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Influence of Social Media Usage on the Behaviours of Students: A Study in Colleges of Education in Ghana

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Abstract:
The study tries to examine the influence of social media usage on the behaviour of Ghana students. Cross sectional descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 378 students was selected using proportional stratified sampling technique from a population of second and third year college of education students. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for the collection of data. Data were analysed descriptively using frequencies and percentages, and means and standard deviations. The study revealed that all the respondents were using social media with the most common social network sites used by the respondents being WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. The study revealed also that most of the respondents spent an average of six to 10 hours on social media in a day for above an average of five days in a week and considered their social media usage to be more than necessary and interfering with their lives. The results revealed finally that social media usage influences students in terms of learning new behaviours, making new friends, becoming addicted, being peer pressured while at the same time withdrawing from real life. It was recommended that authorities of Colleges of Education should organise workshops for students on the proper usage of social media to equip students with the right skills to benefit from their social media usage.

Keywords: Social Media, Behaviour, Colleges of Education

1. Introduction

Interacting with friends and family across long distances has been a concern of humans for centuries. As social beings, people have always relied on communication to strengthen their relationships. When face-to-face discussions are impossible or inconvenient, humans have dreamed up creative solutions. The conceptualization of the internet has undeniably affected the way millions of people (Newman, Strogatz & Watts, 2001).

The internet we know today has come about not in the form of a replacement (Borgatti & Foster, 2003). The world has been changed rapidly (Osharive, 2015). This has made technology very relevant in every aspect of our lives. Technology has advanced so much in the form of social media. Social media refers to online resources that people use to share content such as video, photos, images, text, ideas, insight, humour, opinion, gossip and news (Drury, 2008). Social media has been developing at a rapid pace (Hasnain, Nasreen& Ijaz, 2015), leading to the creation of several social network sites (Alsaif, 2016). With the advent of a new form of communication comes both positive and negative feedback. Millions of people are living part of their lives on social networking sites. Social networking sites are places where users present themselves to the world. Individuals have the opportunity to mould their images for social purposes online by using social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). Especially in the recent network literature, empirical estimation of the exact functional form of such skewed degree distributions have received considerable attention (Newman et al., 2001; Newman, 2003; Hancock & Jones, 2004).

Social networking sites permit users to create unique profiles (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). By the observation of the researchers, individuals communicate and engage with others through social networking sites by using the images they created online, revealing personal details and insights into their lives.

The usage of social media particularly revolves around special interests or shared contexts like students populations at universities. Although they now represent a typical form of computer-mediated communication, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter among others is well known to be rooted in the offline world (Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2007). Students use them typically to stay in contact, communicate with and 'spy' on their offline friends (Moody, 2001).

Social media have set some standards of appearance for its users. This has generated some considerable amount of interest in researchers into how this affects users of social media. Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) have indicated that people are motivated to use Facebook for two primary reasons: a need to belong and a need for self-presentation. The effects of social media usage on the overall health, thus physical and psychological of individuals have been greatly researched. In the study of Labrague (2014), it was found that increasing use of social media may lead to depression, anxiety and stress in young people. Lou, Yan, Nickerson and McMorris (2012) and Kalpidou, Costin and Morris (2011)

have predicted that these psychological hangovers from social media addiction may lead to lower emotional adjustment to college life.

Correa, Hinsley and Zuniga (2009) have opined that the main reason behind social networking sites is usually to extend the actual self out to the world and reach out to the society and not to promote anonymity. This coupled with the desire to gain popularity is one of the reasons behind the vast use and obsession with social media (Boyd, 2008). Bridgestock (2013) however revealed that the main reasons identified for social media usage as per the choices offered to the respondents include 'to keep up to date', 'it's interesting', 'for useful connections' and 'to have my say'. This is contrary to the view that individuals use social media to gain popularity. Overall, the implication of all these findings is that social media has factors that make it easily addictive.

There are several social network sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and others making most students spend most of their time on thereby affecting their academic work (Paul, Baker & Cochran, 2012). Academic achievement is one of the predictors of one's life success (Kyoshaba, 2009).

