THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Kwasi Otopa Antiri,

Department Of Guidance And Counselling, University Of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana.

ABSTRACT: *The study was conducted to find out the impact of social media on University of Cape Coast Psychology students' academic performance. Descriptive survey and convenient sampling were the research design and sampling technique used respectively. The sample size of the study was two hundred (200) psychology students of the university of Cape Coast. Three research questions were posed to guide the study. Research findings showed that a greater number of psychology students in the university had access to the internet.*
To this end the researcher recommended that social networking sites should be created for educational purposes. This is to create a balance between social networking and academic activities of students to avoid setbacks in the academic performance of students.

KEYWORDS; Social Media, Social Networking, Internet, Websites, E-learning, Twitter, Facebook, Communication and Homepage.

BACKGROUND

The interactive nature of online environment has expanded with social networks. Connecting through social networks started as a niche activity, but with time it is now a phenomenon. The social networking sites are being used in various ways like forming communities, chatting, blogging and others. Apart from that different institutions even nowadays are forming communities or groups on different social networking sites. The 21st century had continued to marshal in technological advancement that had changed the nature of communication, socialization and private versus public information. One of such change is the prominence of social networking websites that the world's population currently enjoys, especially among the younger generations. We read every day in newspapers, online blogs and many research papers about the good, the bad, the ugly, the advantage and the disadvantage nature of social networking.

Social networking began in 1978 with the Bulletin Board System (BBS). The BBS was hosted on personal computers, requiring that users dial in through the modem of the host computer, exchanging information over phone lines with other users. This was the first system that allowed users to sign in and interact with each other, although it was quite slow since only one user could be logged in at a time. Later in the year, the very first copies of web browsers were distributed using the bulletin board Usenet. There are modern forums that use the same idea as Usenet today, including Yahoo Groups and Google Groups. The first meaningful social network site is Six Degrees.com, which was launched in 1997. While Six Degrees attracted millions of users, it failed to become a sustainable business and in 2000, the serviced folded up.

'Social' as the word sounds deals with the way we communicate in our environment or society, in which the individual meets and spend time with other people. Network is the

connection of parts together to allow movement or communication with other parts. Social networking is the connection of friends or family together which allow you to communicate easily. Social networking is also the practice of expanding the number of one's business and/or social contacts by making connections through individuals.

According to Boyd and Ellison (2008), "Social Networking Sites can be defined as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system". At the most basic level social networking sites allow users to set up online profiles or personal homepages, and develop an online social network. The profile page functions as the user's own webpage and includes profile information ranging from their date of birth, gender, religion, politics and hometown, to their favourite films, books quotes and what they like doing in their spare time. There are several social networking sites, some of these are, Facebook, whattsApp, Tango, Twitter, Imo, Skype, Viber, etc.

The research was carried out in the University of Cape Coast in Ghana. The university was established in 1962 out of dire need for highly qualified and skilled manpower in education and was affiliated to University of Ghana. It was established to train graduate teachers for the second cycle institutions such as teacher training colleges and technical institutions. Since its establishment the university had added to its functions the training of education planners, administrators, agriculturists and health care professionals.

Statement of the Problem
Over the years, Social Networking among students of higher learning of education has become more popular. In as much as it gives relevant information to academia it is also a distractor to many in respect to their academic performance. We are constantly being reminded of the fact that the world is passing through troubling times and that young people of today think of nothing but themselves, are impatient and also talk as if they know everything under the sun.

Due to increasing popularity, economists and professors are questioning the much time spent on social networking as it concerns academic performance. The study therefore is considerably centred on Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, the leading social networks on the campuses today. Conclusions would have to be drawn as to the basics of social network usage towards academic performance in the University of Cape Coast.
The research questions which were formulated to guide the study were:
What is the perception of students on the use of social networking sites?
What are the reasons of usage of social networking sites?
What are the effects of social networking sites on the students' academic performance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Internet
The internet (net or web) is a more interactive medium of mass media, and can be briefly described as a global computer network providing a variety of information and communication facilities, consisting of interconnected networks using standardized communications protocols. The internet is a massive network of networks, a networking

infrastructure. It connects millions of computers together globally forming a network in which any other computer is part as long as they are both connected to the internet. Okoye (2000) posed that an estimated number of 50 million people worldwide use internet.

