

## IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

Ragini Lawrence Chowdary<sup>1</sup>, Sawsan Al-Shamaa<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>MBA Programme, Auckland Institute of Studies, Auckland, New Zealand

<sup>1</sup>raginim62@gmail.com; <sup>2</sup>sawsana@ais.ac.nz

**Abstract:** Several researchers have done considerable amount of study and their findings suggest both the beneficial as well as the detrimental impacts of social networking sites on its users. This paper examines the impact of social networking sites on academic performance of international students in Auckland, New Zealand.

The paper uses quantitative techniques to collect data from 181 international students studying in private institutions in Auckland, New Zealand.

The results show that the frequent uses of social networking sites have no impact on the academic performance of international students in Auckland and there are no differences based on gender or nationality.

The results from this study will be used to provide some recommendations to the heads of the private institutes and further lay foundation for developing research-grounded policy proposals to address emerging issues related to the use of social networking sites in education.

### Introduction

Ishfaq and Tehmina (2011) state that the changes in technology have been gigantic evolutionary force but it is the advent of internet technology that has shaken all spheres of professional, social and personal human life. We are utilizing the convenience brought by the advent of internet in our day to day life and also to run huge systems. There has been a lot of discussion on the negative impacts of internet technology and also on outweighing the detrimental impacts with the conveniences provided. Teenagers and students are the major focus as they are frequent users of internet.

Ishfaq and Tehmina (2011) stated that the social asset/capital of the nation is the students. Additionally, Pasek, Kenski, Romer, and Jamieson (2006) pointed out that the type of social capital possessed by the nation is determined by the students who form the strengthening pillars of the social value of that particular nation. Shah, Kwak and Holbert (2001) state that the social capital has positive indicators associated with the internet usage for information and negative indicators associated with the recreational use of internet. James (1988) defines social capital as the resource developed by the relationships among the people and the interaction between them. Kalpidou, Costin, and Morris (2011) believe that social networking sites have gained immense popularity among the college students. For instance, the evolution of face book has revolutionized the college student's behavior and practices. It appears as though face book is used as a preferable mode of networking among college students. However, there is limited research on the relationship between the impacts on the physiological well being and social networking sites (Kalpidou, Costin & Morris 2011).

In the calendar year 2012 international enrolments by provider groups in New Zealand are 92,995 (Ministry of Education, 2013).

As these students were away from their home countries and families, they relied on social networking sites to communicate with their distant relatives and friends. In the subsequent sections the author reviews the relevant literature, describes the research problem and states the purpose and significance of the topic of research mentioned earlier.

## Literature Review

Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) claim that in the past few years, in order to interact with others such as family and friends 'social networking sites have emerged. DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield and Fiore (2012) state that social networking sites have a defining feature of decreasing the barriers to interact with each other by enabling online communications. Moreover, Pempek, Yemolayeva and Calvert (2009) believe that that social networking sites create innovative ways to send pictures, photos, and messages online both privately and publically. The most popular social networking sites used now days among college students is Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and My Space. Due to its heavy usage, Facebook among the several other social networking sites is considered as rich site for researchers. Facebook (2009) states that Facebook which was initially created for college students attracted 150 million users with more than half of them outside college.

Furthermore, Mehmood and Taswir (2013) state that social networking sites have increased the ability to integrate learning with an online environment. Apart from using Social Networking Sites for chatting, blogging is now being used in different ways such as forming communities.

Universal McCann survey (cited in Laudon & Traver, 2011) showed that over 70% of people visited their friends profile and 60% were between the age of sixteen and fifty four years old. The countries which have more social network participation than USA were found to be the BRICK countries namely India, China, Brazil, UK, Russia, South Korean and Spain (Universal McCann survey cited in Laudon & Traver, 2011).

Every innovation in the field of technology has been the center of attention for researchers and debates on the development of social networking sites have created similar levels of interest as well. Several researchers have done considerable amount of study and their findings suggest both positive and negative impacts on the usage of social networking sites on its users. Suhail and Bargees (2006) state that excessive usage of social networking sites cause interpersonal, psychological, physical, and educational problems to its users.

