# An Albatross On the Neck: Social Media Use and Its Effects on Students' Academic Performance in Ghana: A Comparative Study

**Ameyaw Samuel**
Valley View University, Oyibi - Accra Campus, Ghana

**Afua Frempong-Kore**
Ghana Communication Technology University, Tesano-Accra Campus, Ghana

**Bitherman Benedicta Krampah Akoto (Corresponding author)**
Ghana Communication Technology University, Tesano-Accra Campus, Ghana

**ABSTRACT:** *This study aimed to examine social media usage and its effects on students' academic performance. The study adopted a survey design approach. The population for this study consisted of undergraduate students from two universities, thus, one private university (Valley View University – VVU) in Techiman in the Bono Region and one public university (Ghana Communications Technology University) in Takoradi, in the Western Region. The study used 5% of the population to arrive at a sample size of 381. The stratified and simple random sampling techniques were applied to select the students. A well–structured questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. The study established that social media had negatively affected their English writing skills, which is detrimental to their academic performance. The results showed that most students visited social media platforms daily and spent more time on these platforms. The study identified challenges like; lack of personal security and privacy, poor internet services, unreliable power, the cost of internet connectivity, and many others. The study made recommendations to the management of both universities to organise workshops and seminars and educate students on the dangers of excessive use of social media platforms.*

**KEYWORDS:** academic performance, Ghana communication technology university, social media, valley view university

## INTRODUCTION

The advent and speedy advancement of the internet have made the world appears like a village where the spread of information has become uncontrollable and reaches the masses of people at a click of a computer button. The past two decades have witnessed tremendous technological revolution – this phenomenon has affected all human activities; educationally, politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Social media is an internet web-based platform that allows individuals, organisations/institutions to create an account for interaction, information sharing,

discussions, and exchange of information between peers or relatives. Indeed, it is an interactive online platform generated from Web2.0 technology. Social media platforms are created and serve as educational platforms for discussions between students, their course mates, and lecturers. Social media networks are online communication channels that allow people and communities to exchange information, ideas, and other content (Lee & Louis, 2016).

Social media is a diverse form of online communication used by individuals to create networks and communities to share information, messages, and other content like videos (Kayumovich, 2020). Some social media platforms are; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, blogs, and many others. Social media is a web-based tool that allows users to interact with one another by exchanging information, opinions, knowledge, and interests through online platforms; it influences human interactions in many ways (Ford & Ravansari, 2017). In this era of information explosion, some institutions have adopted various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Linked In, and many others to connect students and lecturers under one umbrella for teaching and learning purposes. However, students' constant visits and abusive use of the various social media platforms have attracted public attention to the effects of social media on students' academic performance. Most students these days have engaged themselves in non-academic activities on various social media platforms, leaving their books unattended. This unpleasant development has motivated the researchers to determine whether social media platforms affect students negatively or positively; this question remains unanswered.

**Purpose of the Study**
The extensive and abusive use of social media by students these days is perceived to catch the attention of parents/guidance, opinion leaders, stakeholders, and management of various institutions globally. Many students seem addicted to social media sites and spend valuable hours on these sites/platforms without attending to their books. The excessive use of these platforms may eventually negatively impact students' academic performance. This assertion affirms studies by Kayumovich, (2020); Boahene, Fang and Sampong (2019); Zubairu (2021) that there is a drop in students' grades or academic performance due to a lack of time for studies. Bitherman and Frempong-Kore (2021), Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015), also believe that the use of technology such as the internet is one of the most important factors that can influence students' educational performance positively or negatively. However, all these studies did not talk about the lack of personal security and privacy, as well as institutional or parental guidance on the usage of these platforms. Again, most of the students visit these platforms regularly for non-academic activities, which raises an eyebrow whether the rate of use of social media platforms will not obstruct students' performance. The debatable question is, does the use of social media have a negative or positive impact on students' academic performance? This study is therefore to examine social media usage and its impact on students' academic performance. The study is also to fill the gap in Bitherman and Frempong-Kore (2021), Kayumovich, (2020); Boahene, Fang and Sampong (2019); Zubairu (2021) on the lack of personal security and privacy; as well as lack of institutional or parental guidance in social media usage. The findings of this study will be a valuable asset to the universities under investigation and will add knowledge to the body of literature.
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**Objectives of the Study**
The study sought to address the following objectives:
1. To find out the effects of social media on students' academic performance
2. To ascertain the frequency of visits to the social media platform
3. To determine the time spent on the social media platform
4. To examine the challenges students face in the use of social media

