

The impact of social media on students' lives

Case: LAB University of Applied Sciences

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Abstract

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Title of the thesis The impact of social media on students' lives Case: LAB University of Applied Sciences		
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Social media platforms are a ubiquitous part of modern society and the typical student spends many hours each day interacting with them. The purpose and research question of this thesis was to study and analyse the impact of social media on the lives and academic performance of students and to give recommendations on how to avoid the possible negative effects and how to amplify the positives A specific focus was on the foreign students at LAB University of Applied Sciences which functioned as the case company.</p> <p>The study was performed using the qualitative method and utilizing a combination of primary and secondary sources. The main primary source was a series of interviews conducted with these aforementioned foreign students. This data was then analysed by thematic analysis and the results of it were compared with the literary sources.</p> <p>The results showed that social media has both positive and negative effects on the academic performance. It allows for easy communication and can be a great source of information, but it can also lead to psychological issues such as addiction and falling victim to cyberbullying. The distractions it causes and the time students waste on it can have a negative effect on their academic performance. Recommendations both for students and the school were made in how to handle social media in a safe and productive way.</p> <p>This topic provides many possible options for further research. Cyberbullying could be one such topic and interviews with the students of LAB could be conducted to scope out how widespread of a problem it is.</p>		
<p>Keywords</p> <p>Social media, social network, social media impact, academic performance</p>		

Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Research background.....	1
1.2	Objectives and research question.....	2
1.3	Research focus and limitations	3
1.4	Research approach and method.....	3
1.5	Thesis structure	5
2	Theoretical framework.....	7
2.1	The definition and types of social media	7
2.2	Academic performance factors	8
2.3	Psychological aspect of social media usage	10
2.3.1	How social media affects the brain	11
2.3.2	Psychological reasons for using social media	11
2.3.3	How social media shapes your self-image	13
2.3.4	The impact of social media on mental wellbeing	14
2.4	Impact of social media on academic performance	15
2.4.1	Advantages of social media on students' academic work	15
2.4.2	Disadvantages of social media on students' academic work.....	17
2.4.3	Summary	19
3	Study and analysis	21
3.1	Overview	21
3.2	Interview design.....	21
3.3	Collected data results	22
3.3.1	Respondent 1	22
3.3.2	Respondent 2	23
3.3.3	Respondent 3	24
3.3.4	Respondent 4	26
3.3.5	Respondent 5	27
3.4	Data analysis	28
3.5	Suggestions.....	30
3.6	Conclusions	31
4	Summary	33
	References	35

1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

Nowadays, people's lives have become more and more convenient, comfortable, and easier thanks to the fast development of technology, especially social media. The use of social media is growing and using social media has become an essential part of people's lives. As a concept, social media refers to a wide network of websites and applications that allow users to interact, communicate and share information with the public quickly. It also permits people to create, exchange, discuss available contents on the internet as well as share people's photos, events, opinions, facts. Everyone is connected to one another through it. (Hudson 2020.)

Accompanying the rapid growth of the number of smartphones, people have gained easier access to social media through mobile applications. Whereas many people use social media sites to communicate and keep in touch with their friends, others use them to interact with different communities. Moreover, businesses use social media sites as a tool to advertise their products and promote their brands. This trend has influenced and changed the way of how people live and how to do business. In short, using social media has affected society in different ways. (Wigmore 2020.)

Nowadays, most of college students use technology with multiple kinds of devices such as laptops, smartphones, desktop computers, and tablets. It means that students constantly access social media. Social media sites have had a major influence on students' performance in recent years. Social media sites are impacting students in both positive and negative ways. On the one hand, social media helps students gather information in learning and research, saving time of communication, exchanging ideas and resources and so on (Madaiah, Seshaiyengar, Suresh, Munipapanna & Sonnappa 2017). On the other hand, the overuse of social media causes addiction (Schou Andreassen & Pallesen 2014). Overusing social media affects academic performance; it reduces cognition, makes students distracted, and may cause psychological problems such as depression and anxiety (Shensa, Escobar-Viera, Sidani., Bowman, Marshal, & Primack 2017). Furthermore, wasting time on social sites can harm students' future goals and can lead to compromised lives.