In Africa, students spend quality time on social media taking away the time they could have spent on academic work (Alsaif, 2016; Osharive, 2015). The same applies to Ghana, where social media usage among students is common, mostly, among senior high school students and tertiary level students (Mingle, Adams, & Adjei, 2016; Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015). Even though, social networking sites are used by most people to interact with old and new friends, physical or internet friends (Adeboye, cited in Asemah & Edegoh, 2012), students have been so engrossed in social media activities that they are online for almost 24 hours (Olubiyi, 2012). In classrooms, school campuses and after school, students are always busy on social network sites (Paul et al., 2012). Seeing that academic performance requires concentration and much study, the current study seeks to examine the impact of social media addiction on the academic performance of students in the Presbyterian University College, Ghana. By the observation of the researchers, social media use like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram among others has gained prominence in Ghana and has become a normal part of life among both the young and old. However, it appears that the youth are the most proliferous users of social media in Ghana. There appeared to be only a small number of researches conducted on social media usage in Ghana. Some of them included the study of Danso and Appeanti (2014) and that of Mingle and Adams (2015), Mingle, Adams, and Adjei (2016), Asiedu (2017) and Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) which have all sought to investigate social media usage and how it affects students' academic work. All these studies have found that social media usage negatively affect academic performance of students.

Even though the current study is also concerned with students, its major focus is on how social media usage influences the behaviours of students. This study therefore adds something new to the research on social media usage in Ghana. The study also aims to offer recommendations that can help ensure that students are not affected negatively by their usage of social media. The research objectives are given below:

- The social network sites those Ghana college students use.
- The amount of time that Ghana college students spend on social media.
- The influence of social media usage on the behaviour of Ghana college students.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) was developed by Blumler and Katz in 1974. The theory was developed in response to the traditional mass communication research emphasizing the sender and the message. It has been used to give greater insight into why individuals chose the various media outlets (Severin & Tankard, 1997) (Hamburger & Ben-Artzi, 2000). Researchers found eight reasons or gratification factors for Internet use (West & Turner, 2007). Additionally, people select and use particular/specific channels of communication to gratify their needs and wants (MacQuil, 1994).

2.2. Concept of Social Media and Social Network Sites

Safko and Brake (2008) also defined social media as the activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information. Boyd and Ellison (2007) defined social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to construct profiles, display user connections, and search and traverse within that list of connections. Social networking sites enable users to create public profiles within that website and form relationship with other users of the same website who access their profile. It is used to describe community base website, online discussion forum, chat rooms and other social space online. All social media sites enable social interaction, yet they do not all offer the same service or have the same focus (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012).

2.3. Usage and Effects of Social Media

Since the last few decades technology has grown immensely and has brought major changes globally. Communication barriers have reduced through technological advancement and new mediums are being introduced to connect global audiences. Social networking has become an international trend and has spread its reach to almost every corner of the world. According to a survey conducted in 2014 there were 15.4 million people using Facebook which represented 8.5 percent of the total population (Haque, 2014). However, with these advancements a major concern arises as in this age of huge technological development social networking sites are becoming more and more popular especially among students.

Social media allows anyone from the general public to register and connect to others. It allows participant the opportunity for just in time learning and engagement. This is what Jerkins (2006) described as participatory culture. The advent of social network platforms has impacted the way in which students engage with technology in general. According to Hasnain, Nasreen and Ijaz (2015), having social media in the classroom has been a controversial topic for the last several years. Social media has become embedded in the lives of students, particularly those in higher learning institutions. The usage of social media therefore presents significant effects both positive and negative to students. A national survey in 2009 found that 37% of online teenagers use social networking site which increased to 55% three years later (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr, 2010).

2.4. Empirical Review

Talaue, AlSaad, AlRushaidan, AlHugail and AlFahhad (2018) assessed the impact of social media on academic performance of selected college students. Alwagait, Shahzad and Alim (2015) investigated to role of social media on academic performance of 108 Saudi students. Similarly, Junco, Elavsky and Heiberger (2013) examined the relationship between Facebook activity. The findings are in line with Junco et al. (2013) and Alwagait et al. (2015).

3. Methodology

Cross sectional descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. According to Kulbir (2009), descriptive survey is a research design that seeks to find factors associated with certain occurrences, outcomes, condition or types of behaviours. The cross sectional nature of the design implies that the data is collected at one point in time. Descriptive survey research design was used to explore conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are evident, or trends that are developing. This made the design suitable for the current study.

