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THE IMPACT ON USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SABAH – A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

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Abstract:

This is a conceptual paper that attempts to show that social media can improve the academic performance of university students. The study assumes that it is interesting to investigate the impact of social media on university students' academic performance, given the explosion in the number and use of social media sites worldwide. In addition, social media offers new opportunities to engage learners and teachers and can also be used in face-to-face, blended and e-learning settings. This paper highlights the benefits of using social media for effective communication between lecturers and students, and students and fellow students during the online teaching and learning process. Interestingly, the literature in this area also highlights the benefits and risks of using social media in teaching and learning. The findings of the study will also be useful for academics, researchers and policy makers in the context of innovations in teaching and learning.

Keywords:

Academic Performance, E-learning, Social Media, Teaching and Learning, Tertiary Education

Introduction

The recent outbreak of COVID -19 poses a major challenge to educational institutions and has also thrown the global economy into turmoil. As a result of the pandemic, higher education in most countries has shifted to the Internet, reflecting the need for increased training of teachers in digital technology, especially in countries and institutions that are adopting e-learning for the first time (Sobaih et al., 2022). According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2020), e-learning means "learning by studying at home using computers and courses on the Internet". According to Maslo et al. (2020) and Widodo et al., (2020), e-learning provides multimedia content that students can select or personalise and use in online and offline learning scenarios, while increasing the accessibility, cost and productivity of education. As Abdullah (2018) mentions, online learning through electronic learning (e-learning) is a type of learning used for distance education. The concept of e-learning in this study refers to a network that enables the transfer of skills and knowledge and the delivery of education to a large number of recipients at the same or different times (Economic Times, 2020).

The use of social media platforms in education is increasing day by day. As social media users engage with such services, they tend to develop highly interactive platforms where students can create or share ideas and discuss information (Davis et al., 2015). Social media encourages interaction between teachers, professionals, students, communities and large companies, and according to Avcı et al., (2015), the use of social media in education provides students with the opportunity to obtain more useful information and other educational systems that facilitate education. The study by Chandrasena and Ilankoon (2022) investigated how students perceive the use of social media for academic purposes. Most of them preferred WhatsApp as a method of communicating with lecturers, followed by email, Google Classroom and LMS.

As noted by Pekkala and van Zoonen (2021), the use of social media has become an integral part of intellectual work and students who post study-related material on social media platforms are seen as a reliable source of information that is important to any community, such as students, clients and staff, which is in line with Avcı et al., (2015). With the availability of smartphones and other mobile computers, social media has changed the way people communicate and interact. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn are increasingly used to connect the community of learners and also teachers. It can be said that people live on social media, as teenagers and young adults worldwide spend an average of 188 minutes per day on social media, as reported by Statista (2021).

As mentioned by Al-Rahmi and Othman (2013), there are several reviews and opinions that recognise the four main benefits of using social media in higher education, namely fostering relationships, improving motivation to learn, offering personalised course materials and developing collaborative skills (Wheeler et al, 2008; Rifkin et al., 2012). Furthermore, the role of social media in education is not limited to the educational context (teaching and learning), but also plays an important role in marketing, advertising and generally reaching out to students through updates and announcements.

Social media has revolutionised the formal and informal sharing of knowledge and information by individuals, groups and organisations, enabled effective knowledge exchange and positively impacted the use of educational platforms as it can facilitate the sharing of scholarly knowledge

(Khan et al., 2021). However, the main focus of this article is on the impact of social media as a tool for teaching and learning activities and the impact on academic performance.

Problem Statement

Greenhow and Lewin (2016) pointed out that students engage in formal, informal and non-formal learning in a variety of contexts, and to a significant extent can determine how they learn, when they learn and with whom. Despite the many potential benefits of incorporating social media into higher education and the extent to which it is used by both faculty and students for non-formal educational purposes, there is a large "gap between the extent of positive perceptions of social media and the extent of practical use". (Keenan, Slater and Matthan, 2018). There are both benefits and risks to using social media. Some researchers have found that excessive use of social media has a bad effect and influence and sometimes does not improve learning or the learning process in school (Karpinkski and Duberstein, 2009; Wang et al., 2011). The study finds it interesting to investigate the impact of social media on academic performance of university students in Sabah. As mentioned by Al Rahmi et al., (2022) and Papademetriou et al., (2022), educators should not consider and acknowledge social media as an 'appendage' but as a detailed plan for successful teaching that facilitates the pedagogical transition to the use of social media technologies. On the other hand, the study believes that university faculties should incorporate social media into the teaching and learning process. The study aims to contribute to the literature in this area and to highlight the benefits and risks associated with the use of social media in teaching and learning (TnL).

