

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.

INTRODUCTION

Social media use has become a phenomenon of the current generation. An estimated 970 million people were reported to have been using social media in the year 2010, according to the Statistics Portal (2014). The number increased to 1.79 billion users in 2014 worldwide and a forecast suggests that there will be 2.13 billion users in 2016 (Social Bakers 2014). These statistics give an indication that social media usage has rapidly increased worldwide and people will continue using social media in the future. In South Africa, the leading social media used is Facebook, with 9.4 million active users by 2013. Other frequent social networks used in South Africa are Mxit, with 6 million users, WhatsApp, 2Go and Twitter, which increased the number of users in 2014 (South African Social Media Land-

scape 2015). Social media is mostly popular amongst young adults (Social Bakers 2014). The dominant age group that uses social media ranges from 15-25 years, which suggests that college students constitute a sizable number of social network users. Therefore, college and university students are the most common users of social media in comparison to other groups of people in the world.

Social Media and the Academe

Social media websites offer a unique prospect for students to connect with several interesting social networks. These networks allow for connections with potential friends, new university classmates/roommates, fellow campus organization members, as well as family members. These networking sites likewise create potential pitfall for student engagement professionals. Websites, such as Facebook, may enable students to engage in social relationships, increase their stock of social capital and provide them with better access to academic resources. However, such networking sites also inadvert-

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ently lead to diminished communication skills, information overload, disconnection from pre-university networks and diminished academic performance (Wankel and Wankel 2011). Junco (2012) argues that social media is largely used by first year and sophomore students at a university institution. Social media enhance identity expression, exploration and experimentation, which are innate to the human experience (Warburton and Hatzipanagos 2013).

Social Media and Academic Performance

The improved use of websites has become a universal sensation. What arose as a hobby for computer literate people has become a social norm for many (Ellison et al. 2007). Teenagers have found these sites useful for contacting and sharing information with their peers. The sites have also enabled young people to reinvent their personalities, and show off their social lives (Ellison et al. 2007). While this increase in the use of technology is supportive of people getting together, young users often experience poor performance in their schoolwork. Thus, social media use is becoming a negative factor in academic performance of students in spite of its known advantages. The continued use by young people is now leading to what has been termed 'Internet addiction'. Addiction eventually sets back users' personal and professional lives, and this culminates in lowered academic performance for those in school. Users of Facebook often devoted less time to studying compared to non-users. This resulted in lower Grade Point Averages. Time spent on social networks is significantly correlated with the performance of students. Other predictors of academic performance include time spent preparing (material) for classes (Junco 2012).

Robyler (2010) reported continued decline in grades among students who used social networks. Similarly, Haq and Chand (2012) found that Facebook use adversely influence academic performance. They, however, reported that while male and female students spent equal amounts of time on the Internet, the latter spent more time on Facebook. Males however, had more 'friends'. This led them to conclude that Facebook use had more negative effect on males' performance than females'. Conversely, however, Lamia (2013) reported that students using the Internet often performed better in a reading skills test.

The attention span devoted to multiple sources of attractions is important in conceptualizing students' academic performance. Paul et al. (2012) reported a negative association between time spent online and academic performance. This underscores the importance of using social media wisely in pursuit of productive ends classrooms and at home. Social network use is related to personalities of students. Rouis et al. (2011) found that Facebook use among extroverts often led to declined performance. They concluded that students who engaged in 'self-regulation' and 'goal orientation', and thus, more able to control their levels of involvement in social activities, have a better chance of improving their academic performances.

The increasing use of these sites thus necessitates that parents and teachers monitor their use by young students. Students' increased use of these sites creates challenges for education professionals. However, keeping up to date with these become challenging due to the speed at which new technologies are being uncovered in the market.

The Present Study

Academic excellence should be a priority for all university students. Therefore, it is imperative that one's academic performance is of good standard. Conceptual academic performance is showing knowledge in the classroom and operational is the accumulation grade point average of the student (Rubin et al. 2010). Past studies of social network use and academic performance in South African universities have not shown much variety of social media use. Studies have limited the source by focusing on only one social networking site. The variety of social media used by young adults has different rages. One social network could be used for academic purposes, like gathering information, or social purposes by interacting with different people and socializing online. Therefore, this paper was aimed at investigating if social media use has an effect on academic performance. This paper is important as it may assist in promoting awareness of factors preventing good academic performance. According to Yazedijian et al. (2008), some students have stated that *Facebook* can distract them from academic pursuits. Moreover, Gemmill and Peterson (2006) argue that computer-mediated communication like the chat func-

tion on social networking sites might interrupt schoolwork. Other studies suggest that Facebook usage is negatively correlated with lower levels of education involvement and the development of effective study skills. The present study, thus, hypothesized as follows:

H1: There is a correlation between students' use of social media and their level of academic performance.