The study was carried out among students in Colleges of Education in Ghana. Specifically, the colleges were divided into three zones, the northern, middle and southern zones. One college of education each was randomly chosen from each of the colleges. For the sake of anonymity, the names of the colleges have been withheld. The population was made up of second- and third-year students of the chosen colleges of education. The population of second and third year students in the chosen colleges was 21,655. This comprised 10,995 males and 10,660 females. A sample size of 378 students was selected based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table for Determining Sample Size.

Proportional stratified sampling technique was used in selecting the actual respondents for the study. Gravetter and Forzano (2009) defined proportional stratified sampling technique as deliberately structuring the sample so that its composition matches the composition of the population. The use of this technique ensured that each subgroup (various colleges, males and females) was fairly represented in the sample.

Questionnaire was used as the instrument for the collection of data in the study. The questionnaire was based on extensive review of literature on the subject for the study. The validity of the instrument was established by a group of research experts in the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. They scrutinised the instrument to verify its content validity. It was established that items on the instrument adequately and accurately measured what they were intended to measure. Reliability was established by using the internal consistency method after conducting a pilot test. Cronbach Alpha Co-efficient of 0.81was obtained for the instrument. This implied that the instrument was reliable for the study.

Several ethical issues were considered in the study. Consent was sought from respondents before the study was carried out. Participant autonomy was also ensured in which the participants were not forced to answer the questionnaire in a way desired by the researcher. Consideration was also given to anonymity and confidentiality. With anonymity, the questionnaire did not require the names of participants and their exact ages. In the case of confidentiality, the privacy of the data collected was ensured. Also, the information provided by participants were not shared indiscriminately. Data were analysed descriptively using means and standard deviations.

4. Results

4.1. Social network sites students in Colleges of Education in Ghana use

The study aimed to find out the social network sites that students in Colleges of Education in Ghana use. The respondents were asked a series of questions to which they had to respond. Firstly, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they use social network sites. Their responses are shown in Table 1.

Answers	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Yes	190	100.0
No	-	-
Total	190	100.0

Table 1: *Usage of Social Network Sites by Students*
Source: Field Work (2021)

It is revealed in Table 1 that all the 190 respondents responded yes to the question of whether they were using social network sites. The implication is that all the respondents were using social media. The respondents were then asked to indicate the social network sites that they use. This was on a multiple response scale and so the respondents could indicate as many as they wished. The results are shown in table 2.

Social Network Sites	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Facebook	139	73.2
WhatsApp	180	94.7
Instagram	110	57.9
Twitter	103	54.2
2go	60	31.6
Viber	66	34.7
YouTube	135	71.1
Telegram	44	23.2
Snapchat	86	45.3

Table 2: Social Network Sites Used by Students
N=190
Source: Field Work (2021)

Table 2 shows that the most common social media network used by the respondents was WhatsApp (180, 94.7%). This was followed by Facebook (139, 73.2%), YouTube (135, 71.1%), Instagram (110, 57.9%) and Twitter (103, 54.2%). Based on the results, however, the least common social network sites used by the respondents were Telegram, 2go and Viber. It is inferred from the results therefore that WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter are the social network sites mostly used by the respondents.

4.2. Amount of Time Students in Colleges of Education in Ghana Spend on Social Media
The study aimed at finding out the amount of time that students spent on social media. The respondents were asked a series of questions to find out the time they spent on social media. The results are presented in Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Device	Frequency	Percentage
Mobile Phone	190	100.0
Laptop	112	58.9
School Computer	85	44.7
I-pad / Tablet	88	46.3

Table 3: Device Used in Accessing Social Media Sites
N=190
Source: Field work (2021)

All the respondents (100%) indicated that they used mobile phones in accessing social media sites. After this, the respondents were asked to indicate the average number of hours that they spent using social media in a day. The responses are shown in Table 4.

