MODEL OF PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE USING SOCIAL NETWORKING

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ABSTRACT

Social networking sites have created a new social dimension where individuals can increase their social awareness by keeping in touch with old friends, making new friends, getting new data or products and gathering information in other aspects of everyday life. This helps individuals become more knowledgeable, which is very beneficial for students. Based on this, the paper proposed a model of perceived influence of academic performance using social networking. The proposed model was interpreted based on the academic performance of FSKSM (Faculty of computer Science and Information systems) students using SNSs in UTM. The study confirmed that majority of students agreed the social networking media have positive influence on their academic performance. Hence there is need for FSKSM policy makers to evolve strategies to guide and ensure that social networking sites are adopted mostly for academic purposes especially among the undergraduate students of the faculty.

Keywords

Social Networking Sites, Academic performance, Perceived Influence

INTRODUCTION

The Internet is more than just a means of seeking information. People discovered that the Internet could be used to connect with other people, whether for business or commercial purpose, make new friends, reawaken old friends and long lost relatives. The emergence of social networking sites (SNSs) simplify the whole process as they are easier to use and navigate, because it does not require advanced knowledge and experience of the internet and are made up of a wide array of different formats and topics; this means that just about anyone can connect. Most specialized social networking sites restrict the individuals that can take part in their network; thus, making your experience more pleasurable [1]. With such extensive acceptance, it is no surprise that social networks have transformed the way people live and socialize [2].

SNSs are also being used by teachers and students especially in the West as a communication tool. It is a bi-directional process as students too are using these mediums to share comment to their teachers [2]. Nearly all SNSs are often designed to include certain type of community for instance the college community being emulated by Facebook.com or a music/party community emulated by MySpace.com. This study is aimed to answer these questions; what are the reasons students engage in the use of SNSs? And how does the use of SNSs impact on students' academic performance?

Social Networking Sites

SNSs have been defined as web based services that enable individuals to construct a semi-profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share connections and views"[3]. Another given definition of SNSs is "it is an online community of Internet users who want to communicate with other users about areas of mutual interest" [4]. The term "social network site" is usually used to describe this phenomenon and "social networking sites" also appears in public discourse, and both are often used interchangeably. While the term "networking" emphasizes relationship initiation, often between strangers [3] which is one of the main activities in the course of SNSs usage. Harnessing properly the opportunities that are bound through this networks tend to help the students a lot in a positive manner and can also be channeled into helping others. Examples of SNSs include; Twitter Friendster, MySpace, Facebook, Orkut and many others.

The majority of users of the SNSs are youngsters who were named 'Digital Natives' [5] especially the most common are students in higher education. They often use SNSs to stay in touch with their offline friends or bolster existing connections rather than developing new affairs [6]. That exposed a significant message that the SNSs could be a possible medium to gain more recognition of online learning than conventional e-learning platform if the elaborately designed activities can be closely integrated into the features of SNSs.

Academic performance is defined as"…how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers" [7]. It was indicated that friendship networks often necessitates access to information and knowledge directly and indirectly, and the friendship network effect on student academic performance has been confirmed [8].. Involvement of a student in these forms of activities such as making friends on social networks should be seen as a way of having access to up to date information that is relevant and can be channeled towards improving his academic performance. It depends on the ability and willingness of the concerned individual to be able to harness that opportunity to cope with academic related stress [7]. A student who records a high ingenuity on social networks has the tendency to make lots of friends online and also may translate same to his normal daily academic life.

Reasons for Using Social Networking Sites by FSKSM Students

This study reveals two categories of students, the more matured postgraduate students who can manage their time well and the naive undergraduate students who still need to be guided appropriately on time management. This is important because the observation result indicated all post graduate students observed managed their time properly which reflected on the minimal time spend on the social networking media for non academic purposes. While the undergraduate students observed spend more time on social networking sites for non academic purposes rather than for academic purposes The most commonly used application for social interactions among FSKSM students is Facebook, which is being used frequently for non-academic purposes in the hostels, the faculty library and university library. Non-academic usage includes; using of social networking sites for social interactions through chatting with friends, sending and receiving messages, making comment on friends, sharing files, and playing games.

