



SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES: USAGE AND PERCEPTIONS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS



MOHAMED RIDHWAN BIN MOHAMED RADHI

SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine students' social media usage for educational purposes and to analyze their perceptions of the impact of social media usage on academic performance. A quantitative method with two types of data, namely quantitative data and qualitative data was used in this study which involved a sample of 54 undergraduate students from a public university in Malaysia. Open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires were utilized as research instruments, and both questionnaires were administered online. A descriptive statistical method was applied to analyze quantitative data, while thematic analysis was employed for qualitative data. The results revealed that 85.2% of the respondents believed that utilizing social media for learning activities had a positive effect on their academic performance, while the remaining 14.8% chose to be neutral. Through thematic analysis, twelve themes emerged based on students' perceptions of the impact of social media usage on their academic performance. The positive themes included Source of Learning, Communication and Engagement Tool, Learning Booster, Easy to Access, Fostering E-learning Opportunities, Promoting Self-directed Learning, Be A Smart User, Promoting Direct Communication Tool, and Anytime, Anyplace Connectivity. The negative themes comprised Tending to Distract and Traditional Is Better. The emerging theme under the mixed category was the Double-edged Sword. In conclusion, the study findings showed that students had a positive attitude towards using social media in their learning, acknowledging its importance as a versatile learning tool. Implications of the study suggest that by understanding students' attitudes towards social media usage in learning activities and their perceptions of its influence on academic performance, the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching and learning process can be improved, thus enhancing students' academic performance.



MEDIA SOSIAL UNTUK TUJUAN AKADEMIK: PENGGUNAAN DAN PERSEPSI PELAJAR PRASISWAZAH

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidik penggunaan media sosial pelajar untuk tujuan pendidikan dan menganalisis persepsi mereka terhadap kesan penggunaan media sosial terhadap prestasi akademik. Kaedah kuantitatif dengan dua jenis data iaitu data kuantitatif dan data kualitatif digunakan dalam kajian ini yang melibatkan sampel seramai 54 orang pelajar prasiswazah dari sebuah universiti awam di Malaysia. Soal selidik terbuka dan tertutup telah digunakan sebagai instrumen kajian, dan kedua-dua soal selidik telah dijalankan secara dalam talian. Kaedah statistik deskriptif digunakan untuk menganalisis data kuantitatif, manakala analisis tematik digunakan untuk data kualitatif. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa 85.2% daripada responden percaya bahawa penggunaan media sosial untuk aktiviti pembelajaran memberikan kesan positif terhadap prestasi akademik mereka, manakala 14.8% yang lain memilih untuk kekal neutral. Melalui analisis tematik, dua belas tema muncul berdasarkan persepsi pelajar terhadap kesan penggunaan media sosial terhadap prestasi akademik mereka. Tema positif termasuk *Source of Learning, Communication and Engagement Tool, Learning Booster, Easy to Access, Fostering E-learning Opportunities, Promoting Self-directed Learning, Be A Smart User, Promoting Direct Communication Tool*, dan *Anytime, Anyplace Connectivity*. Tema negatif terdiri daripada *Tending to Distract* dan *Traditional Is Better*. Tema yang muncul di bawah kategori campuran ialah *Double-edged Sword*. Kesimpulannya, dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa mempunyai sikap positif terhadap penggunaan media sosial dalam pembelajaran mereka, mengakui kepentingannya sebagai alat pembelajaran yang serba boleh. Implikasi kajian mencadangkan bahawa dengan mengenal pasti sikap pelajar terhadap penggunaan media sosial dalam aktiviti pembelajaran dan persepsi mereka terhadap pengaruhnya terhadap prestasi akademik, keberkesanan dan kecekapan proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran dapat dipertingkatkan, sekali gus meningkatkan prestasi akademik pelajar.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



The aim of this chapter is to introduce several points related to the study in general which discusses the scope of the study that is to be carried out. This chapter further describes in general the background of the research which designates more points with details and elaborations. The following section of this chapter presents the research problem and further explains the objectives of the study that were carried out on the basis of appropriate evidence and related to the problem statement mentioned. At the end of this chapter, an outline of the main structure of the research is briefly reported.





