and keeping in line with world development. It is also a trend these days for students to access social media regularly to fulfil necessary educational or non-educational activities. However, there are multiple aspects that must be considered as it might affect their academic performance positively or adversely. According to Asemah and Edegoh (2012), most people use networking sites to communicate with their old and new friends, physical or internet buddies. Grahl (2011) had stated several available types of social media which include social networks, social news, media sharing, microblogging and forum. Social media is known as a good source of technology for teenagers, not only to accomplish their goals and objectives, but also important for knowledge and social skill development.

On a positive side, social media can be a platform for users to gain knowledge and stay updated. For instance, Ito et al. (2009) stated that technologies are used by teenagers to participate in various community activities, while Ahn (2011) stated that social media sites provide a mechanism for the adolescences to get involve in the society which enhance their learning and skills in particular area. Additionally, Fishman et al. (2005) states that with extensive writing skills gained from social media tools such as blogs and online forum would enable students to improve their writing skills. Furthermore, Yunus et al. (2012) states that participation on social media may not only improve students' writing skills but also their vocabulary and reading skills. On the other hand, social media might also bring more adverse impact than its positive side (Wood, 2016). For instance, Banquil et al. (2009) has found that student that participate in social network tend to have a continuous lower grade. Similarly, Kirschner and Karpinski (2010), has observed that Facebook use is inversely related to academic performance. Furthermore, according to Rithika and Selvaraj (2013), the longer the time spent on social media, the more it affect students' academic preparation which then affect their academic performance. This is true as social media use has negative impact on mental health and might lead to depression and anxiety, which then would affect the performance (Kolhar et al., 2021). Since the findings of previous research are mixed, thus this study is conducted to determine the current state and to what extent the social media might affect the academic performance. This would give some insight how serious the impact or the influence of social media towards students' academic performance.

The remaining parts of the paper are organised as follows: First section will discuss on literature review, then followed by discussion on theoretical framework and hypothesis development, analysis of findings, then conclusion of the study.

Literature Review

Social Media and Students' Academic Performance

Social media can be a platform for entertainment, business as well as academic purposes. The power of social media is significantly influential not only to a student's social life and relationship but also to their health and academic performance (Abraham, 2020). Kyoshaba (2009) highlighted that academic performance of a student might be affected due participation in social media. There are several benefits come along with the usage of social media in education (Lederer, 2012). Firstly, students' communication skills can be improved with opportunity to express themselves in less fear environment of social media. Next, the communication between educators and students might be improved with the usage of social media. Educators might answer students' questions, send messages and updates and other kind of information sharing. Finally, Lederer highlights the employment opportunity from the use of social media. Through social media, students may seek for a potential employer, post resume and other task which may assist them to get placement faster and easier.

In contrary, some researchers found the negative impact of social media towards students' academic performance. Malaney (2005) observed that the grade of the students is deteriorated as they spent too much time on social media. While Bowen (2008) found that students' academic performance is affected by social media usage and it will lead to unethical behavior like procrastination of assessments. This is the reason why some educators consider that social media are not always a suitable platform for teaching and learning activities (Waycott et al., 2010). Lederer (2012) found that social media could be a distraction to students as it may divert students' attention from being active in class and would disrupt the whole learning process. Even though the role of social is important for educational purpose, students tend to distracted with several social networking sites that exist. They tend to spend time for chatting, playing games, shopping and other activities not related to academic (Abbas et al., 2019). Therefore, students' educational activities must be overseen proficiently keeping in mind every one of the features that can positively or adversely influence their academic performance.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

This study employed gratification theory as to describe the relationship between social media and the academic performance. This theory was originated in 1970 by Blumler and Katz and known as the functional theory. It explains why and how an individual selects specific media as to specify their specific needs. Gratification theory emphasises on the question, 'what media do to people' but rather 'what people do with the media'. It describes how users make selection of social media to satisfy their needs on information, entertainment, self-esteem and prestige. Ndaku (2013) stated that people selectively expose themselves to social media that would satisfy their needs. In relation to this study, students may use social media for their specific needs. For instance, certain students may use it for educational purpose whereas others may use it for a non-educational purpose. Thus, it depends on how they utilise it. According to Apeanti and Danso (2014), if students involve in social media for an educational purpose such as communicating with their instructors through social media to ask any doubts regarding their subject, their grade might be better. However, the social media might adversely affect their academic performance as it is used as a platform to solely communicate with peers, playing games, online shopping or any other non-academic purpose (Kolhar et al., 2021).