H2: There is a correlation between students' use of social media and time spent studying.

H3: There is a correlation between time spent on social networks and participation of student in class activities.

H4: The correlation between time spent on social media and students' academic performance is mediated by the amount of friends and followers.

METHODOLOGY

The population of the study consisted of students at the University of Zululand. The university comprises of 16,000 registered students. Using a cluster sampling strategy, the student population was divided into three sections of residences inside the university, namely, the east, middle east and east residences. In each section the researchers picked two residents, a male and a female. Using the Raosoft sample size calculator online (<http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>) and based on the estimated population of students at the University of Zululand, at a standard error margin of ten percent, a confidence level of ninety percent, and a fifty percent response distribution, a sample size of 68 was derived. Copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the sampled students at their respective residences. The questionnaires were distributed personally by the researchers and completed by the respondents in the presence of the researchers. Data was analyzed using SPSS 22.0.

Table 1: KMO and BTS results

	<i>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</i>	<i>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
FAMSOC	.814	556.021	.55	.000
USEOFSM	.803	466.210	.55	.000
ACARATE	.853	353.941	.45	.000
TIMEONACA	.851	348.538	.45	.057
TIMEONSM	.754	350.913	.55	.000
CLASSRATE	.854	448.680	.45	.000

RESULTS

Scales and Measures

Familiarity with Social Networks (FAMSOC)

The variable Familiarity with Social Network (FAMSOC) deciphered respondents' level of familiarity with social media. FAMSOC was computed electronically using Principal Components Analysis (PCA) on eleven questionnaire items. The PCA (see Table 1) showed KMO = .814, BTS, $X^2 = 556.021$, ($df = 55$), $p < 0.05$ indicating that the sample size was adequate for factor reduction. PCA electronically extracted only one factor, named FAMSOC, accounting for 55.031 percent variance (see Table 1).

Use of Social Networks (USEOFSM)

USEOFSM was derived electronically through PCA from eleven questionnaire items. The PCA (see Table 1) produced KMO = .803, BTS, $X^2 = 466.210$, ($df = 55$), $p < 0.05$ confirming sample size adequacy for the factor reduction. PCA extracted only one factor, named USEOFSM, which accounts for 50.692 percent of variance (shown in Table 1). Other subdimensions become irrelevant for extraction after the USEOFSM was extracted.

Academic Rate (ACARATE)

In order to decipher self-reported academic performance rate among students, the variable ACARATE was computed by PCA from ten items on the questionnaire. PCA (see Table 1) showed KMO = .853, BTS, $X^2 = 353.941$, ($df = 55$), $p < 0.05$ indicating that the sample size was adequate for factor reduction. PCA extracted only one factor, named ACARATE, which accounts for 54.398 percent of variance (see Table 1). Oth-

er dimensions become unfeasible for extraction purposes after the ACARATE has been extracted.

Time Spent on Academic Activities (TIMEONACA)

Time spent on academic activities by students was measured using the variable TIMEONACA. The variable was computed via PCA from a list of ten questionnaire items. PCA (see Table 1) produced KMO = .851, BTS, $X^2 = 348.538$, ($df = 45$), $p < 0.05$ indicating sample size adequacy for factor reduction. PCA extracted only one factor, TIMEONACA, accounting for 51.006 percent variance (see Table 1). Other factors lose relevance for extraction purposes once the variable TIMEONACA was extracted.

Time Spent on Social Media (TIMEONSM)

TIMEONSM was constructed electronically through PCA from eleven questionnaire items. The PCA (see Table 1) revealed KMO = .754, BTS, $X^2 = 350.913$, ($df = 55$), $p < 0.05$ indicating that the sample size was adequate for factor reduction. PCA extracted only one factor, TIMEONSM, which accounted for 41.764 percent of total variance (see Table 1). All other factors became irrelevant for extraction once TIMEONSM was extracted.