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Effects of social media on students' academic performance**
It is not far from the fact that most students worldwide have social media accounts and are always glued to various social media platforms for different activities. Some use the networks for educational purposes, and others for non-educational activities. Several studies have indicated that 60 per cent of students are using social media for only communication. In contrast, some dedicate adequate time to social media for non-academic activities such as chatting with their colleagues and loved ones when lectures are ongoing (Kolhar, Kazi, and Alameen, 2021; Habes et al., 2021). Regardless of their activities on these platforms, students' academic performance is directly or indirectly affected since some time might be lost instead of being engaged in learning.

The negative influence of social media use on students' academic achievement may be more than the benefit they may derive from social media usage. Nowadays, students use words like "ur to stand for 'your/your are', u to stand for 'you', thnx/tnx, tank to stand for thank(s). Others are; 4, 4m or frm to stand for- for, from, tot to stand for taught or thought, and bicos or bcos to stand for because. These words and many more are used mainly by some students when chatting with their peers and relatives, and they make the mistake of using the exact words during examinations. This assertion is supported by Zubairu (2021) who observed in their study that social media affects students' use of the English language. According to the authors, they tend to use short handwriting to chat with their friends and get used to it, subsequently imitating the same mistakes during examinations. Studies on the effects of social media on students' academic performance revealed that students' use of social media sites had negatively affected their academic performance (Alam, and Aktar, 2021; Evers et al. 2020; Mahdi, 2019). It can be concluded from the literature that students use various social media platforms for non-academic activities like chatting and entertainment to the detriment of their studies.

On the other hand, Boateng and Amankwa (2016) observed that social media incredibly improved students' educational exercises, such as group discussions on assignments and issues of courses. Through social media, students could obtain more information during lecture periods. Even though social media over the decades seems to remain an effective communication apparatus, it has made different individuals receive information both locally and globally with the click of a button and has encouraged insightful academic activities. Mingle and Musah (2015) highlighted that most of the respondents experienced adverse effects from the use of social media. For instance, poor grammar, spelling, late submission of assignments, inadequate time for academic work, and poor academic performance. The rapid development of the internet and the flexible use of social media

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platforms make it more possible for students to visit various networking sites. Some students turn these platforms into places for making new friends and meeting old friends; however, some use the media to consume their leisure hours and release stress. The study of Boahene, Fang and Sampong (2019) disagreed with Bernard and Dzandza (2018) that students benefit from chatting with other students, teachers, and other sources to gain knowledge.

Equally, Bakeer (2018) supported that "students gained more vocabulary, improved their writing skills and reduced their spelling mistakes through social media usage. Since its introduction, it has been evident and indisputable that social media utilisation among students within the instructive sector cannot be ignored. The study of Yeboah and Ewur (2014a) established that majority of respondents,76% admitted that WhatsApp has a more negative effect on their studies. Only 24% of the respondents showed that it positively impacts their studies. Surprisingly, the study by Dogoriti et al. (2014) revealed that 75 per cent of the students use social media and learning management to strengthen their English skills. Based on the views of the various researchers, it is prejudicial to conclude that the use of social media only has negative consequences on students' lives; the onus depends mainly on the individual user.