Time Spent on Social Media and Academic Performance

It was found that almost 25 percent of students' time on internet is now spent on social media (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011). According to Rithika and Selvaraj (2013), students may have problem to balance between their academic tasks and social media activities if they spend more time on social media. As a result, it would affect their academic performance. Additionally, Kalpidou, et al. (2011) find evidence that students who utilise most of their time on social media tend to have lower grades than students who do not use the social networking sites. This could happen as amount of time spent on social networks had jeopardise their productivity on academic activities. Moreover, Yeboah and Ewur (2014) indicated that time spent on social networks will lead to delay of academic tasks. Other than that, Junco and Loken (2012) has found that time spent on Facebook is negatively associated with student's overall grade. Recent study by Kolhar et al. (2021) found that excessive use social media, especially during the pandemic situation may adversely affect students' learning. Students' psychological health will be affected because of physical inactivity, tremendous stress and anxiety. Therefore, from these findings, the first and second hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between number of hours spent on social media and academic performance.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between frequency of access to social media and academic performance.

Non-Academic Use of Social Media and Academic Performance

Kolhar et al. (2021) found that majority of respondents use social networking sites mainly for non-academic purpose. By the availability of smartphone and easy access to particular sites, social media usage has reduced the amount of time that should be spent for academic tasks. Erlin et al. (2015) found that the favourite non-academic social media activities by students are online chat for online discussion, replying comment on other people status, photo or video and viewing the photo posts by their friends. According to study by Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015), most of the respondents use social media for chatting rather than for academic purposes. Thus, social media network has become a platform for students to communicate with their peers and with more time spending on this activity, it would eventually leads to poor academic performance (Bandura, 1997). Mingle and Adams (2015) states that it would be difficult for students to concentrate on their studies when they being distracted with online games and online chat.

Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₃: There is a significant relationship between non-academic usage of social media and academic performance.

Tiene (2000) states that, social media enables students to take part in discussions and sharing of ideas. It provide students a facility of sharing and exchange of information especially on educational information. In addition, Salvation and Adzharuddin (2014) indicates that social media enable students to involve in a group discussions, exchanging ideas and communicate to each other on academic tasks. Other than that, social media enhance interactions among students and lecturers, where some lecturers use social media as a medium to share the lecture notes and tutorial (Ahmed & Qazi, 2011). This may result an improvement in students' grade as the education information are readily available. Deng and Tavares (2013) specified that web-based discussion through social media contributes to the development of student's ability and student's critical thinking. As compared to face-to-face interaction, through online

discussion, students are more confident to voice out their opinion and even disagreements. Thus, student's grade will be better with the online interaction through social media (Apeanti & Danso, 2014). Thus, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H₄: There is a significant relationship between educational use of social media network and academic performance.

Social media addiction can be defined as internet addiction that shows an individual is overly concerned about social media with uncontrollable urge to access and use it (Hou et al., 2019). According to Oye et al. (2012), social media addiction has shown that most students unconsciously get addicted and obsessed to use social media without considering its significant impact. They are obsessed to do such activities which becomes a habit that interferes other important activities which include their academic achievement. Students would find it difficult for them to concentrate on their studies when they are interrupted with online games and chatting. In addition, the texting language on social media affects their language proficiency (Wood et al., 2014), such as on spelling and grammatical construction of sentences (Yeboah and Ewur (2014). This is supported by Mingle and Adams (2015) who stated that the development of social media had deteriorate the standard of student articulation in English which has affected their studies. He also stated that students tend to use abbreviations during examinations. Similarly, Azizi et al. (2019) found that excessive use of social media is related to significant level of stress and leads to reduce the academic engagement and achievement. Therefore, the following hypothesis is derived:

H₅: There is a significant relationship between social media addiction and academic performance.

Research Methodology

Data Collection Procedures and Variables Measurement

The targeted population for this study is accounting students in one of the private and public universities. Both universities have been chosen based on its location and matched population. Accounting students were selected as sample of the study as less previous studies on social media has conducted on accounting students as respondents. Social media with appropriate application is considered as part of digital skill for accounting students that highly demanded in the industry. A total of 341 questionnaires have been distributed to both selected universities. In detail, the questionnaires were distributed almost equally to both universities. There are five independent variables for this study which are numbers of hours spent on social media, frequency of access to social, non-academic usage of social media, educational use of social media network and addiction to social media. The questionnaires were divided into five sections, which include demographic profile and dependent variable sections in section A. Ordinal scale was used to measure time spent on social media in Section B and C, where range were provided for selection of answer. Meanwhile, the remaining variables were measured through the Likert Scale in the questionnaires. Likert Scale is used to express whether a particular individual agree or disagree with a specific statement. The scale is ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree) to determine the student's preference. The academic performance is measured using the respondents' Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) which collected from respondents' examination result in the recent semester.