Studying the topic is important to students who use social media for studying and entertainment but also to educators. The impact of social media on academic performance can

be significant, and it is important to know how significantly social media activities may affect students' academic performance so that students can use social media effectively. This thesis aims to explore the question of just what that impact is.

1.2 Objectives and research question

Using social media brings many benefits. It can improve individual learning, be part of e-learning, and provide access to e-books and other materials. Using social media also offers students new ways to study and can inspire students to be creative. Students who use social media can be more innovative and can remember things more easily. (Student-job Blog 2018.)

However, excessive social media use can raise questions about whether academic performance is affected. Today, college and university students spend a lot of their time on social media. They can find new friendships, express their thoughts and comments freely and even create new identities. Students can do anything they want freely. Besides, students become dependent on modern social media. Students also feel pressured by enticing and quickly shifting technologies. (Xiongfei, Khan, Zaigham, & Khan 2019.)

The main objective of this research is to determine how the use of social media influences the academic work of foreign students at LAB University of Applied Sciences. In addition, the study aims to find out and give recommendations to students on how they could use social media to increase academic performance. Regarding teachers, the thesis aims to provide guidelines or different teaching methods on how to use different types of social media to support their students' learning processes. The main research question of this thesis is:

- How does using social media affect foreign students' academic performance at LAB University of Applied Sciences?

The assumption is that using social media has both positive and negative impacts. Among the expected positive impacts are increased social networking and providing different study tools for students. Another positive impact is the access to quick communication. The biggest negative impact should be addiction to social media and wasting time.

The following subordinate questions help narrow down the focus of the study:

- What benefits and drawbacks do social media have in the learning process?
- How does overusing social media students' affect academic performance?
- How do students use social media to improve their academic performance?

The study focuses on and is limited to foreign students at LAB University of Applied Sciences and their academic performance.

1.3 Research focus and limitations

Social media is used at schools and universities with new models in teaching and learning activities. Some environments now supplement traditional contact lessons with social media seminars, online group work, and even one-on-one mentoring. Social media can be considered as a tool for helping students enhance their learning process. The new social networks, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and others, can affect the behaviour and academic performance of students.

This research question is very broad so setting limitations is necessary. For reasons of personal interest, this thesis will research the impact of social media on foreign students at LAB University of Applied Sciences. To set further limits, instead of student life, this thesis will research the impact on academic performance. For instance, some positive impacts of social media are the effects on e-learning, building of confidence in learning, and saving time. However, there are also negative impacts such as wasting time, mental health issues and cyberbullying. Other related topics connected to social media that are ruled outside of the scope of this thesis include privacy issues. Mental health issues will be talked about in brief, but do not make up a significant portion of the thesis.

1.4 Research approach and method

The research approach, research method, and reasons are described in this chapter. How the data will be analysed is also introduced. In general, the inductive and the deductive approach are the main research approaches mentioned by Wilson (2014, 12-14). The inductive or empirical approach intends at building a theory while the deductive approach focuses on testing an existing theory (Streefkerk 2019). Inductive research contains the observation of an example and then creates patterns or generalizations of the observations. Deductive research takes existing theories and develops a hypothesis from them, that is then compared with the data gathered through research and experiments. In this research, the objectives are to investigate the influences of social media use on the academic work of foreign students. The deductive approach, therefore, is chosen for this thesis.

According to Wilson (2014, 37-39), the two suggested types of research are qualitative and quantitative. While quantitative research is often connected with numerical analysis, qualitative research is associated with non-numerical data collection and analysis such as

interview, text, video, audio, and so on. Bhandari (2020) adds that quantitative research collects and analyses numerical data to find models and averages, and to predict and demonstrate the general characteristics of a wider population. Qualitative research aims for explaining the particular details to comprehend concepts, ideas, or experiences. It helps readers reach in-depth insights into an issue or suggest new ideas for further research.

In this thesis, it is important to find out foreign students' thoughts and experiences on the impacts of social media on their academic performance, different aspects of using social media, as well as other aspects that might influence their opinions of social media use. Therefore, data is collected through interviews. Individual interviews will be designed to find out deeper information as well as students' experience. Each one of the questions should have a valid reason to be included and that they should help in finding answers to the research question.