**Frequency of visits to social media platform(s)**
Students' frequent visits to the various social media platforms can be associated with their degree of addiction to a particular social media site for specific activities. Frequencies of engagement in these platforms may change their behaviour and academic performance, even though some are aware of these harms. However, they find it challenging to stay away because of the addiction. Mese and Aydin (2019) highlighted that most Turkish undergraduate students have a Facebook account, and this network is used for social and daily activities instead of related educational purposes. Zubairu (2021) revealed that students visit social networking sites daily. A survey by Ford and Ravansari, 2017 in the United States indicated that students spend approximately 30 minutes on Facebook throughout the day as part of their daily routine. Singh and Gill (2015) showed that 70.1% of the students spent about one hour daily on social media platforms to access their accounts. The frequent use of social media platforms by university students may be influenced by the degree of availability and accessibility of learning resources that will facilitate their learning activities. These days, students create platforms as avenues for educational exercises and mediums for group discussions, and not only for posting and receiving videos from peers. However, some students spend too much time frequenting these sites at the expense of their studies.

Similarly, Alam and Aktar (2021) added that 60% of the students visit social media sites frequently to access their accounts. Hong et al. (2014) established that students spent four and a half (4.5) hours daily on Facebook. Fasae and Adegbilero-Iwari (2016) stated that over two-thirds of the respondents, thus 70.3% used social media daily, 18.1% indicated occasionally, and 0.7 % showed never. Stainbank and Gurr (2016) concluded that most students, 52.3%, used social media 1 to 4 times daily, whereas 40 % accessed social media five times a day. However, 7% did not answer the question. Akakandelwa and Walubita (2018) posited that 67% of the respondents accessed social media platforms 1 to 5 times a day. In contrast, Neier and Zayer (2015) study affirmed that

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88% of students visited social media sites daily to access their accounts. According to Ghareb and Sharif (2015), undergraduate students frequently visited Facebook sites daily, negatively affecting their academic performance; they averagely, spent 1 to 3 hours. Even though the phenomenon of social media platforms has gained popularity globally, especially among university students or the young generation, it must be used so that the negative influence will not potentially affect students' academic performance.

**Time spent on social media platform(s)**
The excessive use and adoption of social media sites by most students have reinforced the term "information age," It is assumed that majority of university students across the world today spend too much time on these sites searching for academic and non-academic information. Undoubtedly, social media technologies have completely transformed the communication landscape, making information available and accessible to all people without barriers. The number of time students spend on social media sites may vary significantly; it may also depend on the activity they carry out on these sites. Indeed, although some may argue that they use these platforms for academic activities, studies by Singh and Gill (2015) established that the amount of time spent on these sites had a negative effect on students' studies. Alameen, (2021) surveyed the impact of social media on college students. The findings established that 45% of the respondents indicated that they spent 6 to 8 hours per day checking social media sites, followed by 23% who spent more than 8 hours; 20% spent 2 to 4 hours, whereas 12% spent less than 2 hours on these platforms. This indicates that most students spend adequate hours on social media platforms. It is also a confirmation that too much use of social media platforms has a negative effect on students' academic performance. The application of social media in every aspect of human lives has become part and parcel of our daily activities. The use of social media per se is not the bone of contention, but the amount of time students spend on these platforms, and even when lectures are ongoing, and students are on these platforms instead of concentrating.

Leyrer-Jackson and Wilson (2018) carried out a study among biology students in Northern Colorado, USA. The findings indicated that most of the respondents spent one to two (1-2) hours per day, while others spent two and a half (2.5) to three (3) hours per day using social media websites, with the most commonly used social media websites being Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram. Yeboah and Ewur (2014) studied the impact of social networks (Whatsapp messenger) on the performance of tertiary students in Ghana. The findings established that 48% of the respondents spent over 8 hours daily engaged in WhatsApp, while 4 % spent 1 to 2 hours. Another 17% spent 3 to 5 hours per day, and 31% spent 6 to 7 hours. Stainbank and Gurr (2016) in India on social networking sites among college students established that most students spent between one to ten hours on social networking sites weekly. The development and embracement of social media serve as a learning platform and emerging source of access to current information; however, these platforms are time-consuming and need extra care, especially for students. Spending too much time on the various media and not on academic-related work will worsen individual academic performance; this statement is echoed by Agwi and Ogwueleka (2018; Kolan & Dzandza, 2018; Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015) that spending too much time on social media has been identified as the critical root of addiction and distraction on the part of students, thereby

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leading to poor students' academic performance. Besides, there is the inclination to expect students to use social media as a platform for excitement rather than for educational purposes.

