

Usage Intensity of Social Media and Academic Performance



Radziah Mahmud, Mustaffa Bukhari

Abstract: *Current students are constantly engaged with social media platforms not only for entertainment and interaction, but also to gain and share information. Even though various studies have been conducted on the use of social media in education, there is lack of evidence on the influence of social media on accounting students particularly in Malaysian setting. This study aims to investigate the impact of the usage intensity of social media on accounting students' performance. It is discovered that the utilization of social media in their learning activities has influenced the student's academic achievement after considering their proficiency and gender. In contrast, social presence and social interaction have no impact on the students' performance.*

Keywords: *Social media usage, intensity, performance*

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of the social media usage mostly affects the millennial generation. This generation refers to those who were born between the year 1980 and the year 2000 (Partridge & Hallam, 2006). The current students in Malaysian universities are regarded as millennial generation since most of them were born during that period. They possess different characteristics that distinguish them from their predecessors since they have been living their entire life receiving digital input through modern digital technologies (Prensky & Berry, 2001). Preference on indoor activities, spending long hours on video games and television; and communicating through their hand phones will lead to the intense usage of social media.

Social media refers to any platform of technological systems including blogs, social networking site, virtual social world and wikis. The use of social media allows students not only for social interaction and entertainment purposes but also for creating, disseminating, and bookmarking the information and network at an amazing rate (Bolton, Parasuraman, Hoefnagels, Migchels, Kabadayi, Gruber, Loureiro & Solnet, 2013; Jha & Bhardwaj, 2012; Kim, Sohn & Choi, 2011; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zichuhr, 2010).

Current educational environment has been influenced by the evolution in digital technology (Gutmann, Lübeck, Berberat, Fischer, Engelhardt, & Sarikas, 2015). Social media has been embedded into learning platform for information-sharing, interaction and engagement through virtual classrooms in lieu of conventional classroom setting (Al-Rahmi & Zeki, 2017; Blattner & Fiori, 2009). It is suggested that social media can be utilized in learning process since it can enhance the learning activities and assists students in completing their course works (Al-Rahmi, Alias, Othman, Marin & Tur, 2018). Even though many studies on the association between social media and academic performance has been done using Malaysian higher education setting (Al-Rahmi et. al, 2018; Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009; Selwyn & Grant, 2009; Zakaria, Watson, & Edwards, 2010), there is still lack of evidence on the influence of the social media usage on accounting students' academic performance.

Applying social learning theory, this study investigates whether the academic performance particularly accounting students' performance is being influenced by their usage intensity of social media after considering their proficiency and gender difference.

II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

A. Usage Intensity of Social Media and Performance

Previous literature suggests that usage intensity of social media has influence on students' performance positively and negatively. The use of social media in higher education may develop networking, encourage learning motivation, offer personalized study materials and enhance collaborative abilities (Rifkin, Longnecker, Leach & Ortia, 2009). Students utilize social media for several reasons. Among others, they use social media for social interaction (Clayton, Osborne, Miller & Oberle, 2013), educational purposes (Roblyer, Mc Daniel, Webb, Herman, & Witty, 2010) and social presence (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Cheung, Chiu & Lee, 2011). Through social interaction, students will acquire new knowledge and exchange information as well as support each other (Lenhart et. al, 2010; Thackeray, Neiger, Smith, & Van Wagenen, 2012; Olson, Liu & Shultz, 2012). In educational setting, proper utilization of social media assists students in studying, completing class projects and assignments as well as supporting different learning styles (Selwyn, 2007).

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Gefen and Straub (2004) propose that the presence of online friends in social media is seen as essential since it has impact on human interaction which is similar to face-to-face communication. Wang and Wu (2008) suggest that performance is improved when the interaction with peers is appropriately regulated as the use of social media may adversely affect the students' performance when social media usage is not taken cautiously. It is suggested that the intense usage of social media may have detrimental effect on students' performance (Kolan & Dzandza, 2018; Maya, 2015). It could be due to obsession and distraction caused by the social media that may divert their concentration during learning activities.

B. Proficiency and performance

Another factor that may influence students' performance is their academic proficiency which refers to their academic ability, skills and competence within the subject matter (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). Consistent with student-centered learning approach, university students are required to take control of their own learning (Marioara, 2015) by working independently, organizing their own study materials, managing their time and monitoring the knowledge (Cassidy & Eachus, 2000 and Shanmugam et al. 2019b). Students can learn better considering their different learning styles and preference which will lead to different level of proficiency. High proficiency students generally believe in themselves, more motivated, possess good habits and higher self-confidence (Ainin, Naqshbandi, Moghavvemi & Jaafar, 2015) which will contribute to better performance as compared to those who have lower proficiency. Thus, it is expected that students' proficiency is positively associated with their academic performance (Cassidy & Eachus, 2000).

C. Gender and performance

Gender has been regarded as essential element that has been deliberated over long period of time especially on women. Literature posits that women seem to outperform men in education (Marcenaro-Gutierrez, Lopz-Agudo & Ropero-Garcia, 2018; Pirmohamed, Debowska, Boduszek, 2017; Pomerantz, Altermatt, & Saxon, 2002). It could be due to better attitude, higher motivation, better time management and better personal- testing strategies.

III. METHODOLOGY

The sample of this study was taken from Accounting students in local public and private universities in Malacca, one of Malaysian states, due to their age ranging from 19 to 23 years old which were around the age of maturity (Stone, 2008). Using questionnaire survey adopted from previous literature, it was distributed to the respondents after pilot test had been performed. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section A was related to demographic questions whereas Sections B represented the question on the student's proficiency. The usage intensity of social media was asked in Section C.