Martin (2009) stated that in a recent survey conducted by Whittemore School of Business and Economics on over 1000 students concluded that there was no relation between the grades of the students and the use of Social Networking Sites. The research was conducted by asking questions such as what were the popular Social Networking Sites used by the students, the amount of time spent on them and the grades achieved by the respondents. Additionally, University of Hampshire research showed that the students' who received high grades contributed to 63% of heavy users of social networking sites as compared to 65% of light users (U of NH, 2010). The University of Hampshire also found that the students used social networking for educational and professional reasons apart from entertainment and social connections (U of NH, 2010).

Cheng (2010) emphasized that a research published by North-western University showed that the use of Social Networking Sites does not affect the Grade Point Average of students. It also showed that instead of the amount of time spent on Social Networking Sites, the grades of students were affected by their ethnic background and parental education. North-western University survey indicated that there was no major affect of Social Networking Sites on Grade Point Average (GPA) between white and African American students or male and female.

However, Miguel's (2009) studies on the relationship between the academic performances of students and the use of Social Networking Sites showed that the academic performances of students are affected by use of Social Networking Sites as students noticeably achieved lower grades due to excessive time spent on these sites. Also the study states that the students who do not use Facebook has a Grade Point Average of 3.5 – 4.0 and studied for 11 to 15 hours per week while the students who use Facebook on average studied for 1 to 5 hours per week and were found to have Grade Point Average of 3.0 – 3.5.

Kalpidou, Costin, and Morris (2011) stated that among all the sections of communities, the student community has gained huge popularity over Social Networking Sites. Enriquez (2010) states that the study done by Kirschnera reveals multitasking between homework and study by the students lower the grades by 20% compared to the students who do not use social networking sites in visual range.

Choney (2010) states that professors and economists due to the increased popularity of Social Networking Sites are questioning whether the use or amount of time spent on these sites are affecting the student's grades. Currently, there is vibrant usage of smart phones especially among young people and it is of utmost significance to investigate how the grades of students are affected by using the Social Networking Sites on smart phones.

Choney (2010) states that Facebook non-users have an average Grade Point Average of 3.82 compared to the users who have a Grade Point Average of 3.06. A presentation at the American Educational Research Association 2009 annual conference stated that the United States College students have lower grades as they use Social Networking Sites extensively.

Benson, Filippaios, and Morgan (2010) found key differences between the use of Social Networking Sites among under graduate and post graduate business students in United Kingdom.

Schneider (2009) states it is not certain there is a direct link between the usage of Facebook and lower grades of students but there is an obvious connection..

## Problem Statement

As mentioned in the previous section, there has been mixed findings regarding the impact on academic performance of the students and use of Social Networking Sites. The problem statement of this study is: **Are the social networking sites having an impact on the academic performance of international students in Auckland?**

The aim of this study is to examine if there is any impact of social networking sites on academic performance of international students' in Auckland.

**Hypothesis 1:**  $H_0$ : Frequent usage of social networking sites has no impact on the academic performance of the students.

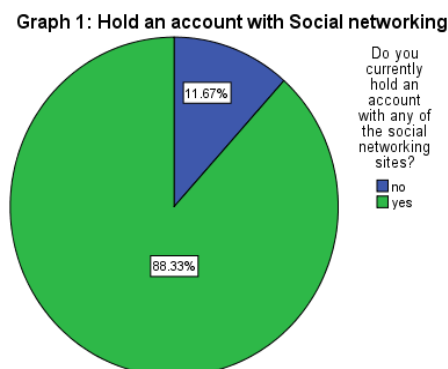
**Hypothesis 2:**  $H_0$ : There are no differences in students' academic performance based on gender and nationality.

## Methodology

In order to understand the impact of social networking sites usage among international students in Auckland, the researchers conducted a survey in four private training establishments in Auckland. The questionnaire focused on the most popular social networking sites and the questions were ; amount of time spent; frequent activities with social networking sites; impact of social networking sites on academic performance and learning. The primary data was collected by distributing 181 questionnaires at four different private training establishments in Auckland using combination of random and non random sampling process.

## Data Analysis

The data which was collected was analyzed by creating descriptive statistics, frequency tables, percentages, and graphs using SPSS software.



Graph 1, of the 181 questionnaires filled, 88.33% of the respondents hold an account with any of the social networking sites and 11.67% do not hold an account with any of the social networking sites.