**Challenges students face in the use of social media.**
The proliferation of social media has changed the landscape of information because of the swift growth of the internet. Social media play a central role in students' life; it is now a virtual platform for learning, despite its negative consequences. Students and lecturers meet on these platforms for educational activities; students use these platforms for group discussions and information sharing, whereas groups, professionals, individuals, and members of an organisation create group accounts to discuss and share information pertinent to their work. However, some obstacles hinder using these platforms, hence the need for this study to identify some factors that impede students' use of social media. Wickramanayake and Jika (2018) on social media use by undergraduate students of education in Nigeria identified power outages, cost of internet connectivity, inadequate bandwidth, individual security, and privacy as some challenges students face in the use social media.

Similarly, Zubairu (2021) also pointed out some challenges users faced: inconsistent power supply 93 per cent, followed by inadequate internet bandwidth, 77 per cent, poor time management with 89 per cent, and absence of infrastructure 72 per cent. The rest, Privacy and security problems, ergonomics, blurred vision, and cyberbullying, as the challenges. The challenges that students face in their use of social media were confirmed by Singh and Gill (2015). They pointed out too much time consumption, 37.2 per cent, followed by fear of exposing their personal information, which accounted for 29.2 per cent. Thirty-two per cent showed a lack of security and privacy, whereas 10 per cent revealed that they do not have access to the university's internet facility. Fasae and Adegbilero-Iwari (2016) demonstrated that 79.0 per cent of the respondents showed poor internet connectivity, 63.8 per cent indicated receiving irrelevant messages and pictures, and power interruption accounted for 52.2 per cent.

The rate of use of social media by students around the globe is causing fear in the general public as to whether the excessive use of these platforms will not endanger the life and academic performance of students; hence the need for this study to refute or affirm the perception of the public regarding social media use by undergraduate students' in Ghana.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a survey design approach. The population for this study consisted of undergraduate students from two universities, thus, one private university (Valley View University – VVU) in Techiman in the Bono Region and one public university (Ghana Communication Technology University) in Takoradi, in the Western Region.

The reason for selecting these two institutions was to find out how students from different regions and institutions use social media networks (SMNs) and their effect on their academic performance. The population for the study comprised level 100, 200, and 300 students; the reason for excluding the final year students was that they were busy working on their final year project work as well as

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practical work as part of the academic requirements. The population for VVU Techiman – Campus was three thousand and twenty- three (3,023); this comprised two thousand, one hundred and fifty–eight (2 158) males, while eight hundred and sixty-five were females (865).

On the other hand, the population of GCTU was four thousand, six hundred (4600); this includes three thousand, six hundred and seventeen (3617) males, while nine hundred and eighty-three (983) were females. Table 1 displays gender characteristics based on each institution and the population.

**Population and Gender-Based on Institution**
*Table 1: Population and Gender-Based on Institution*

| Gender | Institution | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | **Valley View University (VVU) Population** | **Ghana Communications Technology University (GCTU)** |
| Male | 2, 158 | 3617 |
| Female | 865 | 983 |
| **Total** | **3,023** | **4,600** |
| **Grand Total** | **3,023** | **+ 4,600 = 7623** |

**Source:** Field Data (2022)

**Sample size from each institution**
The stratified sampling technique was used to group the students based on their schools and levels. The probability simple random sampling technique was applied to select the sample size. Joseph and Eleojo (2019) asserted that "if the population is a few hundreds, a 40% or more sample will do; if many hundreds, a 20% sample will do; if a few thousands, a 10% sample will do and if several thousands, a 5% or less sample will do."

