

Social Media Use and Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students in South African Higher Institutions: The Case of the University of Zululand

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ABSTRACT The study investigated the effects of social media use on the academic performance of undergraduate students. 68 participants were selected among students of the University of Zululand. A survey was conducted using a five-level Likert scale to determine if use of social media has an effect on academic performance of students at the University of Zululand. In the first stage of analysis of the research results, responses (n = 68) were summarized using Principal Components Analysis (PCA) to determine the extent of contribution of Likert scale items to the variables under study. Variables extracted were subsequently correlated and relationships uncovered using bivariate correlations. These analyses uncovered relationships between 'familiarity with social networks', 'use of social networks' and the 'academic performance' rates of students. The analysis further uncovered the relationships between 'time spent on academic activities', 'time spent on social media' and the 'classroom participation rate' of students. The results of the study indicated that familiarity with social networks results in excessive use of social networks and the time spent on academic activities. The results further showed that time spent on social media predicts students' academic pass rate and that classroom participation results in better academic pass rate. It was, therefore, recommended that students should limit the huge number of social networks they use to a more reasonable number, which would allow them to be able to give attention to school related activities.