**Table 1: How many days a week do you use social networking sites, on an average?**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	one day	17	10.7
	two to three days	35	22.0
	four to five days	24	15.1
	more than five days	83	52.2
	Total	159	100.0
Missing	System	22	
Total		181	

Table 1 shows 83 (52.2%) of the respondents use social networking sites more than five days a week. This is followed by 22% (35) of the respondents who use it two or three days a week, 15.1% (24) four to five days and 10.7% (17) only one day a week. This shows that most of the international students in Auckland use social networking more than five days a week.

**Table 2: How many social networking accounts do you have?**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Less than 3	82	51.9
	3 to 5	57	36.1
	more than 5	19	12.0
	Total	158	100.0
Missing	System	23	
Total		181	

Table 2 shows 51.9% (82) of the respondents hold less than three accounts, 36.1% (57) hold three to five accounts, and 12% (19) hold more than five accounts. This shows that most of the international students in Auckland hold less than three accounts with social networking sites.

**Table 3: Which course are you currently enrolled in?**

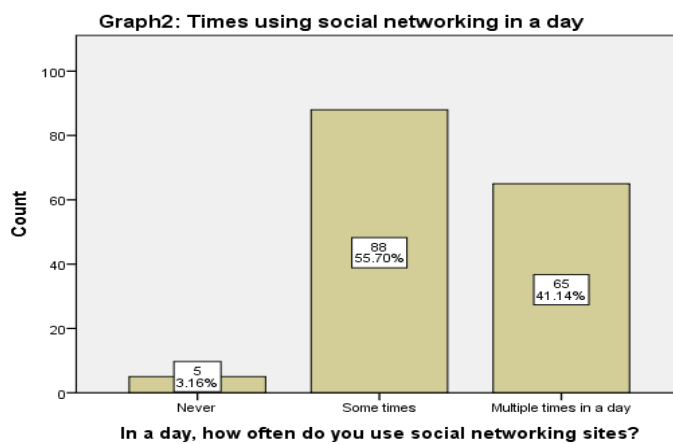
		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Diploma	126	70.8
	Bachelor degree	13	7.3
	Post graduate	7	3.9
	others	32	18.0
	Total	178	100.0
Missing	System	3	
Total		181	

Table 3 shows out of the 181 respondents 70.8% (126) are enrolled in Diploma programme, 18% (32) in other programmes while 7.3% (13) are enrolled in Bachelor degree and 3.9% (7) in post graduate programme. This shows most of the respondents are enrolled in Diploma programme.

**Table 4: Social Networking Sites used by respondents**

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Facebook	110	39.6%	<b>69.2%</b>
Twitter	18	6.5%	<b>11.3%</b>
MySpace	1	0.4%	<b>0.6%</b>
Google	77	27.7%	<b>48.4%</b>
Others	72	25.9%	<b>45.3%</b>
Total	278	100.0%	174.8%

Table 4 shows out of all the social networking sites 39.6% (110) use Facebook, 27.7% (77) use Google, 25.9% (72) use others, 6.5% (18) use Twitter and 0.4% (1) use MySpace. This shows that Facebook is used by most of the international students in Auckland.



Graph 2 shows 3.16% (5) of the respondents never use social networking sites, 55.7% (88) use sometimes in a day and 41.41% (65) use multiple times in a day. This shows that most of the international students in Auckland use social networking sites sometimes in a day.

The descriptive measures for the reasons of using social networking sites reveal that the most important reason has been found to be “communicating with distant friends/family” with mean of (4.14) and standard deviation of (1.053) followed by “sending messages” with mean of (3.96) and standard deviation of (1.053) with “participating in polls/surveys” being the least important with mean of (2.63) and standard deviation of (.994).

Therefore from the above results, the research shows that most of the respondents agree that networking sites are good to use to communicate with friends and families.

Looking at the factors that are associated with the academic performance when using social networking sites as shown in Table 5 below, the researcher found that respondents disagree (mean is (2.76) and standard deviation of (1.065) that spending time on social networking sites rather than studying has negative impact on grades) but the high standard deviation shows some of them agree and some disagree. The other important factor is that the networking sites can give the respondents more information regarding education or career, and the mean is 3.4 which is towards agree, and the standard deviation is less than 1; indicating all the respondents are consistent regarding this factor.