1.2 Research Background

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are among the most important world-level assets of modern education. Teaching and learning activities involving various interactive technologies and channels are growing to become more common (Bardakci, 2019). Prior to that, the world of communication started to experience a huge evolution of the internet in the 1990s with the advent of social media. This led to the revolution of the communication world hence, today we celebrate its expansion from education to entertainment. The internet advancement has evolved successfully where two-thirds (2/3) of the population of the internet world visit social media today (Bernard & Dzandza, 2018). Social media is one of the most important forms of ICT for the sharing of knowledge, data, and undisclosed content. Attracting millions of internet users, social media is a powerful medium of electronic communication that is regularly used to create connections between society (Nasrullah & Firdouse Rahman Khan, 2019). According to Bernard and Dzandza (2018), social media has erupted as an online discourse category that allows people to create, share, bookmark, and network content at a stupendous rate. This interfered with people's current reliance on conventional methods of communication, such as letters and phone calls, to connect with friends and family. That is the answer to why it is not shocking to see people of all ages use social media. These platforms are rapidly changing public discourse in society.

Notwithstanding, social media is also influencing attitudes and strategies on various topics of everyday issues- spanning from the government to technology and showbiz. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are used daily by millions of people around the world, especially young people (Zachos et al., 2018;





Mahdiun et al., 2020). Nearly all students have a social media account and are also likely to perform a range of activities on their social media platforms. For example, Instagram is now one of the most commonly utilized media networks in the world (Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2020). It has a huge attraction for the youth with its function of focusing on photo sharing besides its simplicity of access to it. As a consequence, it shows that when social media like Facebook is regularly utilized by students, it causes a decrease in their academic performance, which suggests that academic performance depends on how much Facebook is used in a day (Karim et al., 2019). The impacts of the usage of social media are highly significant for students since they continue to be the most active and strong users of these websites (Doleck et al., 2019).

In general, communication is a crucial part of human nature. Therefore, the role of social media is very beneficial in terms of communication. Students can communicate digitally or in person with anyone to exchange information through social media. In reality, for example, the WhatsApp application serves as a collaboration tool in education that may help students' communication skills grow. Students can also talk to their peers about a certain task through social media. Additionally, they are more prone to use social media for communication, hence, it is not improbable that in modern times, the only way to discuss a project with classmates is online (Mazni et al., 2023). Speaking about social media use in education, as an addition, Learning Management System (LMS) is an institutionally secure environment for learners that provides learning content through an interactive learning experience. According to AlHaidari (2018), learners and educators must expand their practises by incorporating social media into education, as present LMS is unsuitable for today's socially-networked, constantly-connected learners. LMS is a useful tool for managing and administering





learning, but it does not improve the learning experience or the achievement of learning results. Learners who utilise LMS primarily employ document sharing facilities, owing to the high level of privacy and institutional support. However, Prahani et al. (2022) argued that there are no restrictions in LMS research since LMS technology is growing among consumer styles in many countries and regions, including Malaysia. Advanced tracking capabilities and communication for discussion are the LMS's key benefits. There are many educational levels where the usage of LMS may be included into the classroom as LMS is able to yield positive outcomes for learning in the classroom.

It is important for the researchers to pay attention to the role of social media in academic content areas and its impact on students' lives with different types of activities. Studies have demonstrated the understanding and recognition impact of social media use on students' academic performance, involvement, and engagement (Mahdiuon et al., 2020). Therefore, this study aims to review university students' usage and perceptions of social media on their academic performance.

1.3 Problem Statement

Academic excellence plays a significant role in every individual's life, and thus a huge amount of attention is placed on academic excellence. That is why many individuals always find effective ways to increase their academic performance (Bernard & Dzandza, 2018). In the meantime, the education field has embraced various usage aspects of electronic technology for refurbishing and incorporating creative environments for the productive process of education (Busalim et al., 2019). Social





media in education plays an important part in education through technological advancements. For this reason, the internet is the most valuable source of knowledge today and the increasing aspects of students' use of social media cannot be neglected (Bernard & Dzandza, 2018). However, it is important to note that social media would affect the academic performance of students positively or negatively (Nasrullah & Firdouse Rahman Khan, 2019).

On top of that, there are opposing opinions about social media and positive academic results (Zachos et al., 2018) and to some extent, social media are presumed a significant distraction in students' goals achievement. Abuse of social media will specifically impact the academic performance of students (Busalim et al., 2019). Students, according to Zachos et al. (2018), despite being fully convinced that social media will enhance their academic performance, they do not utilise it voluntarily and instead rely on their lecturers' successful use of technology in the classroom.