Average Hours	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Less than 3 hours	38	20.0
3 – 5 hours	53	27.9
6 – 10 hours	56	29.5
Above 10 hours	43	22.6
Total	190	100.0

Table 4: Hours of Social Media Use in a Day
Source: Field work (2021)

In Table 4, it is evident that 29.5% of the respondents used social media for six to 10 hours in a day. Again, the respondents were asked to indicate the average number of days they use social media. The views of the respondents are presented in Table 5.

Number of Days	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Less than 3 days	40	21.1
3 – 5 days	61	32.1
Above 5 days	89	46.8
Total	190	100.0

Table 5: Number of Days of Social Media Use
Source: Field Work (2021)

In Table 5, 46.8% of the respondents indicated that they used social media for an average of above five days. Also, 32.1% of the respondents used social media for an average of three to five days. Overall, it can be inferred that most students use an average of more than five days on social media.

The respondents were also asked to rate their social media usage. The views of the respondents have been presented in Table 6.

Rate	Frequency	Percentage
More than Necessary	86	45.3
Normal	70	36.8
Not Enough	34	17.9
Total	190	100.0

Table 6: Rate of Social Media Usage
Source: Field Work (2021)

In Table 6, 45.3% of the respondents rated their social media usage as being more than necessary. Also, 36.8% of the respondents rated their social media usage as being normal. The views of the respondents are presented in Table 7.

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	106	55.8
No	84	44.2
Total	190	100.0

Table 7: Social Media Interfering with Life
Source: Field Work (2021)

In Table 7, more than half of the respondents (55.8%) considered their social media usage to be interfering with their lives. This agrees with the earlier finding from Table 6 when the respondents rated their social media usage to be more than necessary.

4.3. Influence of Social Media Usage on the Behaviour of Students in Colleges of Education in Ghana
The study sought to find out the influence of social media usage on the behaviour of students in Colleges of Education in Ghana. The data were analysed using means and standard deviations. The results are presented in Table 8.
It is shown in Table 8 that the respondents had learnt several behaviours from social media than real life in recent times (M=3.15, SD=0.95) and that spending much time on social media made them withdraw from people in real life (M=3.12, SD=0.89). The respondents indicated also that they had become addicted to being on social media compared to real life (M=3.10, SD=0.88). In terms of friendships, the respondents indicated that social media had made them become friends with people they would have been friends with in real life (M=3.10, SD=0.78).

Statement	Mean	SD
Spending much time on social media make me withdraw from people in real life	3.12	0.89
I feel pressured to live a life like what I see on social media	3.08	0.92
Social media has made me become friends with people who I would not have become friends with in real life	3.10	0.78
I have learnt several behaviours from social media than real life in recent times	3.15	0.95
I use social media to engage in several behaviours which are not deemed right in real life	2.75	1.01
I have become addicted to being on social media compared to real life	3.10	0.88

Table 8: Influence of Social Media Usage on Behaviour of Students
Source: Field Work (2021)

From the results in Table 8, it is made clear that social media usage influences students in terms of learning new behaviours, making new friends, becoming addicted, being peer pressured while at the same time withdrawing from real life.

5. Discussion
, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter are most widely used social media. This is perfectly in line with Camilia, Sajoh, and Dalhtu (2013) and Asemah, Okpanachi and Edegoh (2013). Ouedera and Abousaberb (2018) and Osharive (2015) examined the influence of social media and academic performance of students in the University of Lagos. The results revealed finally that social media usage influences students in terms of learning new behaviours, making new friends, becoming addicted, being peer pressured while at the same time withdrawing from real life. In present times when most young people spend all their time on social media, their behaviours are likely to be influenced more by social media

than reality. These findings confirm the findings of Olubiyi (2012) that students have been so engrossed in social media activities that they become withdrawn from real life activities and become addicted with social media. In a similar vein, Talaue *et al.* (2018), assessed the impact of social media on academic performance of selected college students and revealed that social networks becomes an integral part of the students' full life, took up most of their free time and make them act and behave in ways similar to what they see on social media.

6. Conclusions

From the findings, it was concluded that most students in Colleges of Education spent a lot of their time on social media particularly on WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. The time they spent on social media was more than necessary and as such social media usage was interfering with their lives.

7. Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations are made:
- Authorities of Colleges of Education should organize workshops for students on the proper usage of social media.
- Students should be encouraged by tutors and college authorities to reduce the time that they spend on social media.

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