Classroom Participation Rate (CLASSRATE)

Classroom participation rate among students, CLASSRATE was computed electronically through PCA from a list of ten items. The PCA (see Table 1) revealed KMO = .854, BTS, $X^2 = 448.680$, ($df = 45$), $p < 0.05$ indicating that the sample size was adequate for factor reduction. PCA extracted only one factor, named CLASSRATE, which accounts for 58.767 percent of variance. All other factors became irrelevant for extraction once the variable CLASSRATE was extracted.

Familiarity with Social Networks (FAMSOC)

Social networking entails a whole array of online environs, encompassing what Alexander (2006) construed as Web 2.0 'collaborative environments'. Although many socially collaborative environments were available on the Internet in the 1980s, the advent of social networks

today arose with largely commerce-supported websites, like as *Friendster*, *LinkedIn*, *MySpace* and *Facebook*, in addition to content-sharing oriented sites with partial social network features, like YouTube.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for FAMSOC

	Mean	Std. deviation
Facebook	4.25	.853
Mxit	3.79	1.100
WhatsApp	4.34	.822
2go	3.54	1.125
Twitter	3.72	1.063
Instagram	3.88	1.086
YouTube	4.12	1.044
Wikipedia	3.56	1.214
LinkedIn	3.00	1.446
BBM	3.84	1.074
WeChat	3.01	1.430

As shown in Table 2, the most important item in describing the variable FAMSOC is 'Facebook' with mean=4.25 and SD=.853. This implies that the social network that respondents indicated that they were most familiar with during the study was Facebook. Conversely however, the least in familiarity among the students was LinkedIn with mean = 3.0 and SD = 1.446. This is hardly surprising given the fact that professionals mostly utilize LinkedIn.

Social Demographic Correlates of Familiarity with Social Media (FAMSOC)

Table 3 shows the correlations coefficients for the relationships between social demographic factors and familiarity with social networks. The results showed that 'device used' is correlated with FAMSOC, $r = .431$, $p < 0.05$ (2 tailed) and 'friends and followers' is negatively correlated with FAMSOC, $r = -.567$, $p < 0.05$ (2 tailed), which means H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. The relationships between FAMSOC and other social demographic variables fell below the all acceptable levels of statistical significance. These results support the notion that Facebook is the most widely used social network site. In many studies, as much as two-thirds of adults reported being Facebook users. It has also been shown that females are more likely than males to use Facebook. Facebook, especially more common among youngsters, has registered itself as South Africa's preferred site with strong growth in recent years, overtaking Mxit (South African Social Media Landscape 2015).

Table 3: Zero-order correlations for FAMSOC and demographics

	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Gender						
(2) Age						
(3) Race						
(4) Level of study						
(5) Device used						
(6) Friends and followers						
(7) FAMSOC	.132	-.055	-.012	.203	.431**	-.567**

** . p < 0.01 (2-tailed), * . p < 0.05 (2-tailed)

Use of Social Media (USEOFSN)

Human use of social media is for a variety of reasons. These include the desire for interconnection and interaction with others. Maslow's famous Hierarchy of Needs, included people's desire to achieve a 'sense of belonging' by engaging in relationships with fellow humans. Maslow hypothesized that subsequent to the attainment of physiological and safety needs, people move on to attain the 'need to belong'. Social networks provide the opportunity for people to communicate when they connect on networks through virtual online. People use social networks to acquire knowledge and varieties of opinions on topical issues and occurrences. There are in addition, nascent social media devoted purely to socializing, allowing people to engage in conversations with other people without meeting them in a face-to-face manner.

As can be deduced from Table 4, the most important item in describing the variable USEOFSN is 'Facebook' with mean=4.12 and SD=1.410. This implies that the most widely used social network is Facebook. Interestingly however, the least widely used medium was WeChat with mean = 1.94 and SD = 1.196.

Social Demographic Correlates of USEOFSN

Table 5 depicts correlations coefficients for the relationships between social demographic

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for USEOFSN

	Mean	Std. deviation
Facebook use	4.12	1.140
Mxit use	3.06	1.280
Whatsapp use	3.90	.849
2go use	2.53	1.252
Twitter use	2.72	1.195
Instagram use	2.78	1.208
YouTube use	3.32	1.057
Wikipedia use	2.68	1.202
Linkedin use	2.13	1.303
BBM use	2.87	1.245
WeChat use	1.94	1.196

factors and the use of social networks. Results show that 'device used' is correlated with USEOFSN, $r = .486$, $p < 0.05$ (2 tailed) and 'friends and followers' is negatively correlated with USEOFSN, $r = -.462$, $p < 0.05$ (2 tailed), which means H_0 is rejected and H_2 is accepted. The relationships between USEOFSN correlates with other social demographic variables, fell below acceptable levels of statistical significance. The number of friends and followers determines how much a person uses social networks.