Simultaneously, due to the spread of COVID-19 illness and the closure of physical schools, online learning through various technologies such as computers and smartphones with an internet connection has emerged as an alternative learning option (Selvanathan et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2021). Also, according to Selvanathan et al. (2020), online learning is an effective alternative learning method for both students and lecturers. However, there are certain concerns that must be addressed, such as restricted internet access and financial assistance status. Furthermore, students have trouble connecting with their lecturers and peers, as well as having access to laboratories, all of which have an impact on their academics. The pandemic caused by COVID-19 will have a long-term impact on higher education institutions. If the pandemic persists,



schooling may shift from face-to-face to online (Shahzad et al., 2021). Nonetheless, online learning offers benefits in self-reliant learning and developing new skills, eventually leading to life-long learning. Students have the freedom to learn wherever they wish because of these learning methods and environments (Selvanathan et al., 2020). Social media in education when used correctly makes information-sharing possible which leads to the understanding and resolution of learning challenges in less time (Bernard & Dzandza, 2018).

Due to various perspectives and views on the usage and impact of social media in education, this study aims to deepen the research by investigating the relationship between the use of social media and university students' academic performances.

1.4 Research Objectives

Below are the objectives of the study:

- a) To determine students' social media use for educational purposes.
- b) To analyze students' perceptions of the effects of social media use on their academic performance.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the highlighted research objectives, several research questions are constructed to help to improve knowledge of the study as well as to precede the study process. The following are two (2) research questions that are specified accordingly:

- a) How do students use social media for educational purposes?
- b) What are students' perceptions of the effects of social media use on their academic performance?

1.6 Research Scopes

The aim of this study is to report the students' social media use for educational purposes and the students' perceptions of the effects of social media use on their academic performance. The scope of the study is limited to recruiting student volunteers of a public university in Malaysia who would be contacted through student groups on WhatsApp and/or Telegram applications due to the limitation of time and the COVID-19 outbreak where physical distancing is being practiced nationwide. Therefore, data could only be collected from a limited number of students at the university.

1.7 Significance of Study

Through this study, students may learn more about how social media is used in educational activities. Also, by identifying if their usage of social media has a positive or negative impact on their academic performance, students may better plan their use after understanding the findings of this study. For lecturers, by better understanding how students utilize social media for learning, they will be able to increase their efficacy and efficiency of teaching in the classroom. Through this study, administrators of higher education institutions are expected to gain an understanding of students' perceptions in order to prevent the negative effects of social media use. Therefore, rational strategies may be developed to strengthen the use of social media in academic activities by broadening its usage among lecturers as well as students, which will enhance students' academic performance.

1.8 Operational Definitions

The following are definitions of terminology used in this dissertation that relate to its concepts, methodologies or procedures:

Social media

Social media refers to a range of online platforms that allows the exchange of information and knowledge, both text and visual, across online groups and communities (Tarigan et al., 2023). In this study, there is no particular focus for any one social media platform because this study focused on students' general use of social media for



educational purposes, but several of the platforms included in the survey, such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (now known as X) were there to make it straightforward for respondents to give their responses.

Academic performances

Academic performance is the assessing of student achievement across several academic subjects or courses. This is often done by educators using test results, and it is typically been linked to student's IQ (Noemy et al., 2017). In this study, the students shared their experiences using social media for educational purposes and their thoughts on how it affected their academic performance.

Students' perceptions

Students' perceptions are their ideas and feelings about other people or situations (Schunk & Meece, 1992). In this study, one of the research objectives is to look at how students perceive using social media in educational activities affected their academic performance.

Educational purposes

The term "educational purposes" refers to activities that are suitably applied to work that involves studying and research. In this study, social media use for educational purposes is analysed to determine its effect on students' academic performance.

Collaborative learning

Collaborative learning refers to a form of group of students joining up or discussing to solve a problem or finish tasks. Students are actively involved, given the chance to interact with classmates, propose and defend ideas, and discuss various worldviews



(Laal & Laal, 2012). In this study, collaborative learning is seen as one of the benefits obtained through the use of social media in educational activities. Students may not just interact with their lecturers and friends but they also have the opportunity to engage with communities globally.

Teaching and learning activity

A teaching and learning activity is a setting in which students can interact with their educators to acquire the knowledge or skills necessary to fulfil their academic objectives. In this study, social media is viewed as a platform for communication and interaction, including the sharing of learning materials, between students and teachers during teaching and learning activities.

Voluntary sampling

Voluntary sampling is referred to a sample chosen from possible responders who volunteered (Murairwa, 2020) . Survey participants who choose to participate typically do so because they strongly feel one way or another about the survey subjects. In this study, students received the survey Uniform Resource Locator (URL) via the Telegram and WhatsApp applications. Only students who chose to take part in the survey had access to the questions since they had to click "Yes" before joining and because participation was optional, they may choose not to.