Hence, the study used 5% of the population to arrive at a sample size of 381. A well–structured questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. Three hundred eighty-one (381) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents; 9 copies were wrongly filled, therefore, were excluded for analysis. Three hundred seventy-two (372) copies of questionnaire were deemed valid and used for the analysis. Hence, the study obtained a response rate of 97.6 per cent. Table 2 below presents the results.

*Table 2: Sample size from each institution*

| Institution | No. of students | Sample (5%) |
|---|---|---|
| **VVU** | 3023 | 5/100 x 3,023 = 151 |
| **GCTU** | 46 00 | 5/100 x 4,600 = 230 |
| Total = | **7623** | **Sample size Total = 381** |

**Source:** Field Data (2022)

**Data Analysis**
**Age of the Respondents**
Table 2 presents the respondents' age distribution results based on their respective institutions. The findings indicated that 67 (44.4%) from VVU fell between the ages of 21 – 25 years, whereas 56 (37.1%) were within the age range of 16 – 20 years, and 28 (18.5%) were between the ages of 27 – 30 years and above. In the case of GCTU,98 (42.6%) of the respondents fell between the ages of 16 – 20 years, whereas 77 (33.5 %) were within the age range of 21 – 25 years, and 55 (23.9%) were with the age range of 26 – 30 and above.
The respondents' ages are an indication that they fell within the group who are heavy users of various social media platforms.

*Table 3: Age of the Respondents*

| Age range | VVU | | GCTU | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| 16 – 20 | 56 | 37.1 | 98 | 42.6 |
| 21 – 25 | 67 | 44.4 | 77 | 33.5 |
| 2 6 – 30 and above | 28 | 18.5 | 55 | 23.9 |
| **Total** | **151** | **100** | **100** | **100** |

**Source:** Field Data (2022)

**Gender of Respondents**
Table 4 summarises the respondents according to gender from each institution. A significant proportion, 106 (70.2%) of the respondents, were male students from VVU, while 45 (29.8%) were female students. Similarly, 164 (71.3%) of the respondents were male students from GCTU, whereas 66 (28.7%) were female students. From the findings, it can be deduced that there is a total absence of gender balance.

**Demographics of Respondents**
*Table 4: Demographics of Respondents*

| Gender | VVU | | GCTU | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Male | 106 | 70.2 | 164 | 71.3 |
| Female | 45 | 29.8 | 66 | 28.7 |
| **Total** | **151** | **100** | **230** | **100** |

**Source:** Field Data (2022)

**Level of Respondents**
In assessing the respondents' levels, Table 5 depicts the statistics of their levels. It was established that 46 (30.5%) of the respondents from VVU were in level 100, followed by 63 (41.7%) in level 200 and 42 (27.8 %) in level 300. Also, it was found that 63 (27.4%) of the respondents from GCTU were in level 100, followed by 65 (28.3 %) in level 200 and 102 (44.3 %) in level 300. It can be concluded that level 200 students of VVU participated in the study more than the other two levels. Level 300 students of GCTU also participated in the survey, more than levels 100 and 200.

*Table 5: Level of Respondents*

| Levels of study | VVU | | GCTU | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| **100** | 46 | 30.5 | 63 | 27.4 |
| **200** | 63 | 41.7 | 65 | 28.3 |
| **300** | 42 | 27.8 | 102 | 44.3 |
| **Total** | **151** | **100** | **230** | **100** |

**Source:** Field Data (2022)

**Effects of social media on students' academic performance**
This section of the study sought to determine the impact of social media on students' academic performance; the five levels of Likert scale choice were used to solicit responses. Of 151 respondents from VVU, 58 (38.4%) agreed that social media negatively affected their writing skills, followed by 38(25.2%) who disagreed with the statement. However, 4 (2.6%) was undecided. On the other hand, 68 (29.6%) of the GCTU respondents disagreed with the statement, followed by 59 (25.7%) who agreed that social media had affected their writing skills. None of the respondents was undecided. The researcher again sought to find out the effects of social media on students spelling abilities. Regarding this statement, most of the respondents from VVU 51 (38.8%) strongly agreed that it has negatively affected their spelling. This was followed by 43 (28.5%) strongly disagreed with the statement. However, none of the respondents was undecided. The majority of the respondents, 74 (32.2%) from the GCTU, disagreed that social media has