Academic Rate (ACARATE)

Enhancing students' academic performance has major economic and social implications. Researchers and policymakers have therefore been

Table 5: Zero-order correlations for USEOFSN and demographics

	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Gender						
(2) Age						
(3) Race						
(4) Level of study						
(5) Device used						
(6) Friends and followers						
(7) USEOFSN	.125	-.202	.108	.055	.486**	-.462**

** . p < 0.01 (2-tailed), * . p < 0.05 (2-tailed)

interested in the factors that foster improved student performance in order to articulate proper strategies for raising achievement. This is especially more germane in South.

In South Africa, given repeated reports of low pass rates in mathematics and languages, in comparison to other African countries (van der Berg and Louw 2006). Sadly, South African government's own assessments of years of democracy indicate insignificant improvement in educational outcomes, in spite of substantial policy changes (DoE 2004). There is shared agreement among stakeholders that one of the major challenges in South Africa is the declining quality of education. There is however, a dearth of empirical evidence upon which policymakers build policies to enhance student performance in South African schools.

As can be deduced from Table 6, the most important item in describing the variable ACARATE is '*I am always confident when writing a test or exam*' with mean=3.74 and SD=.956.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics for ACARATE

	Mean	Std. deviation
I performed excellently in the last test	3.63	.896
I always score A's in my assignments	3.00	1.281
I am an excellent student	3.34	1.060
I have never failed any test or examination	3.66	1.154
I always perform excellently in my tests	3.59	1.040
I had outstanding marks last semester	3.37	1.021
I always produce good marks for activities	3.50	1.029
I am always confident when writing a test or exam	3.74	.956
I always score good marks in my exams	3.51	1.044
I always score good marks for presentations	3.63	1.050

Table 7 depicts the correlation between social demographic factors and the academic rate. Results show that gender is correlated with ACARATE, $r = .318$, $p < 0.05$ (2 tailed), which means H_0 is rejected and H_3 is accepted. The relationships between ACARATE correlates with other social demographic variables, fell below the levels of statistical significance.

Time on Academic Activities (TIMEONACA)

Academic performance is often influenced by the amount of time spent by students on relevant activities directly related to their schoolwork. Consequently, time spent on schoolwork must be managed efficiently as factors that influence educational outcomes. The use of technology, especially the Internet, influences academic work of students. However, with current overlap between mere use of technology to gain knowledge and the use of social media linked to the same technology for socializing and informal communication presents a challenge to academic work of students. There is therefore, the great need for universities to conceptualize designed and implemented academic development programs that ensure that students take advantage of new technologies without devoting excessive amounts of time to networks that inhibit learning and consequently diminish prospects of academic success (CHE 2014).

As shown in Table 8, the most important item in describing the variable TIMEONACA is '*Preparing for an exam*', mean=3.50, SD=1.191. This implies that the most important activity for which students devote their time for is preparation for examinations. On the other hand, the activity that consumes the least amount of student's time is '*Preparing for the next class*', mean = 2.03, SD = 0.992.

Table 7: Zero-order correlations for ACARATE and demographics

	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Gender						
(2) Age						
(3) Race						
(4) Level of study						
(5) Device used						
(6) Friends and followers						
(7) ACARATE	.318**	-.039	-.083	-.106	-.038	.121

** . $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed), * . $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)

Table 8: Descriptive statistics for TIMEONACA

	Mean	Std. deviation
Reading	2.10	.883
Doing assignments	2.79	.955
Preparing for a test	3.16	1.087
Group work	2.18	.711
Preparing for the next class	2.03	.992
Revising	2.18	1.036
Going to the library	2.28	1.063
Going through your notes	2.29	1.094
Preparing for an exam	3.50	1.191
Preparing for a presentation	3.00	1.079

Social Demographic Correlates of TIMEONACA

Table 9 depicts the correlation between social demographic factors and time spent on academic activities. Results show that 'friends and followers' is correlated with TIMEONACA, $r = .445$, $p < 0.05$ (2 tailed) which means H_0 is rejected and H_4 is accepted. The relationships between TIMEONACA correlates and social demographic variables fell below all levels of statistical significance. Diminished time spent by students on studying and schoolwork is becoming of great concern to academic administrators. This trend is bound to lower academic performance and lead to negative consequences. The literature on academic development has placed much emphasis on personal variables, such as motivation and ability as determinants of academic success. Perhaps the paucity on research in this area is due to commonsense assertion that more time spent studying outside of class positively influences academic performance.