Generally, data is collected from primary sources and secondary sources. According to Wilson (2014, 164), in primary data collection, you collect data yourself using a range of collection tools such as interviews, observation and questionnaires, rather than simply relying on existing data sources. Primary data is collected through questionnaires, observations, interviews, and others. Secondary data is based on earlier published research, and the sources can be, for example, journal articles, internal records, websites, or books. In this research, secondary data is used to establish a general knowledge of social media and its impacts on foreign students' academic performance.

After the data has been collected, it is important to analyse it to answer the research question. Since the research is of the qualitative type, one of the methods used to analyse the collected data is thematic analysis. This type of data analysis method is commonly used with interviews or surveys to find any common recurrences within the answers. Thematic analysis has six steps:

1. Familiarization
2. Coding
3. Generating themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Writing up

The first step is about getting to know the collected data. The idea is to get a basic knowledge of what it contains and possibly transcribe audio or write notes. In the second step you start breaking the data down into smaller segments with coding or labelling. This is done by looking for words and sentences that share some type of quality with each other and coming up with the names for these to group them into tighter themes in the next step. It is important to go through these themes a second time and not consider them to be completely set in stone. They might evolve and change remarkably once they have been gone through a second or even a third time. After reaching a satisfactory list of themes, it is the moment to name and give them definitions. This is to can easily understand them and the data they portray. The final step is to write the analysis with the help of the themes established over the previous five steps. (Caulfield 2019.)

1.5 Thesis structure

Figure 1 illustrates the structure of the thesis. The thesis contains four chapters. The first chapter describes the theme and determines delimitations, research objects, questions, approach and method, data collection and analysis, and thesis structure.