However, a good conclusion was derived considering the basis of the findings of current study that students are managing their time correctly and hence, the use of SNS does not affect their academic performance. Hence the use of social networking sites is not only restricted to non-academic use, some responders agreed to the use of social networking sites for academic purposes like communicating with friends, supervisors, lecturers and making group discussions etc. This can be further verified by responders results which showed that majority of the students were aware of social networking sites and use these sites for friendly communication. It should be noted that social networking media can be used as an interactive platform for academic communication and can be a source of information, knowledge and help (see tables 1 & 2).

Student's Perception of the Use of Social Networking sites

From analysis of findings of this research it was discovered that FSKSM students perceive the use of social networking sites in a variety of ways, and this perception depend on the individual student in question. By looking at the use of SNSs in a broader dimension respondents believe that it usually have both positive and negative influence upon their academic performance. As a result of more time being dedicated to the use of social networking sites for non-academic usage and less time to academic usage, respondents agreed that it tells positively on their academic performance,. This perception will depend on what the concerned individual define as positive or negative i.e. according to his personal views in life and the way and manner students are able to manage their time efficiently and appropriately.

Considering the positive use of social networking sites, majority of FSKSM students interviewed agree that they perceive that the use of SNS for academic usage such as communication with faculty members, academic resource sharing of materials, video sharing, information dissemination among faculty members, coordinating faculty activities and collaborating with lecturers and supervisors do have positive influence on their academic performance.

The Proposed Model

Currently the global information revolution is growing rapidly and government and educational institution managers should be ready to provide their secure online services to their youths especially those in institutions of higher learning. However to promote the use of the social networking media interest parties in the education subsector must fully implement policies that guide and enable students to incorporate social networking sites into their daily teaching and learning processes as agreed by several previous researchers that the use of this medium has become an everyday life of an average youth. In view of this, the paper proposes a full detailed model which indicates the perception of students as regards the use of social networking media and how it influences their academic performance (see figure 1). This proposed model was a result of the findings from the literature review of this research, findings from the data analysis and previous model of educational usage of social network sites proposed by [9]. The researchers have defined the purpose: communication as the main variable applied for educational usage, collaboration and lastly sharing educational materials and other resource.

In this paper however, the researcher find that academic usage elaborate with student's perception. The variables observed for academic use of social networking sites are communication, collaboration and material and resource sharing. These variables influence academic performance as the dependent variable, while the students' perception remains the independent variable.

Table 1.

Level of study * Time spent on SNS for non academic purposes Crosstabulation

			Time spent on SNS for non academic purposes						
			Less than 1h	1-2hrs	2-3hrs	3-4hrs	4-5hrs	More than 5hrs	Total
Level of study	Undergraduate	Count	35	55	29	23	10	18	170
		% within Level of study	20.6%	32.4%	17.1%	13.5%	5.9%	10.6%	100.0%
	Post-graduate	Count	46	38	31	12	14	9	150
		% within Level of study	30.7%	25.3%	20.7%	8.0%	9.3%	6.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	81	93	60	35	24	27	320
		% within Level of study	25.3%	29.1%	18.8%	10.9%	7.5%	8.4%	100.0%

Table 2.

Level of study * Time spent on SNS for academic purposes Crosstabulation

			Time spent on SNS for academic purposes							
			Less than 1h	1-2hrs	2-3hrs	3-4hrs	4-5hrs	More than 5hrs	I donot use it	Total
Level of study	Undergraduate	Count	60	49	28	13	9	5	6	170
		% within Level of study	35.3%	28.8%	16.5%	7.6%	5.3%	2.9%	3.5%	100.0%
	Post-graduate	Count	51	41	17	9	8	5	19	150
		% within Level of study	34.0%	27.3%	11.3%	6.0%	5.3%	3.3%	12.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	111	90	45	22	17	10	25	320
		% within Level of study	34.7%	28.1%	14.1%	6.9%	5.3%	3.1%	7.8%	100.0%