Time Spent On Social Media (TIMEONSM)

Rideout et al. (2010) reported that 8 to 18-year-olds spend double the spent in school each year on social media. In the USA, children aged

8 to 18 spend over 7½ hours daily on social media, watching TV, listening to music and playing video games. Often these children juggle many media simultaneously. New technologies enabling people to receive media through the cell phone has resulted in an increase in media use among young people. This has enabled youths to spend the same amount of time every day surfing the Internet while simultaneously watching television or playing music. The numbers of 8 to 18-year-old people who now own their own cell phones has increased from thirty-nine percent to sixty-six percent (Rideout et al. 2010).

As can be deduced from Table 10, the most important item in describing the variable TIMEONSM is 'Time spent on WhatsApp', mean=3.38, SD=1.372. Students in the study reported that they spent most of their time on WhatsApp, an application that enables people to chat and send short messages for free. They however spent the least amount of time on WeChat, mean = 1.56, SD = 0.817.

Table 10: Descriptive statistics for TIMEONSM

	Mean	Std. deviation
Time spent on Facebook	2.91	1.075
Time spent on Mxit	2.19	1.136
Time spent on Whatsapp	3.38	1.372
Time spent on 2go	1.82	.897
Time spent on Twitter	2.07	.997
Time spent on Instagram	2.13	1.006
Time spent on YouTube	2.74	1.241
Time spent on Wikipedia	2.01	.985
Time spent on LinkedIn	1.72	1.118
Time spent on BBM	2.47	1.310
Time spent on WeChat	1.56	.817

Social Demographic Correlates of TIMEONSM

Table 11 shows the correlation between social demographic factors and time spent on so-

Table 9: Zero-order correlations for TIMEONACA and demographics

	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Gender						
(2) Age						
(3) Race						
(4) Level of study						
(5) Device used						
(6) Friends and followers						
(7) TIMEONACA	.074	-.116	.020	-.101	.012	.445**

** . $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed), * . $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)

Table 11: Zero-order correlations for TIMEONSM and demographics

	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Gender						
(2) Age						
(3) Race						
(4) Level of study						
(5) Device used						
(6) Friends and followers						
(7) TIMEONSM	.166	-.225	.082	.131	.418**	-.425**

** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed), * $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)

cial media. Results show that 'device used' is correlated with TIMEONSM, $r = .418$, $p < 0.05$ (2 tailed), and 'friends and followers' has a negative correlation with TIMEONSM, which means H_0 is rejected and H_5 is accepted. The relationships between TIMEONSM and social demographic variables fell below the levels of statistical significance.

Classroom Participation Rate (CLASSRATE)

Social interaction and effective communication between teachers and students are important to classroom learning. Students' freedom to ask questions, share opinions or to disagree with opinions is essential to learning. Quite often it is through these conversations and discussions between students and teachers that ideas are clarified and assumptions challenged. This process further leads to the attainment of broad learning objectives of skills impartation.

As can be deduced from Table 12, the most important item in describing the variable CLASS-

Table 12: Descriptive statistics for CLASSRATE

	Mean	Std. deviation
I always participate in class discussions	3.50	1.029
I always ask a question if I do not understand	3.38	1.185
I always attempt to answer a question in class	3.34	1.192
I always write down important points that the lecturer has mentioned	3.91	1.089
I always make sure I am prepared for class	3.44	1.084
I always concentrate in class	3.66	1.002
I never disrupt the lesson	3.84	.908
I am observant and I pay attention in class	3.65	.943
I make sure I understand all aspects of the lesson taught	3.65	.974
I am never late for class	3.41	1.212

RATE is 'I always write down important points that the lecturer has mentioned', mean=3.91, SD=1.089.