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negatively affected their spelling abilities, 58 (25.2%) strongly agreed that it has negatively affected their spelling, and none of the respondents chose undecided.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether social media has negatively affected their academic performance or not. 37 (24.5%) of the respondents from the VVU strongly agreed that using social media has negatively affected their academic performance, and 45 (29.8%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Nevertheless, 5(3.3%) was undecided.

Similarly, 65 (28.3%) of the respondents from GCTU strongly agreed that the use of social media has negatively affected their academic performance, 53(23%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while 5(2.2 %) was undecided about the statement.

The respondents were probed to show whether social media has positively affected their academic performance. 54 (35.8%) of the VVU respondents strongly agreed that it has positively impacted their academic performance, followed by 51(33.8%) who disagreed with the statement, and 4(2.6%) was undecided. On the side of the GCTU, 71(30.9 %) strongly disagreed social media has positively affected their academic performance, 56 (24.3%) agreed to the statement, and 13(5.7%) was undecided.

On whether social media has a negative effect on their English grammar, a significant number, 48 (31.8 %) of the respondents from VVU, disagreed with the statement, and 36 (23.8%) agreed. None of the respondents was undecided about the statement. In the same vein, 66 (28.7%) of the respondents from the GCTU strongly disagreed with the statement, while 51 (22.1%) of the respondents showed strongly agreed, and 8 (3.5%) chose undecided to the statement.

***Table 6: Effects of social media on students' academic performance***

Strongly Agree= SA; Agree= A; Undecided=U; Disagree=D; Strongly Disagree =SD
**Source:** Field Data (2022)

| Effects | VVU (n = 151) | | | | | | | | | | GCTU (n = 230) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | | A | | U | | D | | SD | | SA | | A | | U | | D | | SD | |
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| My writing skills are negatively affected | 35 | 23.2 | 58 | 38.4 | 4 | 2.6 | 16 | 10.6 | 38 | 25.2 | 51 | 22.1 | 59 | 25.7 | - | - | 68 | 29.6 | **52** | 22.6 |
| It has negatively affected my spelling | 51 | 33.8 | 32 | 21.2 | - | - | 25 | 16.5 | 43 | 28.5 | 58 | 25.2 | 53 | 23 | - | - | 74 | 32.2 | 45 | 19.6 |
| It has negatively affected my daily activities | 32 | 21.2 | 46 | 30.5 | 2 | 1.3 | 40 | 26.5 | 31 | 20.5 | 31 | 13.5 | 60 | 26.1 | 2 | 0.8 | 83 | 36.1 | 54 | 23.5 |
| My academic performance is affected negatively | 37 | 24.5 | 31 | 20.5 | 5 | 3.3 | 33 | 21.9 | 45 | 29.8 | 65 | 28.3 | 59 | 25.6 | 5 | 2.2 | 48 | 20.9 | 53 | 23 |
| My academic performance is affected positively | 54 | 35.8 | 20 | 13.2 | 4 | 2.6 | 51 | 33.8 | 22 | 14.6 | 43 | 18.7 | 56 | 24.3 | 13 | 5.7 | 47 | 20.4 | 71 | 30.9 |
| It has negatively affected my English grammar | 33 | 21.9 | 36 | 23.8 | - | - | 48 | 31.8 | 34 | 22.5 | 51 | 22.1 | 57 | 24.8 | 8 | 3.5 | 48 | 20.9 | 66 | 28.7 |

**Frequency of visits to social media platform (s)**

The respondents were asked to indicate the visit frequency to social media platform (s). With this, 41(27.2 %) of respondents from VVU disclosed every day, followed by 35 (23.2%) who indicated twice a week, and 29 (19.2%) admitted that they visited the platforms three times a week. On the side of GCTU, 114 (49.6%) visited the sites every day, followed by 43 (14.7%) who indicated three times a week, while 34 (14.8%) visited social media sites twice a week. This implies that most university respondents visited various social media platforms daily.