The study involved the participation of 320 respondents, table (1 &2), shows time spent on SNS for academic and non-academic purposes cross tabulation. This is the analysis on the average response on a 5-point scale. Description of the model

Student's perception
Student's perception on the use of social networking sites can be viewed in a variety of perspectives. When viewing it in a more general perspective the social networking sites can be used in two different ways such as in academic usage and for non-academic. However, the use of social networking media among students of FSKSM may also be seen as having both positive and negative consequences on their academic performance. This perception will depend on how the concerned individual defined as positive or negative i.e. according to his personal views in life and the way and manner students are able to manage their time efficiently and appropriately. Result from this study found that the

widespread use of the social networking sites among students of FSKSM as a means of seeking information is only natural to the technology transformation going on globally. And those students discovered that the social networking media could be used to connect with other faculty members of like minds and enhance academic achievement of college students.

Furthermore, Hinchcliffe [10], pointed out that in social networking media the individual user (or groups of users) can decide what they wish to discuss and who they wish to work together with. This means that social networking media truly have the capability to deliver a platform for learning where the student is potentially at the centre of activities. These social networks help FSKSM students to promote their academic activities by adopting various possibilities to communicate with faculty members and share knowledge and educational resource materials such as videos, files, journals, assignments to mention a few, which eventually lead to a positive performance in their educational attainment. No wonder social networks have been found to influence the way students live and socialize. Study was conducted by [11] shows that numerous approaches can be used to encourage amiability among students which leads to a positive effect from SNS user's point of view.

Positive Influences

From the literature, the study reveal several purposes for which social networking sites have been adopted to enhance educational performance of students in institutions of higher learning, a few of the purposes are : for sharing resource information, exchanging messages, chatting, uploading files and sending and receiving photos, updating and sharing of personal information, booking appointment for meeting , watch movies, review lectures, seminars, books and even political campaign are carried out with the use of social networking media. There are also some arguments in favors of using SNS that proposed that greater use of SNS has a positive influence on students' academic performance .This is also consistent with the current findings among FSKSM students. Roblyer et al.[12], explained that SNS are a brilliant source of interaction between students and faculty members. Undoubtedly, a good number of students use these medium for academic purpose. It should be noted that social networking sites can be used as an interactive platform for academic communication and can also be a source of information, knowledge and help.

Academic usage

This research carried out among students of the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Systems considers the various academic benefits provided through the use of social networking sites which is evident from the findings of this study; they include letting subscribers to have access to intentional or spontaneous knowledge opportunities by gathering students together around shared interests, exchanging information, sharing ideas, discussing topics, collaborating. This is consistent to previous study by [9] who reported that the educational use of Face book can be grouped into three main categories which include sharing, communication between users and lastly collaboration.

Communication

Since social networking sites consist of various categorical groups and communities, this is an avenue for students to belong to networks that are useful for academic collaboration. Through this opportunity the researcher found that FSKSM

students came together to exchange ideas, share information and work together with which they have common interests, ideas and needs which will eventually help in their academic performance. Social networking sites are used for academic purposes such as collaboration, activities such as students coming together to form research groups, classroom assignment groups, group discussions teams and all other activities related to their faculties, departments or classes and carrying on group works by sharing homework, projects, ideas, and etc.

This study found that three basic activities are common to all FSKSM students involved in using SNS for academic purpose they are: communicating with the faculty and university authority, communicating with lecturers and supervisors, making academic discussions with classmates and chatting with friends in respect to topics of educational interest.

Collaboration

From the result of this research, the researcher found that academic usage of social networking sites for communication comprise of several educational activities such as availing FSKSM students the opportunity to communicate among themselves and their lecturers, enhancing and facilitating classroom discussions, following up announcements about classes and courses, arranging group discussions to jointly solve difficult assignments in departments or schools, delivery of homework and assignments by teachers, informing students about resources and links related to subject areas.