Finnegan Jr and Viswanath in Okoye (2000) identified three main effects or functions of mass media in the internet. These are;

- Knowledge gap theory-
  The media influences knowledge gap due to factors including the extent to which the content is appealing, the degree to which information channels are accessible and desirable, the amount of social conflict and diversity there is in communication.
- Agenda setting theory-
People are influenced in how they think about issues due to the selective nature of what the media places on the internet for public consumption.
- Cultivation theory-
The extent to which media exposure shapes audience perception over time is known as cultivation.

Features of the internet

The internet is a global network of computer networks. In more technical terms, it could be said that a group of two or more networks that are electronically connected and able to communicate with one another. Together, they act as a single network and this is possible when all the computers speak a common language. The common language, called a protocol by computer programmers, that was developed for the internet is called the TCP/IP protocol. TCP/IP stands for Transmission Control Protocol/ Internet Protocol. It is usually a set of protocols that govern how data travel from one machine to another over networks.

Social effect of the internet

Obviously, research concerning the effect of spending time on the internet is still on a formative stage. The internet seems to have had the most impact on television usage. This is not surprising since much internet use take place during the evening, the same time that most television viewing takes place generally. Magazine and Newspaper reading, radio listening and movie going seem not to have been significantly affected. The internet is becoming more important as a source of news. At the same time, there has been a decline in the number of people who rely on broadcast television and newspaper as their source of news.

Research has been conducted to prove that the internet and the social networking involvement have been contradictory A 1998 survey of online users revealed that as people used the internet more, they spent less time talking to family members, experienced more loneliness and depression, and reported fewer friendship. Heavy net users seemed to be more socially isolated than those who are light users. (Retrieved 10th March, 2016). Another survey released in 2000 by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found the opposite. This study reported that the use of internet is an important factor in sustaining and strengthening social and family's ties. It was proved that some net users make use of email as well to connect to family members and friends they have not seen for a while (Retrieved 10th March, 2016).

Research has demonstrated that some individuals spend a great deal of time in the internet. This has led to some suggestion by some social scientist that people can be addicted to the internet in the same way they might be addicted to drugs, gambling or alcohol. Psychologists have identified three characteristics of an addiction; increased tolerance, loss of control, and withdrawal. People who find themselves spending more time online, who cannot control their internet use, and who neglect their family, friends, and other social obligations to spend time online will fit these criteria.

The Concept of Social Media

Social media is the means that employs mobile and web based technology to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and community share, co-create, discuss and modify users' generated content (Kietzmann,2012).It is a website that does not just give information but interact with you while giving you the information. It is a group of internet based application that allows the creation and exchange of users generated content. It is easy to confuse social media with social news because we often refer to members of the news as media. Some media websites includes; social book marking, social news, social networking, social video and photo sharing, wikis and others.

Andreas and Michael (2000) are of the opinion that social media is a group of internet based application that builds on the ideological foundation and allows the creation and exchange of users. The internet usage effect of social media, as informed by (Kietzmann,2012) is that, internet users continue to spend more time on the social media than any site. The total time spent on social media across mobile devices increased by 37 percent, 121 billion minutes in July 2012 as compared to 88 billion minutes in July 2011.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) classified social media into six different classes as follows;

1.   Collaborative Project (Wikipedia)
2.   Blogs and Micro Blogs (Twitter)
3.   Content Communities (U-tube)
4.   Social Networking Site (Facebook, 2go, BB chat)
5.   Virtual   Game World (World of war craft)
6.   Virtual Second World (second life).

Mobile Social Media

When social media is used in combination with mobile devices it is termed as Mobile social media. Social media is a group of mobile marketing application that allows the creation and exchange of users generated content. Due to the fact that mobile social media runs on mobile devices, it differs from traditional social media as it incorporates new factors such as the current location of the user and the time delayed between sending and receiving.

The Concept of Social Networking Site or Services

It is used to describe any website that enables users to create public profiles within that website and form relationship with other users of the same website who access their profile. A social media could be termed as an online service or platforms that focus on facilitating the building of social network among people who share interest, activities and background on real life connections. It is a website that allows users to share information within a selected group and also a great way to stay connected and a convenient way to share photos from trips (Awake, 2012). It consists of a representation of each user (profiles), social links and a

variety of additional services. For detailed analysis of social networking, the following terms will be discussed;

- Features
- Social network and education
- Constraints of social network in education.