*Table 7: Frequency of visits to the social media platform(s)*

| Response | VVU | | GCTU | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Every day | 41 | 27.2 | 114 | 49.6 |
| Twice a week | 35 | 23.2 | 34 | 14.8 |
| Three times a week | 29 | 19.2 | 43 | 18.7 |
| Four times a week | 26 | 17.2 | 15 | 6.5 |
| Occasionally | 20 | 13.2 | 24 | 10.4 |
| **Total** | **151** | **100** | **230** | **100** |

**Source:** Field Data (2022)

**Time spent on social media platform (s)**

The researcher sought the views of the respondents in regards to time spent on social media platforms. Table 8 below indicates that 67 (44.4%) of VVU students spent between 0 to 30 minutes, 51 spent 30 minutes to1hour, and 28 (18.5 %) spent 2 to 3 hours. However, only 5 (3.3%) spent 4 to 5 hours on social media platforms. Similarly, the results revealed that 128 (55.7 %) of the respondents from GCTU indicated that they spent 2 to 3 hours, while 52 (22.6%) indicated 30 minutes to 1 hour, and 35 (15.2%) showed 0 to 30 minutes, only 15 (6.5%) admitted 4 to 5 hours. Interestingly, there are variations in the number of time students spent on the various social media platform (s) by the respondents from both institutions.

*Table 8: Time spent on social media platform (s)*

| Response | VVU | | GCTU | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| 0 – 30 minutes | 67 | 44.4 | 35 | 15.2 |
| 30 minutes to -1 hour | 51 | 33.8 | 52 | 22.6 |
| 2 - 3 hours | 28 | 18.5 | 128 | 55.7 |
| 4-5 hours | 5 | 3.3 | 15 | 6.5 |
| **Total** | **151** | **100** | **230** | **100** |

**Source:** Field Data (2022)

**Challenges students face in the use of social media**
The respondents from both universities were subsequently asked to indicate their challenges in social media use. Majority of the respondents, 37 (24.5%) from VVU, revealed a lack of personal security and privacy, followed by 33 (21.9%) who showed poor time management, while 18 (11.9%) and 15 (9.9%) indicated unreliable power and poor internet services.
Similarly, a significant number, 68 (29.5%) of the respondents from GCTU indicated poor time management, followed by 51 (22.2 %) who stated unreliable power, 37 (16.1%) mentioned the cost of credit for the bundle, and 26 (11.3%) indicated poor internet services.

*Table 9: Challenges students face in the use of social media*

| Challenges | VVU | | GCTU | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Lack of personal security and privacy | 37 | 24.5 | 23 | 10 |
| Poor internet services | 15 | 9.9 | 26 | 11.3 |
| It leads to poor time management | 33 | 21.9 | 68 | 29.5 |
| Cost of credit for bundle | 13 | 8.6 | 37 | 16.1 |
| Unreliable power | 18 | 11.9 | 51 | 22.2 |
| Lack ofrules to guide users | 11 | 7.3 | 3 | 1.3 |
| Too many unpalatable words | 14 | 9.3 | 5 | 2.2 |
| Too much-unedited information | 10 | 6.6 | 17 | 7.4 |
| **Total** | **151** | **100** | **230** | **100** |

**Source:** Field Data (2022)

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of this study have been discussed based on the research objectives that guided the study. The survey method employed for this study has also led to significant revelations.