Materials and Resource Sharing

This study indicate that academic usage of social networking sites for resource and material sharing comprise of activities such as exchanging multimedia resources, videos, audio materials, animated videos, resources, documents and following the links to external resources or pages. This relationship is shaped by the social, informational, or material resources that they both exchange. These resources exchanges are called "relations" in social network analysis. The level of information disclosed on SNS is another tool, which can be used to facilitate another portal of communication between the student and educator. From the result of this study, the researcher found that the social networks promote students of faculty of computer science and information systems to share information and academic resource materials such as files, assignments, books journals and online articles, videos, interviews can also be carried out and so on.

Negative Influence

Growing concern has been highlighted on the need to address the negative effects of the social network and other emerging technologies. For instance the use of social networking sites to chat with friends and relatives by students for social and non academic activities during lecture periods when they should be engaged in their studies. .Moreover, observation from this study find that most of the undergraduate students of FSKSM are engaged in the use of SNS mainly for socializing activities rather than for academic purpose, while the postgraduate students of same faculty use it more for academic purpose.

Non-Academic Usage

Empirical findings have however indicated that the use of social networking sites can also be used for non-academic purposes; the result of this study is consistent with such previous studies in the sense that some of the respondents

(FSKSM students) who were sincere enough confessed that they spend more time on the network on activities that are not related to educational purposes such as: social interactions, online games etc. These activities they reported if not well managed have a tendency to influent negatively on their academic performance.

Distraction from Study

Growing concern has been highlighted on the need to address the negative effects of the social network and other emerging technologies. Considering the report of [13], which indicated that regular use of social networking media may result in a kind of obsession. From observation and result of Tables 1 & 2, many of the FSKSM students were sincere to reveal that most times they unconsciously found themselves getting addicted to the use of these sites immediately they have subscribed to them. It's a kind of obsession that you plan to spend a few minutes on the site, but before you know it you have spent hours surfing and updating profiles and viewing photo actions promoted by MySpace. Some students of faculty of computer science and information systems perceived the hours spent on this network as main hours lost whereas others see it as a mere distraction from what is supposed to be done.

Wastage of Time

Those students who say that their performance is not hampered by the use of social networking media agree that they limit the time they spend on the networks. From this statement it can be inferred that invariably time spent on social network media has a correlation to the academic performance of students. This means that, if a student devotes more time to checking the net, it will reduce the time spent on his studies, hence lowers his grades. . The Karpinski study also found that 65 percent of Face book users access their account daily, often checking it several times for new messages. Some people spend just a few minutes on the site; others spend more than an hour [14].

Low grades

In this study, many of the participants agreed that spending more time on the social networking media results in them getting low grades in their studies. This is the reason why majority of students of faculty of computer science and information systems say that they normally regulate the periods they access their networks in such a way that their study will not be hampered. Kolek and Saunder.[15], concluded that there is no association between SNS usage and GPA of students. The results of the study show that a majority of the students were aware of social networking media and use these sites for friendly communication. From physical observation the researcher find that some FSKSM students are paying more attention towards these social networking activities rather than utilizing this time for their studies and this might affect their academic performance adversely.

Academic Performance

Tuckman [16] defined performance as the apparent demonstration of understanding, concepts, skills, ideas and knowledge of a person and proposed that grades clearly depict the performance of a student. Hence, students' academic performance must be managed efficiently keeping in view all the factors that can positively or negatively affect educational performance and proposed that internet is advantageous to both students and teachers if used as a tool of knowledge

creation and dissemination. Defending on the nature of the SNS usage, if students use it positively like using it for educative collaborations and recourse sharing then, it will enhance his/her performances. And if it is used socially e.g. friendly chatting and sharing pictures it will degrade the student's performances..

CONCLUSION

The objectives of the paper are:, to propose a model of perceived influence of academic performance for using Social networking sites among FSKSM students and to recommend how the usage of social networking sites can improve student's academic performance**.** In this paper, particular emphasis was given to discovering the various approaches adopted by students in making sure that the use of SNS influences either positively or negatively on their academic achievement. Various manners in which this tool has been utilized by different respondents were studied to actually know the positive and the negative perception of SNSs and find out whether the influence on their academic performance is negative or positive. Most of the younger students are engage in the use of SNSs mainly for socializing activities rather than for academic purpose. However, most of the students do feel that the SNSs have more positive impact on their academic performance. This is due to the fact that the SNSs can be used for various academic activities such as communicating with the faculty and university authority, communicating with lecturers and supervisors, making academic discussions with classmates and chatting with friends in respect to topics of educational interest.