Features

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007) social networking shares a variety of technical features that allows individuals to construct a public or semi-public office, articulate list of their users that they share connection with and view their list of connections within the system. Some sites allow users to upload pictures, add multimedia content or modify the look of their profiles. For instance, facebook allows the user to update their status and change profile pictures and WhatsApp chat also allows them to change and display pictures, names and status. They allow them to search for users and share a list of contacts and there are sections dedicated to comments from friends and other users. To protect their privacy, they have a control that allows users to choose who can view their profiles, contacts and add them to their list of contacts.

Social Network and Education

The advent of social network platforms may also be impacting the way in which learners engage with technology in general. For a number of years, Prensky (2001) dichotomized between digital natives and digital immigrants who had been considered a relatively accurate representative of the ease with which people of a certain age rate, in particular, those born before and after 1980, use technology.Social networking and their educational uses are of interest to many researchers. Livingstone and Brake (2010) in their opinion said social networking site, like much else on the internet representing a moving target for researchers and policy makers. Recent trends indicate that 47 percent of American adults use social network. A national survey in 2009 found that 37 percent of online teenagers use social networking site which increased to 55.5 percent three years later (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr 2010).

Constraints of Social Networking in Education

In the past, social networking were viewed as a distraction and offered no educational benefit. Blocking this social network was a form of protection for students against wasting time, bullying and privacy protection. In an educational setting, Facebook and WhatsApp chat are seen by instructors and educators as frivolous time wasting and distraction from school work. Cyber bullying has been an issue of concern with social networking site. An online survey based on 9-19 years old and above discovered that students received bullying comments online. Social networking, often include a lot of personal information posted publicly and many believe that sharing personal information and the easy communication vehicle that social networking does opens the door to others, such as sexual predators (Lenhart & Madden, 2007).

Social media are also emerging as online year book for private and public use. They allow anyone from the general public to register and connect to others. They allow participants the opportunity for just in time learning and engagement and prescribed curriculum. Jenkins (2006) described it as participatory culture. It creates space for learners which James (2004) suggest affinity space and dispersion of expertise and relatedness for learning. In 1994, it was

reported that the number of users with access to the internet was growing at the rate of 10.1 percent per month. Forecast were that by the turn of the century, there may be one million networks, hundred million computers and one billion users of the internet (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). As of July 1999, 205 countries had at least one connection to internet (Oludayo & Levi, 2008).

Social Networking and students.
Social networks are increasingly gaining momentum in the world of information and communication. It has without doubt altered the conventional method of news gathering and dissemination, a confirmation of what seems to be paradigm shift from print and broadcast media to the more effective and efficient rave of the moment. Social networking played a pivotal role in information and communication among students and their academic performance, event that will forever stick to our memories.

The role of social network is quiet overwhelming in this scenario considering the very fact that this ordeal started and ended on Facebook, it amused everyone. It proved that social networks are becoming tools in the hands of students and their academic performance. Unlike most other news media, social networks allow and survive on feedback and public effort, thus ensuring effective communication which has no doubt brought us this far and hopefully, will aid our journey towards the modern society.According to Charlene Li et al (2006) students activity on social networking sites focuses on communicating with each other. The most popular activities done by students and users on social networking sites revolve around looking at profiles of one another, searching for someone here and there, or updating one's own profile, eavesdropping (sensing others activities on social networking websites and analyzing their posts). Media and content related activities like looking for an event, watching online videos, or listening to music and news. Williamson and Kim (2011) conducted a research and reported that 35.3 percent females use the social networking websites whereas 42.2 percent males use the social networking websites.

According to Acquisti and Gross (2006) point of view, many users believe that whatever they post is only limited to their associations and close group of friends unaware of the fact that the information they posted may be publicly available to be searched and read by much wider audience. Social networking websites best serve educational goal and objectives by connecting students through such informal methods as it allows students through the process of collaborative sense making (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). Some of the social networking websites are specifically for educational environment which is fully featured for educational purposes and let users to update his/her educational credentials and make a professional connection. In addition to this statement Lampe et al (2008) also stated that social networking websites may enable collaborative sense making among students as it is used by majority of students. A number of studies have found relationship between social media and student commitment in higher education including King and Robinson (2009) who found that students who use electronic voting system were more likely to answer questions in their mathematics course. Annetta et al (2005) observed that students who played an educational games is more committed towards their work rather than a group control. Nicole et al (2007) analysed that there is a strong link between social networking websites and students as social networking websites helps to maintain relation with people when they move from one offline community to another.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted the survey method in the collection of data. The population of the study comprised 668 students from the following levels of psychology students in the University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

Table 1: Population Distribution

LEVELS	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
100	81	50	131
200	116	66	182
300	105	78	183
400	131	41	172
TOTAL	**433**	**235**	**668**

The population of the study was on the University of Cape Coast Bachelor of Science, Psychology students. A quantitative method was employed to generate data for the study, a sample size of 200 was employed for the research work. The simple random technique was used to select the sample size whereas convenience sampling technique was used in selecting the individuals as not all the students were available or were even willing to participate in the study. Table 2 shows the distribution.