The dependent variable of this study would be the student performance measured using the student's Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). The independent variable was the usage intensity of social media measured by social interaction, social presence and education purposes (Ainin et

al, 2015). Control variables included were proficiency and gender. Following Ainin at al. (2015); Shanmugam & Nadesan (2019) and Yu, Tian, Vogel, & Kwok (2010), proficiency was measured using checklists and rating scales.

The data in this study were analyzed using SPSS. The Cronbach Alpha obtained was 0.855 indicating that the instrument used was reliable (George & Mallery, 2010). In determining whether usage intensity of social media has any influence on academic performance, the following equation was used in this study after controlling for proficiency and gender:

$$Performance_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Intensity_i + \beta_2 Proficiency_i + \beta_3 Gender_i + \epsilon_i$$

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. Descriptive Statistics

Results shown in Table 1 denotes that 21.2% of the respondents are male students and the balance of 78.8% of the respondents are female students. This finding is common in Malaysian scenario since majority of the students are female. Almost 80% of the students obtain CGPA of 3.00 and above indicating that most of the students perform well academically.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

| | No. | % |
|----------------|-----|------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 24 | 21.2 |
| Female | 89 | 78.8 |
| CGPA | | |
| 3.00 and above | 90 | 79.6 |
| Below 3.00 | 23 | 20.4 |

The frequency of usage intensity of social media and proficiency is summarized in Table 2 below. The finding posits that the usage of social media for learning purposes is high. 69% of the respondents claim that they use social media for studying purposes and around 69% state that they use social media platform in completing their course work including assignments and projects. While around 64% of the respondents claim that social presence is the reason for using the social media, around 60% perceive that the social media is used for social interaction. With regards to proficiency, the respondents claim that around 81% of them possess the ability and competence in completing their tasks and only 19% notice that they have insufficient proficiency.

Table 2: Frequency of Usage Intensity of Social Media and Proficiency

| | AGREE | DISAGREE |
|--------------------|-------|----------|
| Social presence | 63.7% | 36.3% |
| Social Interaction | 59.3% | 40.7% |
| Studying | 69% | 31% |
| Course work | 60.2% | 39.8% |
| Proficiency | 80.6% | 19.4% |

B. Multiple Regression

After normality tests and other multiple regression assumptions have been taken into consideration, the results from regression model are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Multiple Regression

| Variables | β | <i>t</i> | Sig | |
|--------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------------------------------|
| Constant | 2.531 | 12.708 | 0.000*** | |
| Social presence | -0.005 | -0.153 | 0.878 | |
| Social interaction | -0.015 | -0.508 | 0.613 | Adjusted R ² = 0.1510 |
| Studying | -0.0862 | -2.233 | 0.028** | F-value =4.321 *** |
| Course work | 0.062 | 1.738 | 0.085* | |
| Proficiency | 0.049 | 3.833 | 0.000*** | |
| Gender | 0.110 | 1.893 | 0.061* | |

***, ** and * indicate significance at the level of 1%, 5% and 10% respectively

The multiple regression results suggest that while social presence and social interaction have no influence on academic performance; it seems that the use of social media for learning purposes has significant influence on students' academic performance. With regards to studying purposes, the academic performance is adversely affected by the exploitation of social media. In contrast, the students utilize this medium in completing coursework improves the students' performance. For control variables, both proficiency and gender have positive association with academic performance.

C. Discussion of Findings

This study proposes that usage of social media for learning activities has influence on students' performance. The result supports the finding in Kirshner and Karpinski (2010) that the use of social media in studying may not provide benefits to the students. Social media may distract the students from study and cause reduction in class preparation time. Even though it is occasionally utilized for learning purposes, students may perceive that social media is not meant for formal learning (Madge et. al., 2009). Consistent with Junco (2012) and Manca and Ranieri (2016), social media will produce positive impact on the students' performance by assisting them in doing their course work. Students' performance is not influenced by social presence and social interaction which is consistent with finding in a study done by Pasek and Hargittai (2009), Shanmugam et al. (2019a), and Kolek and Saunders (2008). This finding suggests that the existence of social media for social presence and interaction does not affect the performance.

Considering students' proficiency, this study opines that higher students' proficiency will lead to better academic performance. In line with Marioara (2015) and Cassidy & Eachus (2000), through independency, good time management and well-organized materials, students who are able to take their responsibility better will perform well. This study confirms the finding in Marcenaro-Gutierrez et. al (2018), Lopz-Agudo & Roperro-Garcia (2018), Pirmohamed et. al (2017) and Pomerantz et. al (2002) that female students outperform male students academically. As suggested by Pomerantz et. al (2002), female students are stressing themselves to ensure they perform better even when they have achieved the reasonable level.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORKS

This study infers that the usage intensity of social media for learning activities has influence on the academic performance

of Malaysian accounting students. However, social presence and social interaction have no influence on students' performance. With respect to control variables, high proficiency and female students are observed to have better academic performance.

The findings are anticipated to enlighten the academicians that the usage of social media in learning activities, to a certain extent, could contribute to improvement in learning process. Besides providing insight knowledge on the use of social media by accounting students, this study offers an awareness that the use of social media without proper guidance may detriment the performance of the students. Relevant authorities in education should develop guidelines on how the utilization of social media will promote students' positive engagement on the learning process.

There are a few limitations relating to this study. This study is carried out in only a state in Malaysia. Larger sample from other states should be used to provide the robustness of the results. Future research should include factor analysis as it could offer more accurate results on the impact of usage intensity of social media on students' performance.

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