Social Demographics Correlate of CLASSRATE

Table 13 depicts correlation coefficients for the relationships between social demographic factors and classroom participation rate of students. Results show that there is no correlation between social demographic and classroom participation rate (CLASSRATE).

Social Media Use, Time Spent on Academic Activities, and Academic Performance of Students at Tertiary Education

Table 14 contains correlation coefficients run to determine the relationship between six variables, FAMSOC, USEOFSN, ACARATE, TIMEONACA, TIMEONSM and CLASSRATE. The result showed that there was a negative correlation between familiarity with social media (FAMSOC) and use of social networks (USEOFSN) $r = .708$, $p < 0.05$, (2-tailed). It was further shown that there is a correlation between familiarity with social media (FAMSOC) and time spent on academic activities (TIMEONACA) $r = -.291$, $p < 0.05$. There is a correlation between the use of social networks (USEOFSN) and time spent on social media (TIMEONSM) $r = .749$, $p < 0.05$ therefore. There is a correlation between academic rate (ACARATE) and time spent on academic activities (TIMEONACA) $r = .382$, $p < 0.05$. There is a correlation between academic rate (ACARATE) and classroom participation rate (CLASSRATE) $r = .542$, $p < 0.05$. Lastly, there is a correlation between time spent on academic activities (TIMEONACA) and classroom participation rate (CLASSRATE) $r = .531$, $p < 0.05$.

Table 13: Zero-order correlations for CLASSRATE and demographics

	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Gender						
(2) Age						
(3) Race						
(4) Level of study						
(5) Device used						
(6) Friends and followers						
(7) CLASSRATE	.093	-.157	.089	.026	.145	.013

** p < 0.01 (2-tailed), * p < 0.05 (2-tailed)

Table 14: Correlations of variables (FAMSOC, USEOFSN, ACARATE, TIMEONACA, TIMEONSM and CLASSRATE)

		FAMSOC	USEOFSN	ACARATE	TIMEONACA	TIMEONSM	CLASSRATE
FAMSOC	Pearson Correlation	1	.708**	.085	-.291*	.517**	-.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.493	.016	.000	.578
USEOFSN	Pearson Correlation	.708**	1	-.071	-.071	.749**	-.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.564	.563	.000	.791
ACARATE	Pearson Correlation	.085	-.071	1	.382**	-.024	.542**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.493	.564		.001	.847	.000
TIMEONACA	Pearson Correlation	-.291*	-.071	.382**	1	-.031	.531**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.563	.001		.803	.000
TIMEONSM	Pearson Correlation	.517**	.749**	-.024	-.031	1	.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.847	.803		.784
	Pearson Correlation	-.069	-.033	.542**	.531**	.034	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.578	.791	.000	.000	.784	

DISCUSSION

Astin (1984) construed student engagement to connote the time and effort students invest in educational activities. He proposed that levels of student engagement in class activities are linked to desired academic outcomes. Presently, in the literature however, engagement is used beyond the mere reference to time devoted to academic activities and outcomes to include other factors like the overall academic experience tertiary life, interaction with the faculty, participation in extracurricular activities as well as general interaction with other students (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) concluded that student engagement predicts students' academic outcomes.

Astin (1984) argued that students attain academic outcomes because they put in the time and effort required for the activities designated to attain the goals. Chickering and Gamson (1987) opined that time spent on academic work produce negative effects or psychological outcomes related to academic success. Students have fixed amounts of time each day. Thus, as

time on task is important for academic performance, students who spend more time on social media ultimately have less time for academic work, leading to lower grade scores. Junco's (2012) concluded that Facebook activities were often negatively correlated to student engagement and consequently on performance.

The result from this study showed that students at the University of Zululand are more familiar with the social network, Facebook. Facebook has become the biggest social network in South Africa in the past years (South African Social Media Landscape 2015). Lenhart et al. (2010) concluded that Facebook is the most popular form of social media. When correlating FAMSOC with social demographics, it is revealed that FAMSOC is correlated with 'device used' and 'friends and followers'. The result further showed that Facebook is the most widely used social network amongst the students. Lenhart et al. (2010), similarly found that seventy-one percent of young adults have Facebook accounts. Young and Quan-Haase (2009) reported that the most students visited their social network sites multiple times daily. The result from

this study showed that USEOFSN is correlated with device used by students and their friends and followers. This implies that the more devices a student has and the type of device a student has correlates with the student's use of social networks. Similarly, the higher the number of friends and followers one has on social media, the more they will use social networks.

