



## Use of Social Media and Its Perceived Influence on the Academic Performance of University Students

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study explores the use of social media and its perceived influence on the academic performance of the college and university students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A questionnaire was distributed to students across the country with the help of students' network. 362 responses were collected and analyzed. The use of social media is found significantly negatively related to academic performance. The regression analysis has also found the social media as a significant predictor of the academic performance of college and university students. No significant difference is obtained between male and female students on their perception about the use of social media and its influence on academic performance.*

**Keywords:** Social media, academic performance, the time spent on studies, the time spent on social media.

### 1. Introduction

The technological advancement over the last two decades brought tremendous changes in every field of life. Enormous improvement has been taken place in the field of communication technologies as well. People are well informed about what is going on globally and keep exploring the developments taking place around the world. Growing developments and the use of internet technology made the communication faster and helping the users in many ways. Several social networking sites are being used by people around the world to interact with friends, colleagues, and families.

Rapid developments in mobile devices and user-friendly apps for various purposes have revolutionized the phenomenon of social networking. The use of social media is getting more popular among the students as it is providing opportunities to communicate, teach and learn through the use of inexpensive apps.

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Almost all the college and university going students are having a membership to a popular social media sites i.e. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp etc. The advanced mobile gadgets and the speed of the internet giving an advantage to students for being connected to the world. Students have access to what they need academically or personally from the internet through sophisticated and advanced smartphones they carry. They are spending more time with the mobile set rather than interacting physically with the people around in a variety of situation they encounter every day. They are more interested to interact virtually than physically. Their friend circle has been expanded globally and engaging them more often chatting with them. This increasing use of social media and mobile have become a source of worry to many who have observed the changes in students' behavior which may cause detrimental effects on their academic learning and performance.

It has been noticed or observed that students are addicted to social media and frequently tempted to use their mobile in whatever situation they are. Using mobile phones during the lecture, labs, seminars, free time etc. The time spent on social media using smartphones varies from person to person. The more time students spend on social media the less time they left with for other required academic activities (reading books, preparing the assignment, preparing for the exams etc.). This increasing use of social media may cause poor academic performance of the students.

### **1.1 What is Social Media?**

According to Kaplan and Haelein (2010), social media is internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of content which the user-generated. Social media provides an opportunity to the users and communities to share content like video, photos, images, text, ideas, insight, humor, opinion, gossip, news on a regular basis (Drury, 2008). Social media uses mobile and web-based technologies to develop a platform which is highly interactive for the users to create, share, discuss and edit the content. The websites are not only providing information but also allowing the users to interact. The content created by the users are the source of attracting the other users to develop communities. Social media has become very popular in recent past and reduced all the barrier which were hindering people to communicate expensively. Facebook is reaching nearly 2 billion users worldwide (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>). On the other hand, Twitter reported nearly 330 million active users during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2017 (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/>).

### **1.2 Academic performance**

Academic performance can be defined as the level of student's learning outcome which is measured according to the evaluation process set by the institution i.e. GPA (Grade point average). A student has to maintain a certain level of GPA in order to be eligible for progressing toward the completion of the enrolled program. To keep a track on the student's academic performance an assessment process is adopted by the institution.

### **1.3 Social Media and Academic Performance**

Since the internet and the use of social media have become a necessity of every individual, the university and college students cannot be escaped from it. Infact, the majority of the social media users are university/college students who use internet for entertainment and communicating with friends and families.

## **2. Literature review**

Numerous research studies have been carried out to investigate the effects of social media on the academic performance of the students. Madge, Meek, Wellens, and Hooley (2009) found a negative relationship between Facebook and the academic performance of students in U.K. universities. Junco (2012) reported that the time spent on Facebook was

significantly negatively related to college students' GPA. Englander, Terregrossa, and Wang (2010) reported that social media is negatively related to academic performance of students. Karpinski and Duberstein (2009) suggested that social media users devote lesser time to their studies in comparison to nonusers had lower GPAs. Moreover, social media is found to be the major distraction of current generation. Hong et al. (2012) found that the daily use of mobile phones is associated with the academic difficulties among the students. Jacobsen and Forste (2011) reported a negative relationship between mobile phone and academic achievement. Alwagait et al. (2014) reported that increased use of social networks decreases the academic performance of students. Jamal (2015) reported that the more students use social media the lower their grades will be.

Several other researchers have found no relationship between social media usage and grades (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Kolek & Saunders, 2008; Pasek, More, & Hargittai, 2009). A number of researchers have found a positive relationship between the use of social media and the academic performance (Chen & Peng, 2008; Pasek et al., 2009; Bashir et al., 2008).

Excessive use of social media or internet can adversely affect physical as well as mental health of the user which may further disrupt the family life as well. The internet addiction can cause a drop in time spent on studies, a major drop in grades, low interest in extracurricular activities and lack of interest in attending classes (Akhtar, 2013). Too much use of social media has reported a negative impact on students' physical, psychological and family health. In addition to that sleep deprivation, insomnia and chronic illness have also been reported (O'Keeffe and Pearson, 2011).

In light of the literature review, it is clear that the effects of social media are not universal rather contextual. The present study is aimed to explore the opinion of students on the use of social media and its influence on their academic performance in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is one of the affluent countries where the per capita income (nominal) is & 21,100. Students studying in a government institution, receive a stipend (approximately SAR 1000) for attending the colleges and universities until they graduate. This gives them enough power to purchase sophisticated mobile gadgets and pay the internet bills. They are well connected with the family and friends through the social media apps.

### 3. Methodology

*Sample:* The data were collected from 362 college and university students. 197 male and 165 female students responded to the distributed questionnaires. Respondents were selected by adopting the convenience sampling method.