**Effects of social media on students' academic performance**
The findings on the effects of social media on students' academic performance in each university differed. Most of the respondents from VVU indicated that social media has negatively affected their English writing skills. This finding contrasts sharply with Bernard and Dzandza (2018); Dogoriti et al. (2014; Yunus), whose studies revealed that students use social media to strengthen their English skills, gain more vocabulary, and enhance their writing skills and reduction of spelling mistakes. On the other hand, majority of the GCTU respondents disagreed with the statement that it has not affected their English writing skills. This finding does not reflect that of Alam and Aktar (2021), which concluded that students reproduce the short words such as; '4' in place of 'for', 'U' in place of 'You', and 'D' in place of 'The', which they use to chat with their friends, in their examinations. The findings from both institutions indicated disagreed and strongly disagreed, which means that the use of social media has no adverse effect on their English grammar. The result deviates from the study of Mingle and Musah (2015). Their findings revealed

the use of social media has negatively affected students' grammar, spelling, late submission of assignments, inadequate time for academic work, and poor academic performance.

**Frequency of visits to social media platform (s)**
To ascertain the frequency of visits to the social media platform **(s),** the findings from both institutions affirmed that students visited social media platforms every day or more. These results support studies by Zubairu (2021); Ghareb and Sharif (2015; Neier & Zayer (2015; Ford & Ravansari, 2017), whose findings revealed that majority of students frequently visit various media sites and this has negatively affected their academic performance.

**Time spent on social media platform (s)**
The amount of time spent on social media platforms by the respondents from each university elicited different results. It emerged from the findings that 67 (44.4%) of the VVU respondents spent between 0 to 30 minutes. This finding is not in line with Yeboah and Ewur (2014), whose study established that (48%) of the respondents spent over 8 hours engaged in WhatsApp platforms every day. However, the findings disagreed with Hong et al. (2014), whose study revealed that students spent four and a half (4.5) hours per day on Facebook.

Similarly, another majority of the respondents, 128 (55.7 %) from the GCTU, revealed that they spent 2 to 3 hours on social media sites. This finding contradicts Stainbank and Gurr (2016) study, which found that most students spent between one to ten hours (1-10 hours) on social networking sites weekly. The result again disagreed with Alameen (2021), whose study established that forty–five (45%) of the respondents spent 6-8 hours on social media sites.

**Challenges students face in the use of social media**
The study findings on students' challenges in using social media revealed a lack of personal security and privacy, poor time management, unreliable power, and poor internet. The result is in line with Wickramanayake and Jika (2018; Singh & Gill, 2015), whose studies found individual security and privacy, power outages, cost of internet connectivity, inadequate bandwidth, time consumption, and fear of exposing their personal information. Similar results from GCTU found poor time management, unreliable power, cost of credit for the bundle, and poor internet services. These findings corroborate with Zubairu (2021), who discovered inconsistent power, inadequate internet bandwidth, poor time management, and an absence of infrastructure. These comparison results from the various institutions showed that students in these universities are ardent users of social media technologies.

**CONCLUSION**

The study concluded that students from both institutions frequently use social media daily, and students spend unnecessary time/hours on these platforms. It emerged from the findings that students from both institutions faced some challenges in using social media. They were lack of personal security and privacy, poor internet services, unreliable power, poor time management, cost of internet connectivity, inadequate bandwidth, and time consumption.

Social media platforms are the conduit that enables students to reach their colleagues and lecturers for discussions and many other activities. Despite the dangers involved in social media use, it is also admissible that students cannot do away with these platforms in this technological era – the most important thing is when and how to use them without a negative influence on their academic performance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:
1. The University management in both institutions should organise workshops, conferences, and seminars to educate students about the dangers of excessive use of social media platforms.
2. The study recommends that students should be advised to use these platforms cautiously, not adversely affecting their academic performance.
3. Students should be advised to spend much time on their studies instead of spending hours on these platforms to avoid being addicted.
4. The Universities should restrict students from accessing specific social media platforms on campus and in the hostels.
5. The universities should provide students with websites created for academic work to encourage students to visit these sites for educational information/materials.
6. Students should be encouraged to limit their chatting hours with friends and relatives and get glued to their learning materials than engaging in non–academic conversation.
7. Students should be mindful of the information they post on these social media sites since it exposes their personal information and threatens their privacy.
8. The internet challenges in these institutions should be improved to provide students with access to relevant online information for academic-related work.

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