Table 2: Sample Distribution

LEVELS	POPULATION	SAMPLE
100	131	50
200	182	50
300	183	50
400	172	50
TOTAL	668	200

The research instrument used in the study was the questionnaire. A total number of twenty-six (26) items were drawn and administered to the respondents. They were divided into three sections. The data from the survey was analyzed with the help of the statistical Product and Service solution (SPSS).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of respondents.

Two hundred respondents were sampled for the study. Among them, 68.0 percent were males and 32.0 percent indicated that they were females. The study was averagely represented by the two (2) sexes. The age categories as shown in Table 3, are as follows; 18 to 24 represented 78.5 percent, 25 to 31 was 20.0 percent, 32 to38 represented 0.5 percent and 39

years upwards was 1.0 percent. This shows that most of the respondents were in the age bracket of 18 to 24 which are strong adolescent ages. That is the time that they would want to experiment a lot in life.

Table 3: Age Distribution of Respondents

AGE RANGE	Frequency	Percentage
18-24 years	157	78.5
25-31 years	40	20.0
32-38 years	1	0.5
39 years upward	2	1.0
TOTAL	200	100.0

MAIN ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
1.   Students' Perception on the Use of Social Networking Sites

Table 4: Perception of Students on the use of Social Networking Sites

Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Social networking sites is a tool for E-learning	179	89.5	17	8.5	4	2.0
Social media is a good learning tool when it comes to helping students to accomplish group related projects or tasks	176	88.0	13	6.5	11	5.5
Social media is a bad learning tool	20	10.0	26	13.0	154	77.0
Instructors should increase the use of facebook, twitter, and/or other social media tools in classroom instruction	65	32.5	60	30.0	75	27.5
Social media is a good platform for expressing my feelings and ideas on issues	156	78.0	30	15.0	14	7.0

As shown in Table 4, 89.5 percent of the respondents indicated that social networking sites are tools for e-learning. The majority of the respondents (88.0%) argued that social media is a good learning tool when it comes to helping students to accomplish group-related projects or tasks. Similarly, 77.0 percent of the respondents disagreed to the assertion that "social media is a bad learning tool". About 78.0 percent claimed that social media is a good platform for expressing their feelings and ideas on issues. Less than half of the respondents (32.5%) stated that instructors should increase the use of Facebook, twitter, and/or other social media tools in classroom instruction. This implies that social media is a good platform where users are exposed to a lot of information and provides a platform where effective learning takes place. The findings is in line with previous studies.

According to Greenhow and Robelia (2009) point of view, social networking websites best serve educational goal and objectives by connecting students through such informal methods as it allows students through the process of collaborative sense making. Some of the social networking websites are specifically specified for educational environment including linkedin.com which is fully featured for education purpose and let users to update their educational credentials and make a professional connections. In addition, Lampe et al (2008) also stated that social networking websites may enable collaborative sense making among students as it is used by majority of students.

Reasons for Students' Usage of Networking Sites
This section sought to find out the reasons for students' usage of networking sites. Table 5. Presents details of the analysis.

Table 5: Satisfaction Students Derive from the Use of Networking Sites

Satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
Information	137	68.5
Affiliation (chatting)	29	14.5
Entertainment	34	17.0
TOTAL	**200**	**100.0**

From Table 5, 68.5 percent posited that they acquired information from the use of networking sites, 14.5 percent derived their satisfaction from affiliation (chatting) and 17.0 percent argued that they use networking sites for entertainment. The results reflect the findings of Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickuhr (2010) where they revealed that almost 60 percent of the students who use social network talk about educational topics online and more than 50 % percent talk about school work. From Lenhart and Madden (2007) point of view, social networking websites provide a virtual life to those students who use social networking websites to make new friends although every contact and friend is virtual and unreal.