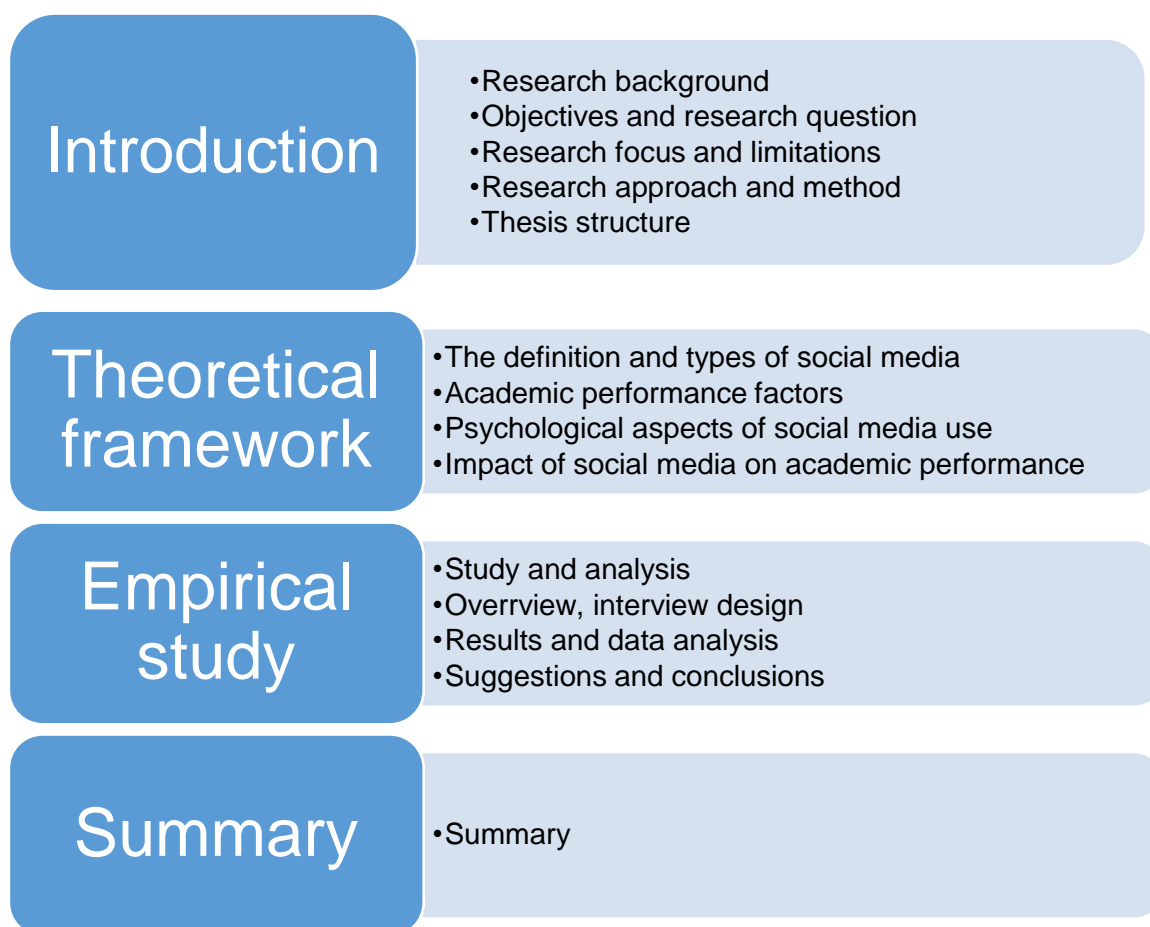


Figure 1. Thesis structure

The second section is the theoretical framework that provides an overview to readers with a theoretical background of the research. Particularly, theoretical knowledge of things relating to the impact of social media on students' academic work. There are four main parts mentioned in this section, including the definition and types of social media, academic performance factors, psychological aspect and the impact of social media on academic performance.

The next section is the empirical part which lays out the research method and the data collecting process. Additionally, this chapter presents the collected data which is then analysed through a thematic analysis process. In the end, this chapter shows the suggestions, conclusions after analysing as well as the limitations of this study and suggests concepts for further research.

Lastly, the fourth chapter is summary part. This chapter answers all previously mentioned research questions. Besides, it also presents the validity and reliability of this study.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 The definition and types of social media

There are many definitions of social media. Some of these definitions focus on the cooperation and communication that takes place within certain websites. Others focus on the tools used within these sites. These sites allow users to collaborate, exchange knowledge, communicate with peers, upload, and send pictures, write comments, create an expression, and learn the benefits of using social media tools. Social media plays an important role of change in different fields in our life today. People have a different way to interact, communicate, and even the way they think (Weisgerber & Butler, 2010). Social media is a 21st-century term used to broadly define a variety of networked tools or technologies that emphasize the social aspects of the Internet as a way for communication and collaboration among users (Dabbagh, Reo, 2011).

According to Ivy Wigmore (2020), social media refers to websites and applications that are used as communication tools to help people sharing information and interacting with each other. With the rapid development of social media, people can interact easily with their friends, colleagues, families, and even online strangers. Along with the improvement of smartphone, social media is growing dramatically in the Appstore environment. Online communities are created. Particularly, Instagram application has become a tool for the community of travellers and fashionistas. Besides, many businesses also take full advantages of social media by using it as a marketing tool to promote their products, servicing their customers and exchanging goods and services. (Maryville University 2021.)

There are many types of social media. In general, people are familiar with traditional form of social media: social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn. However, the forms of social media have extended and become more complicated, including different types. Particularly, they are online social networks, media sharing networks, discussion forums, social bookmarking, blogs, microblogs, and so on. In some cases, many social platforms are formed by combining some different categories. (Kakkar 2018.)

Social Network is considered as one of the most popular social media types. Social networks are platforms, sites or application based on website that are used to associate with people through messages, comments, or photos. Social networks allow users to share information, thoughts, posts, pictures, videos and create online communities. For example, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are social network platforms. (Cite 2012.)

Media sharing networks support users in generating creative contents, sharing ideas on sites. These platforms permit users to upload, share photos, videos, and different types of

media on the websites. Media sharing platforms contain YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, and Snapchat for instance. Those sites also provide social features that are similar to social networks, including starting profiles and the function for giving comments below each photo or video. (Kakkar 2018.)

Blogs are websites or web pages containing articles that are updated frequently. In general, blogs dive into specific topics or private lives of bloggers. They allow users to publish posts and others can share, discuss about these topics by adding comments. Some popular platforms are WordPress, Tumblr, and Blogger. In detail, Tumblr allows users to upload and share photos, videos, posts about their thoughts or other contents. (Cite 2012.)