Students' social integration into the university community plays an important role in student retention. Higher education researchers have defined retention as whether students persist at a particular university until graduation. When correlating ACARATE and social demographic, it is revealed that ACARATE correlates with the gender of the respondents. The variable 'time spent on academic activities' (TIMEONACA) reveals that more time is spent on preparing for examination. The influence of personal variables like motivation and ability on academic success is well known. However, there is need for more research on the effect of time spent on out of class activities on academic performance.

The results of this study show that there is a correlation between FAMSOC and USEOFSN. This implies that university students are familiar with social networks and the social networks that they are familiar with are likely to be the ones that they use. Social networks, thus, play a role in young people's lives as they are continually engaging in using them. Young people are always on their cell phones and laptops engaging in conversations with family, friends and strangers. The study found that students are mostly familiar with social networks and use a lot of the social networks that exist in the media world. This means that the media has made it easy and efficient for young people to gain access to social networks by just a click on the button to log in.

The findings further revealed a correlation between FAMSOC and TIMEONACA. This means that even though students are more familiar with social networks, they also reserve time for academic activities. Academic activities are very vital for a student, they help them understand and gain more knowledge on a subject or module and, therefore, it is important for students to take part in academic activities in order to improve academic performance. Also, USEOFSN is correlated with TIMEONSM. It is, therefore, understandable that the use of social networks will be correlated with the time spent on

social media. The study revealed that the more the social networks used by a students, the more time the student will spend on social media activities.

There is a correlation between ACARATE and TIMEONACA, and this means that students who spend more time on academic activities have a higher academic output. Good academic performance by a student is very vital, as it is the optimum goal when one enters the university environment. Performing well in school does not only increase the chances of proceeding to the next level, but also boosts the motivation and enthusiasm of an individual to strive and want to achieve more. Graduating is one of the ultimate goals of university students, therefore, it is important for them to achieve and proceed in their studies. Furthermore, the findings reveal that there is a correlation between ACARATE and CLASSRATE, and this means that the more a student participates in class, the higher his or her academic output. Therefore, students should always be encouraged to participate in classroom activities at all times in order for academic rate to remain at a high point. Students who participated in classroom activities were likely to gain confidence and that confidence translates to better academic performance and willingness to learn more about a subject or module taught. Lastly, the results show that TIMEONACA correlates with CLASSRATE, and this shows that the more a student participates in classroom activities the more time he or she will spend on academic activities.

CONCLUSION

The core argument of the paper examined the usage of social media and how it affects academic performance at the University of Zululand. Academic adjustment is certainly a critical part of adapting to the university environment. Furthermore, academic advancement should be the primary goal of the higher education experience. A large number of students use social media on a daily basis, always updating, socializing and communicating with distant friends and family. The main argument addresses the excessive use of social media and its effects on academic performance.

In recent years, the graduation rates of South African universities have dropped and the rate of dropouts is relatively increasing. This is a

major concern. The negative effect of social media on academic performance of students is more significant than its advantages. Internet addiction has however been gaining an upsurge. Addicted users experience a setback in their personal and educational development responsibilities. This eventually leads to poor academic performance. Addicted users devote lesser time to their studies in comparison to nonusers, and consequently, had lower academic performances. Social media thus remains a major distraction for the current generation of students. The evidence suffices that the impairment of educational performance is correlated with Internet dependency

RECOMMENDATIONS

As an outcome of the results of the study, the following recommendations are proposed for enhanced academic performance at a university level:

- Students should spend less time on social media, as it uses up most of their time in a day, which leaves a student with less time to focus on academic activities.
- Students should limit the number of social networks they use to a more reasonable number, which allows them to be able to give attention to school related activities.
- Students should, at least, reserve the weekends for social media usage.
- In order to enhance academic performance, students should spend more time on academic activities and going through extra notes.
- Students should invest more time in visiting the library and reading books for more information regarding a subject or module.
- Students should work together with other classmates in discussing different topics pertaining to the subject or module.
- Participating in classroom discussions helps a student build confidence and become motivated. Therefore, students should always attempt to answer questions and also ask questions if there is minimal understanding.
- The University of Zululand, as an institution of higher learning, should give out rewards for those who have achieved better results than others, so as to motivate the rest to work very hard on academic success.
- Also, different departments and faculties should give out rewards for students who have excelled academically.

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