Hence there is need for FSKSM policy makers to evolve strategies to guide and ensure that social networking sites are adopted mostly for academic purposes especially among the undergraduate students of the faculty. In other words if FSKSM lecturers and faculty managers should engage students mostly through this media, just like the classroom discussion group that is now available in the social networking sites, so that students will be indirectly carried away from using the non academic aspect of social networking sites , like games and chatting with friends when they are online. In addition the faculty should explore the available applications on the social sites that are meant for academic purposes and encourage FSKSM students to use them. For instance applications like the networked blogs on Face book should provide thousands of academic topics that FSKSM students can explore.

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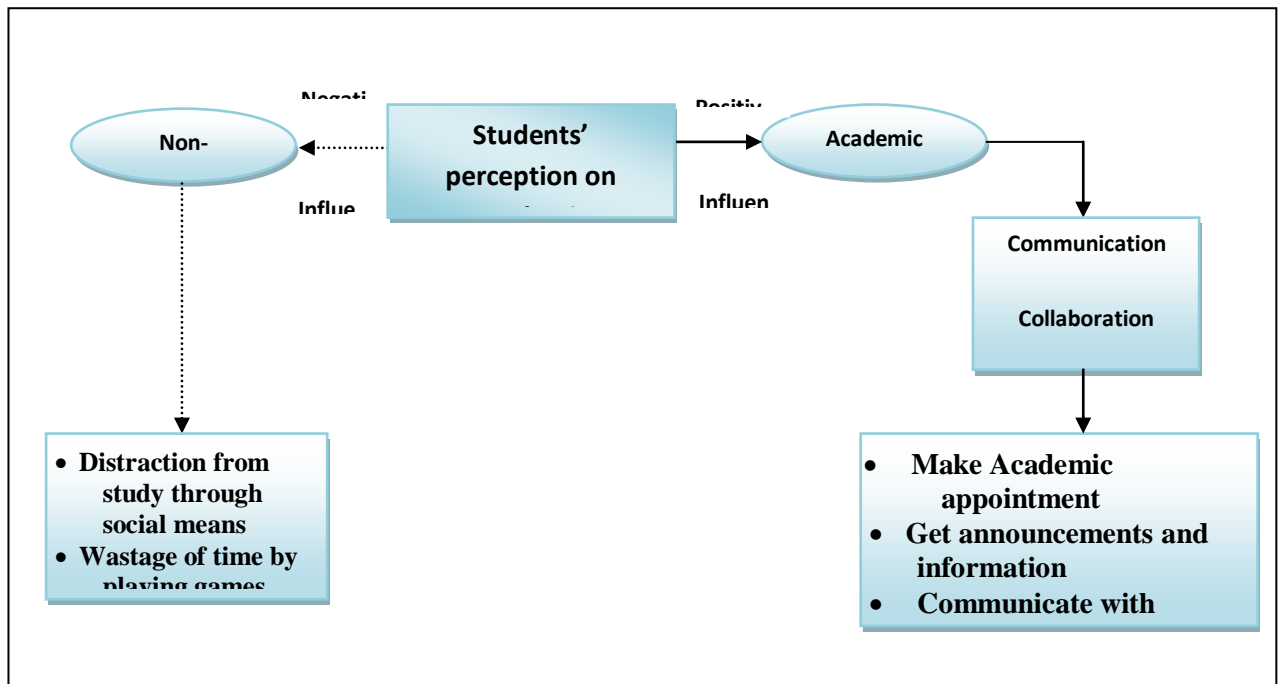
Figure 1: Proposed model of perceived influence of academic performance for using SNS among FSKSM students
FSKSM (Faculty of Computer Science and Information Systems.