Table 6: Why Students use   Online Social Network

REASONS	Frequency	Percentage
To find information	166	83.0
To make professional and business contacts	10	5.0
To share videos/pictures/music	24	12.0
TOTAL	200	100.0

As shown it Table 6, 83.0 percent claimed that they use online social network to find information, 5.0 percent posited that they use online social network to make professional and business contracts and 12.0 percent argued that they use social network platform to share videos/pictures/music. The findings are in line with previous studies. According to Charlene et al (2006) students activity on social networking sites focuses on communicating with each other. The most popular activities done by students and users on social networking sites revolve around looking at profiles of one another, searching for someone here and there, or updating one's own profile, eavesdropping (sensing others activities on social networking websites and analyzing their posts). Media and content related activities like looking for an

event, watching online videos, or listening to music and news. The ratios of these common activities which are almost practiced by almost every social networking websites user are calculated.

Tinto (1997) reviews that in this (14-18) stage of human life people are more attracted towards social networking websites because those students who get aware from social networking websites cannot satisfy themselves only from academic activities, and for that reason they are highly attracted by common social networking websites which are specifically specified for online personal, professional and dating profile.

The Effect of Social Network on Students' Academic Performance
This sections sought to find out the effect of social networking sites on the academic performance of students. Table 7 gives summary of distribution.

Table7: The Effect of Social Network on Students' Academic Performance

Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Social media has increased my success in my academic life	168	84.0	2	1.0	30	15.0
Using social media while doing homework negatively affect the quality of my work	65	32.5	39	19.5	96	48.0
Using social media while doing school assignments positively affect the quality of my work	131	65.5	37	18.5	32	16.0
Social media has affected my studying time negatively	64	32.0	42	21.0	94	47.0
Social media creates an addiction thereby decreasing my concentration in class	81	40.5	50	25.0	69	34.5

Among the respondents, 84.0 percent agreed to the statement that "Social media has increased my success in my academic life". Also, with respect to the assertion that "using social media while doing homework negatively affect the quality of my work", 48.0 percent disagreed. However, 32.5 percent agreed. More than half (65.5%) of respondents agreed that using social media while doing school assignments positively affect the quality of my work. The Table 7 again shows that among the respondents, 47.0 percent disagreed to the statement "social media has affected my studying time negatively", but 32.0 percent agreed. Most of the respondents (40.5%) as agreed that social media creates an addiction thereby decreasing their concentration in class. However, 34.5 percent of the respondents disagreed.

The findings agree with a number of studies which have found a relationship between social media and student commitment in higher education. King and Robinson (2009) who found that students who use electronic voting system were more likely to answer question in their

mathematics course. Annetta et al. (2005) observed that students who played an educational game is more committed towards their work rather than a group control. Nicole et al (2007) analyzed that there is a strong link between social networking websites and students as social networking websites helps to maintain relation with people when they move from offline community to another. Such connections could help students in term of home assignments and projects in terms of job, internship and other opportunity.

Madge et al. (2009) argue that often students use social networking websites to discuss their academics issues formally and informally and also to interact with their instructor, teachers and professors. Research examining student instructor relationship suggests that professors who have online profiles with high disclosure levels are associated with increased student motivation (Mazer et al, 2007) and that self-disclosure decreased uncertainty, increased student motivation, and created more positive attitudes toward both the course and the professor (O'Sullivan et al., 2004)

KEY FINDINGS

1.   It was revealed that students perceived social networking sites as a tool for e-learning and a good tool in helping them accomplish tasks. In addition students perceived social media as a good platform for expressing their feelings and ideas on issues.
2.   The study discovered that students use social networking sites for searching for information and entertainment.
3.   It was revealed that social media affect students' academic performance both positively and negatively. The study found that even though social media creates an addiction which decreases concentration in class, it increases students learning.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to find out whether students have a positive attitude towards the use of networking sites and the use of these networking sites positively affect their academic performance. It can be concluded that if e-learning is incorporated into curriculum, students will perform better.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

1.   E-learning should be incorporated into the university curriculum in order to improve the students' usage of networking sites for learning.
2.   Since students use social networking sites for searching for information, serminars and workshops should be organized by the various departments for students on how information can be effectively searched and retrieved fron network sites.
3.   Parents are advised to monitor the activities of their children on how the use social media. This is to make sure that students use the networking sites for learning.

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