*Tools:* A questionnaire was developed by the researcher by including a number of questions to measure the use of social media and internet which somehow relate to students' academic experience. Items were developed after thoroughly reviewing the literature. The questionnaire was developed in English and later translated into Arabic for reducing the language barrier in order to get the valid responses from the chosen respondents. The questionnaire consists of 20 items which include the gender, age, time spent on studies, time spent on social media, reasons for using social media, the influence of social media on academic performance. The Cronbach's alpha is calculated to measure the reliability of the scale which is 0.75.

### 4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 indicates the mean scores of the variables used in the study. The mean scores for time spent on studies (2.67), use of social media (2.42), and influence on academic performance (2.98) are below 3 out of 4. It seems from the responses received that the students are not heavily using social media and devoting enough time on studies too. This

may be the reason for amoderate score on the influence of social media on academic performance.

**Table-1: Descriptive Statistics (N=362; Male=197, Female=165)**

Range	Number of Respondents	Percentage(%)
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 12 years	1	0.29
Between 13-16	29	8.01
Between 17-20	116	32.04
Between 21-25	168	46.40
More than 25	48	13.26
<b>Time spent on studies</b>		
Less than 1hour	157	43.37
Between 1-3 hours	143	39.50
Between 4-6 hours	47	12.98
More than 6 hours	15	4.15
<b>Time Spent on Social Media</b>		
Less than 1hour	46	12.71
Between 1-3 hours	122	33.70
Between 4-6 hours	100	27.62
More than 6 hours	94	25.97

**Table-2: Descriptive Statistics (N=362; Male=197, Female=165)**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Use of social media	362	1.00	5.00	2.42	.823
Influence on academic performance	362	1.00	4.56	2.98	.699
Valid N (listwise)	362				

Table 3 shows the correlation between the variables used in the study. Age was found significantly negatively correlated ( $r = -.125^{**}$ ) with the time spent on social media. It means as the students grow the time they used to spend on social media is reduced. There is a significant and negative relationship between the time spent on studies and use of social media ( $r = -.283^{**}$ ). The respondents are of the opinion that the use of social media distract them from studies and eventually have less time left for studies. The time spent on studies is also reported to be negatively related to academic performance ( $r = -.189^{**}$ ). Less time on

studies negatively influences the academic performance. The use of social media is also found significantly negatively related to academic performance ( $r = 0.421^{**}$ ).

**Table-3: Correlation**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Gender	1					
Age	.301**	1				
Time spent on social Media	.339**	-.063	1			
Time spent on studies	.058	-.125*	-.071	1		
Use of social media	-.082	.010	.024	-.283**	1	
Influence on academic performance	.021	.001	.031	-.189**	-.421**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows the regression analysis. The table reveals that use of social media is the significant predictor of academic performance.

**Table-4: Regression Analysis**

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	$\beta$	t	Sig.
Influence on Academic Performance	Gender	0.087	1.156	.248
	Age	0.005	0.105	.916
	Time spent on social media	-.004	-.093	.926
	Time spent on studies	-.054	-1.547	.123
	Use of social media	.342	8.039	.000

R=0.430; R<sup>2</sup>=0.185

In order to find the significant difference between the two samples (male and female), the Levene’s t-test was applied (see table 5 and 6). The group statistics indicate the there is no such difference found between the male and female respondent with regard to use of social media, their perception of the influence on academic performance, and the time spent on studies.

**Table-5: Group Statistics**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic Performance	Male	196	2.9646	.74954
	Female	166	2.9940	.63774
Use of social media	Male	196	2.4846	.85006
	Female	166	2.3486	.78970
Age	Male	196	3.8724	.77065
	Female	166	3.3795	.79044

Time sent on social media	Male	196	1.5204	.69768
	Female	166	2.0843	.86976
Time spent on studies	Male	196	2.6173	.99821
	Female	166	2.7349	1.01006

There is a noticeable difference with regard to the time spent on social media. Female students reported spending more time on social media than male students. The Levene’s test shows that male and female student do not differ significantly on their perception about the influence of social media on academic performance. Both the samples are significantly different on age. The samples are found different on the time spent on social media by chance.

**Table-6: Independent Samples Test**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
<b>Academic Performance</b>	Equal variances assumed	3.622	.058	-.398	360	.691	-.02944	.07389	-.17476	.11587
	Equal variances not assumed			-.404	359.99	.687	-.02944	.07291	-.17284	.11395
<b>Use of social media</b>	Equal variances assumed	.809	.369	1.567	360	.118	.13604	.08680	-.03467	.30674
	Equal variances not assumed			1.577	356.90	.116	.13604	.08628	-.03363	.30571
<b>Age</b>	Equal variances assumed	5.255	.022	5.993	360	.000	.49293	.08225	.33118	.65469

	Equal variances not assumed	5.980	347.202	.000	.49293	.08243	.33082	.65505		
Time spent on Social media	Equal variances assumed	.912	.340	-6.84	360	.000	-.56393	.08241	-	-
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.72	314.747	.000	-.56393	.08391	-.72902	-.39884
	Equal variances assumed	.002	.966	-1.11	360	.267	-.11759	.10587	-.32579	.09060
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.11	348.879	.268	-.11759	.10597	-.32601	.09083

### 5. Conclusion

The study was intended to measure the perception of college and university students in Saudi Arabia on the social media use and their academic performance. The findings of the study showed that the respondents perceived that the use of social media negatively affects the academic performance of the students. Through the regression analysis, a conclusion can be drawn that excess use of social media is a significant predictor of the academic performance. Male and female may or may not differ in their use of social media especially the number of hours spent. The more time students spent on social media the greater the risk they have to be distracted from their studies and eventually get poor grades. This topic is being extensively explored as it is not only affecting the academic performance but other social as well as personal matters of life.

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