Data Analysis

The relationship between independent variables and dependent variables is tested using regression analysis. The following empirical models is constructed to test the hypotheses:

$$AP = \beta_0 + \beta_1Hrs + \beta_2Freq + \beta_3Non-Aca + \beta_4Edu-use + \beta_5Addiction + e$$

Where,

AP	=	Academic performance
β_1 HrsSpent	=	Hours spent on social media
β_2 Frequency	=	Frequency of access to social media
β_3 Non-Aca	=	Non-academic use of social media
β_4 Edu-use	=	Educational use of social media
β_5 Addiction	=	Social media addiction
e	=	Error term

Findings

Descriptive Analysis

Based on Table 1, it shows that majority of respondents are female with percentage of 72.1% out of total sample as compared to only 27.9% of them are male. The number of first year respondents consists of 62 (18.2%) respondents, second year amounted to 47 (13.8%) respondents, third year totalled to 60 (17.6%) respondents and fourth year with a frequency of 172 (50.4%) respondents. The dependent variable of this study is the academic performance which is measured through CGPA. Based on the findings, 4.9% of respondents holds the lowest CGPA which is less than 2.00. This is followed by 11.4% of respondents with CGPA between 2.0 to 2.49. For CGPA between 2.5 to 2.99, there are 80 (23.5%) respondents. Majority respondents totalled to 142 (41.6%) are blessed with a CGPA which falls between 3.0 and 3.49. The last category of CGPA is more than 3.50 where there are 63 (18.5%) respondents who maintain it. Further, two institutions from two different sectors have been chosen as the sample of this study, which is from public university and another from private university. There are 170 (49.9%) and 171 (50.1%) respondents from public and private university respectively.

Table 1: Respondents' Information

Demographic Factors	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	95	27.9
	Female	246	72.1
Institution	Private	170	49.9
	Public	171	50.1
Year of studies	First year	62	18.2
	Second year	47	13.8
	Third year	60	17.6
	Fourth year	172	50.4
CGPA	< 2.00	17	4.9
	2.00 - 2.49	39	11.4
	2.50 - 2.99	80	23.5
	3.00 - 3.49	142	41.6
	3.50 - 4.0	63	18.5

Table 2 represent the result of normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S). The results shows that all variables are not normally distributed with $p < 0.01$. Thus, Spearman correlation

is performed to test the coefficient correlation among variables. In order fulfill the requirements of linear regression of normal distribution of data (Field, 2013), data are normalised by transforming all data to normal scores (Young, 1998). The transformation not only enhance the accuracy of statistical properties, it also provides more meaningful interpretation of regression coefficients.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	K-S Test
CGPA	1.000	5.000	3.642	0.996	-0.543	-0.204	0.000
β_1 HrsSpent	1.000	6.000	1.487	0.916	2.234	5.039	0.000
β_2 Frequency	1.000	5.000	3.568	0.673	-0.218	0.423	0.000
β_3 NonAca	1.000	5.000	3.289	0.771	-0.225	-0.342	0.000
β_4 Edu-use	1.000	5.000	3.216	0.700	-0.334	0.222	0.000
β_5 Addiction	1.000	5.000	3.642	0.996	-0.543	-0.204	0.000

Correlation Analysis

The statistical result of correlation coefficient analysis is shown in Table 3. Based on the output, it shows no sign of multicollinearity problem as none of the coefficients exceed 0.8, (Gujarati, 1992).

Table 3: Spearmen Correlation

	β_1 HrsSpent	β_2 Frequency	β_3 NonAca	β_4 Edu-use	β_5 Addiction
β_1 HrsSpent	1.000	-0.101	0.083	0.093	0.170
β_2 Frequency		1.000	-0.260	-0.168	-0.173
β_3 NonAca			1.000	0.483	0.512
β_4 Edu-use				1.000	0.274
β_5 Addiction					1.000

Result of multiple regression on the relationship between the independent variables and the academic performance is shown in Table 4. The results evidenced that there is a significant negative relationship between the frequency of access to social media and accounting students' academic performance with a p-value of 0.001. It shows that, the more frequent of access to social media, the lower the academic performance of students. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 (H_2) which indicates that there is a significant relationship between the frequency of access to social media and academic performance is supported. This result is consistent with Kirschner .et. al (2010), who found that social media use, like Facebook will adversely affect the academic performance. Similarly, Kalpidou et al. (2011) also found that students who frequently access to social media has lower grades compared to students who is inactive in social media.