Objectives of the Study

This study attempts to show that social media can improve the academic performance of university students. The use of social media in education provides students with the opportunity to obtain more useful information, they can connect with learning groups and other educational systems that make education convenient. The proposed framework for this study was adopted from Al-Rahmi and Othman (2013) and Ansari and Khan (2020). (Figure 1). Collaborative learning as a facilitator in the original framework has been omitted and replaced with student engagement. This study will also identify the opportunities and challenges of social media for TnL among university students. Given the problems and challenges facing the country in profiling the use of social media and its impact on higher education, it is timely and very important to conduct this study. This type of study has not been conducted in Sabah before. This study is important for the education sector and also for stakeholders to ascertain the progress and development of teaching and learning in educational institutions in the state.
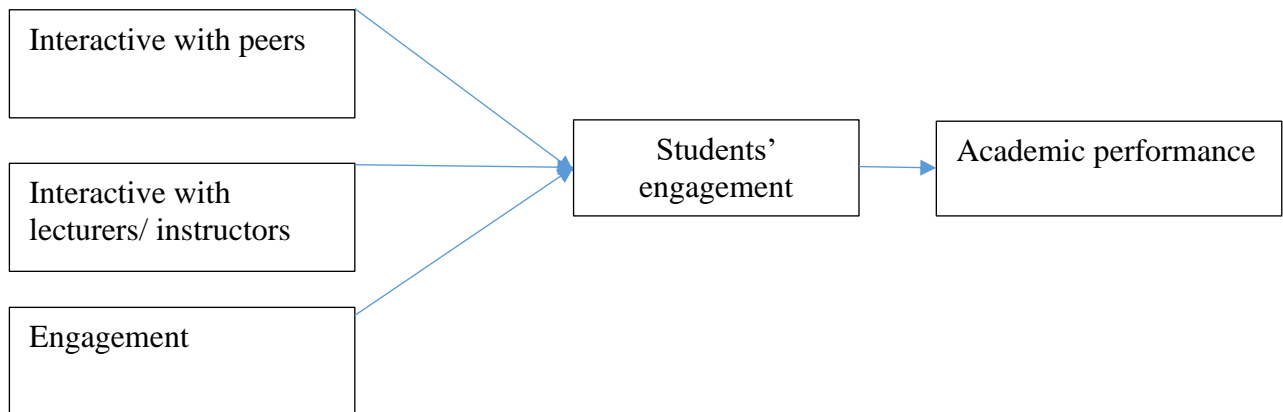
Figure 1: Propose Framework
Source: Adopted from Al-Rahmi and Othman (2013); Ansari and Khan (2020)

Literature Review

The discussion in this section begins with teaching and learning (TnL) through social media and how the activities affect academic achievement, followed by the problems and opportunities in TnL in social media.

Teaching and Learning (TnL) through Social Media

As Dabner (2012) mentions, appropriate use of social media can lead to improved student learning through a better process of communication, interaction and cooperation in the social network. As members of the internet generation or natives of the digital age worldwide, today's students typically develop highly interactive platforms through social media to create or share ideas and discuss information or previously published online content in user-created groups (Sanchez et al., 2016; Niculović et al., 2014).

According to Alwi et al., (2014), technology should be used effectively, especially in the timely dissemination of information and knowledge to intended recipients. Since communication between lecturers and students is one of the most important elements of a successful TnL process, it is high time for IT -savvy students and tech-savvy lecturers to take full advantage of digital social media applications and use them wisely. As discussed by Maatuk et al., (2022), technology-enabled TnL requires the use of the Internet and other essential tools to create instructional materials, train learners and manage courses in an organisation. It also increases the effectiveness of knowledge and skills by providing access to a vast amount of data and strengthening collaboration and also relationships that promote learning.

Abousaber and Oueder (2018) noted that social media has improved communication between lecturers and students, facilitating the communication of the right information and improving the understanding and development of ideas and courses. In line with Alghizzawi et al. (2019), they believe that social media has revolutionised the formal and informal sharing of knowledge and information by individuals, groups and organisations, enabling effective knowledge sharing. They also mentioned that social media also has a positive impact on the use of educational platforms as it can facilitate the transfer of academic knowledge. As mentioned by Sobaih et al., (2022), social media could be a way for students to build social networks with other students of the same level to support each other and could be partially integrated into traditional teaching to improve learning outcomes.