**Table 5: Academic Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
On average you spend more time on social networking sites rather than studying	157	1	5	2.87	1.054
Using social networking sites affect your timing of study?	157	1	5	3.03	1.053
Spending time on studying rather than using social networking sites will improve your grades.	157	1	5	3.41	1.115
Spending time on social networking has negative impact on your grades?	157	1	5	2.76	1.065
More information regarding education or career can be found on social networking sites?	157	1	5	3.39	.952
Valid N (list wise)	157				

**Table 6: Learning Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Using social networking sites for academic purpose by your institute will enhance your learning?	175	1	5	3.10	.933
Social networking sites can be used as an effective tool for communicating your ideas better?	175	1	5	3.51	.958
Social networking sites can be used as an effective tool for academic learning in education?	175	1	5	3.22	.877
Social networking sites must never be integrated with learning.	176	1	5	2.77	.941
Valid N (list wise)	174				

Table 6 shows that “social networking sites can be used as an effective tool for for communicating ideas better” with highest mean of (3.51) and standard deviation of (.958) followed by “social networking sites can be used as an effective tool for a academic learning in education with mean of (3.22) and standard deviaton of (.877).

**Table 7: What is your age?**

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Under 20 years old	42	23.5
Valid 20- 25 years old	96	53.6
26-30 years old	23	12.8
over 30 years old	18	10.1
Total	179	100.0
Missing System	2	
Total	181	

Table 7 shows out of all the respondents, 53.6% are aged between 20 -25 years old, 23.5% less than 20 years old, 12.8% 26 – 30 years old and 10.1% are over 30 years old.

From Table 8 out of the 179 (where 2 of the respondents not answer the question) respondents, 110 (61.5%) are Chinese, 49 (27.4%) are Indians, 8 (4.5%) Europeans, 3 (1.7%) Pacific Islanders and 9 (5%) are others. So the sample of this paper has mixed nationalities.

**Table 8: Which ethnic group do you belong to?**

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Chinese	110	61.5
Valid Indian	49	27.4
European	8	4.5
Pacific Islands	3	1.7
others	9	5.0
Total	179	100.0
Missing System	2	
Total	181	

### Testing Hypothesis

**Hypothesis 1:** Frequent usage of social networking sites has a no impact on the academic performance of the students.

Hypothesis 1 is not rejected as Table 5 results reveal that the mean is lowest at (2.76) and standard deviation of (1.065) for spending time on social networking sites rather than studying has negative impact on grades. Moreover, the mean of (3.39) and standard deviation of (.952) has been noticed for “more information regarding education or career can be found on social networking sites”.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no difference in the affects of student academic performance based on gender and nationality.

Hypothesis 2 is also not rejected as ANOVA and t-test the researched performed show that the females and males have the same views regarding some of the factors, also there are no differences regarding the rate of these factors between nationalities. This shows that gender or nationality in the study sample all have similar views regarding the use of social networking in academic or in learning.

## Conclusion

Export Education Levy: Full Year (2013) states the head count of international students in New Zealand was 120,006 for the year 2012. As the number of international students arriving in Auckland is growing year after year, there is presumably a great potential of using social networking sites to interact with different communities, meeting new people, making friends and understanding student life in Auckland. Although the numerous studies earlier discussed in the literature review show mixed findings regarding the impact on grades and the usage of social networking sites. However, the researcher has found that the frequent use of social networking sites has no impact on the academic performance of international students in Auckland and there is no difference in the student academic performance based on gender or nationality. Since there is a rapid growth in the number of users of social networking sites, heads of private institutes must enhance the learning process in students by using social networking sites to create online forums, blogs, upload relevant academic concepts, etc.

## Future Research

There are many opportunities for future research concerning the usage of social networking sites. Further, research can be done to investigate the differences between the impact of social networking sites on academic performance of international students in Auckland who use computer/laptops for social networking applications and smart phones. Many methods of communications have been generated by technology; investigations can be carried on how to use social networking sites as platform for educational learning for international students in Auckland. Further examinations to discover the differences between genders on the impact of the use of social networking sites on computers/laptops or smart phones can also be carried out.

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