However, the relationship is insignificant for the number of hours spent on social media and the academic performance. Thus, Hypothesis 1 (H_1) which states that there is a significant relationship between number of hours spent on social media and academic performance is not supported. This is consistent with a study conducted by Mingle and Adams (2015) who claimed that there is no correlation found between students' grade and social network participation. In contrast, Yeboah and Ewur (2014) indicated that social media may affect students' time and tend to lead to delay of academic works and activities. In conclusion, since there is diverse

opinion, it depends on the students' perception on how they balance between social media activities and academic related activities.

Furthermore, there has been an interesting finding on the relationship between the non-academic use of social media and students' performance. The result indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between non-academic use of social media and students' academic performance at p-value of 0.044. It shows that the more the students focus on the non-academic usage of social media, the better their academic performance. As such, as stress in the academic area is reduced, students are able to refresh and gain energy after overstretched with academic sessions. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 (H₃) which states that there is a significant relationship between non-academic usage of social media and academic performance is supported. This is consistent with Mingle and Adams (2015) where Facebook utilisation does not contribute to lower grade of performance and rather Facebook users scored higher grades. In contrary, there is no significant relationship between educational use of social media and academic performance as the p-value is more than 0.05. It demonstrates that educational use of social media had no significant influence on students' academic performance. Thus, Hypothesis 4 (H₄) which states that there is a significant relationship between educational use of social media network and academic performance is not supported. This finding is inconsistent with Tiene (2000) which indicates that through social media, students take part in discussions and more idea regarding academic performance may be shared with each other, that may result in a good grade point. However, this result appears to be in line with Jacobsen and Forste (2011) which argue that electronic media use is contrarily connected with grades. Finally, it is observed that social media addiction had no significant influence on students' academic performance. Thus, it can be inferred that, as students get addicted to social media, it will not give impact to their academic performance. This result is consistent with Fauzi et al. (2021) that found no significance association between social media addiction and academic performance. The results indicated that the performance of student is remains despite their addiction towards social media. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 (H₅) which indicate that there is a significant relationship between social media addiction and academic performance is not supported. The result however, in contrast with Mingle and Adam (2015), who stated that social media addiction is a problematic issue that affects students' academic performance adversely whereby students' grades would improve if they stop participating on social media.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Result

Variables	Coefficients	t-statistics	Sig.t
(Constant)		10.240	0.000
B ₁ HrsSpent	0.056	1.029	0.304
β ₂ Frequency	-0.179	-3.280	0.001
β ₃ NonAca	0.142	2.020	0.044
β ₄ Edu-use	0.010	0.165	0.869
β ₅ Attitude	-0.094	-1.467	0.143

$R^2 = 0.5257$, F -statistic = 4.211, $p = 0.023$

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study is to examine how social media affects the academic performance of accounting students in Malaysian universities. Data of the study were obtained by distributing a total of 341 questionnaires to selected universities in private and public university. 170 questionnaires have been distributed in one of the public universities while remaining 171 questionnaires in one of the private universities. We have successfully collected all the questionnaires distributed to both public and private universities. In summary, this study found

that only frequency of access to social media and non-academic use of social media have significant influence on academic performance. It concludes that students who frequently access to social media may find difficult for them to balance their online activities and their academic works (Rithika and Selvaraj, 2013) and would result a continuing drop of students' grade (Banquil et al., 2009). Interestingly, the findings of the study also revealed that non-academic usage of social media are found to have significant positive relationship with accounting students' academic performance. It implies that non-academic use of social media would increase the students' academic performance. This could be true as non-academic use of social media able to reduce stress and enable students to refresh and gain energy after overstretched with academic activities. However, the remaining variables on number of hours spent on social media, educational use of social media and social media addiction were not significantly related to academic performance.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study help to contribute to the body of literature on gratification theory which identify the attributes of social media that have significant impact on academic performance. This is conducted by analysing and testing of developed hypotheses. It further explains how users deliberately select media to satisfy their needs and how it affects their performance.

Practical and Social Implication

This study may benefit both educators and students. The educators might have some insights on how social media put a great influence on their students' academic performance. As for students, this study may alarm their awareness on the possible impact of social media towards their academic performance.

Limitation and Suggestions for Future Research

The sample of this research is concentrated merely on one of the public and private universities. Thus, an improvement should be done in future research by focusing on wider settings as to ensure greater generalisation of the study. A wider range of sample is recommended to allow greater number of data collected for more accurate result. As to ensure even more accurate and reliable data, future study can be conducted in other settings as to make it applicable in most condition and situation. In addition, future research may embark on study to distinguish students' academic performance with the attitude or behaviour of students to recognise the relationship between them.

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