Effects of Social Media on Academic Performance

Iqbal et al., (2018), in a study on the impact of social media use on academic performance of university students in Azar Kashmir, found that the use of social media for academic activities *"significantly positively affects students' academic performance as measured by cumulative grade point average (CGPA)".* In the same vein, Abdulkareem et al., (2020) state that many students use social media as a tool to understand some problematic issues in their courses and form groups to share information. The study goes on to say that respondents who used social media as a teaching tool indicated that it had a positive impact on their performance.

According to Hattie, et al (1996), the right and appropriate learning strategies are a way to improve students' and teachers' academic outcomes many times over. In today's situation, technology should be used effectively, especially to deliver information and knowledge to the desired recipients in a timely manner. TnL through social media provides good feedback and benefits that can impact education, of course with proper guidance to ensure it is used appropriately. Although using social media in teaching and learning can sometimes be challenging for teachers, education will be successful through effective collaboration between teachers and students if students are engaged in their own learning (Alwi, et al., 2014; Helou and Rahim, 2014). Ansari and Khan (2020) confirmed that the use of social media for collaborative learning purposes and interaction with peers and teachers or lecturers has a positive impact on academic performance. They added that the introduction of this sophisticated communication technology would bring revolutionary, drastic changes in higher education for collaborative learning.

There are studies that show that social media has a negative impact on students' academic performance that far outweighs the benefits. Some researchers studied the relationship between social media use among university students and their academic performance and found a bad effect and influence when the media is used so excessively that it does not improve learning or the learning process academically. Englander et al., (2010) found that social media is negatively related to students' academic performance and may be more crucial than its benefits. Shi et al., (2020) confirm that many students associate user-generated content with social networking functions, and they further state that social media can be used to build and maintain social bonds, share information, communicate and entertain, which is also supported by Avcı (2015). The use of technologies such as social media is one of the crucial factors that can positively or negatively influence students' academic performance.

Based on the findings of this proposed study, universities and other higher education institutions could harness the positive impact of social media on TnL processes. Government regulators responsible for overseeing internet activities, such as the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) in Malaysia and the Ministry of Higher Education, could also benefit from the study to outline or improve existing guidelines on internet use in general or specifically on social media use for students (Helou and Rahim, 2014; Alwi et al., 2014). These guidelines will help students, parents and guardians to monitor or appropriately advise on social media use.

Supported by Abousaber and Oueder, (2018), institutions should focus on promoting social media not only as a communication and entertainment tool, but also as a learning tool. For all the benefits social media offers in terms of convenience, it should never be forgotten that these platforms should also be used for academic purposes (Joehanna, et al., 2020). As long as social

media is used for its specific purpose in academic activities, one cannot go wrong in taking full advantage of it to promote students' academic performance.

Opportunities and Challenges for use of Social Media in Higher Education

The addition of social media components increases potential value by enabling the personalisation of learning experiences according to one's interests, one's learning goals and one's preferences in terms of participation, online communities and social media platforms (Gruzd, et al., 2016). Anderson (2019) added that social media also has a number of positive attributes in terms of professional development and networking for teachers and researchers. Educators have new opportunities to connect with students and, equally important, means to monitor and intervene in student learning to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Ansari and Khan (2020) have found that the use of online social media helps students to become more creative and dynamic and to connect with the global teacher for collaborative learning.

Anderson (2019) noted that the price for these benefits is currently reduced user privacy and control. Continuous monitoring, research and control of monitors is crucial for the development of educational quality and opportunities. The challenges identified by Li and Wong (2021) are related to the blurring of boundaries between students' public and private lives and between student-faculty relationships, as well as questionable effectiveness for knowledge construction, insufficient pedagogical and technological skills of lecturers, and lack of integration into instructional design.

Implication and Conclusion

This study will help the higher education sector in Sabah to recognise the advancement and development of social media as a teaching and learning tool. The students and lecturers will benefit from the findings and at the same time, both parties will be able to use social media and play their role in using social media as an effective TnL tool. According to Sobaih et al., (2022), the use of social media in an educational context can enhance learning, increase participation and engagement, disseminate content well and improve pedagogy. Moreover, social media could be a way for students to build social networks with other students of the same level to support each other globally. They also mentioned that social media could also be partially used in the traditional classroom to improve learning outcomes. It is expected that the proposed study will contribute to the literature and provide a reference for the topic of social media in TnL in Sabah. It is expected that this study will also open up space for many other studies on social media and teaching and learning. The findings of the study will also be useful for academics, researchers and policy makers in the context of innovation in teaching and learning. As mentioned by Alshuaibi et al., (2015); Azlan and Yunus (2020), one of the potential benefits of integrating social media in learning activities is a useful tool to enhance students' learning experience.

Acknowledgements

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