Forums and message boards are one of the oldest platforms of social media. Those types of social media channels offer users a platform for discussion with different kinds of information, news. (Kakkar 2018.)

Nowadays, the definition of social media and social media platform are still developing. There are various types of social media in this concept and other new types are being created constantly. The new types of social media can have the possibility of not belonging any types before. The list of social media types mentioned, therefore, is not covered all the categories. Thus, the list only represents for the most popular types of social media.

For the purposes of this thesis, the definition of social media will follow closely along the lines of Wigmore (2020) as a tool of communication and interaction with others. This will allow for the inclusion of many different websites and platforms as part of the research and because of the interview that will form the empirical part of this thesis. Since most of the interviewees will most likely have slightly varying definitions of what social media is, it is best to have allow for a broader definition of it in the first place.

2.2 Academic performance factors

To later analyse how social media affects the academic performance of students, first it is necessary to explore what this concept means. This section first introduces what academic performance is and then it also will be explaining the various factors that affect it positively or negatively.

Academic performance is a measurement of the scholastic achievements of students. Typically, this measurement is done on a numerical scale, but it can also be displayed with words or letters. Typical ways of measuring academic performance include testing, grade point averages, and graduation rates. (Bell 2021.) Academic performance can be considered to also include activities outside classrooms and tests such as participating in

student groups or volunteer organizations or anything other that shows the student as eager to take initiative (Williams 2018). For this study, the more classical classroom performance will be the focusing point.

According to a literature study by Mushtaq and Khan (2012), there are broadly four different categories that have either a positive or a negative effect on academic performance: communication, environment, guidance, and family situation. You could also simplify this into also being a traditional case of nature versus nurture, but for now, these four categories will be considered more in-depth.

There is a direct correlation between the language and communication skills of the student and their academic performance. Studying is based on these two skills on many different levels, that this seems almost obvious to note. Those students who have trouble with the language that they are being taught in, will have more difficulties to overcome compared to other students. Reading and writing skills are crucial parts of education and any deficiencies in these will surely have a direct impact on the academic performance. The reverse is true too since mastering those skills make it easier for a student to achieve higher levels of performance, but they are not the only factors involved. (Mushtaq & Khan 2012.)

Other personal qualities of the student play a significant part in academic performance. Personal motivation and attitude towards studies both can have either a negative or a positive impact. According to one study a positive attitude towards certain subjects does not correlate with good academic performance in them but having a positive attitude can still make it easier to achieve better results. (Uok & Langat 2015).

The environment a person grows up in and the environment they study in both have direct impacts on their academic performance too. How much their parents interact with their academic life at home has a direct influence on how well they do at school. The children of those parents who take an active interest in the education will most likely then have a higher academic performance compared to those whose parents did not do such a thing. The kind of a school one studies in also has an effect in many ways. Teachers are some of the most important factors in this equation and their role is crucial in making the school environment and its effect either positive or negative for the students. It is worth noting that the physical faculties of the school itself can also have an effect. Especially in higher levels of education a good library can prove to have a significant effect on academic performance. In lower levels such as primary schools this is reduced since libraries do not necessarily play such a big part in that level of education. The overall economic level of

the school also has an effect since the richer schools tend to have the more successful students. (Abaidoo 2018.)

Guidance can be referring to both the one received at home and the one received at school. In this point of view, it is connected to the two environments, since those are the locations, you are mainly receiving guidance in. Good guidance can help students with developing positive attitudes and habits when studying. There also seems to be a link between good performance in exams and children who have gotten good guidance from their parents. (Hussain, 2006.)

The final category, family situation is in a way related to all the previous categories since they can all be interconnected. This category specifically is more about socio-economic factors such as attendance, family income, the education level of the parents, and travel distance to school. There have been studies that show that there is even a link between the poor nutrition that the children of poor families suffer from and the poor academic performance. This issue can made twofold if these children are then unable to also receive nutritious food at their school either. Poor attendance levels can be caused by many different reasons and sometimes the parents can be at fault if they for one reason or another, do not let their children attend school normally. Long distances of travel between homes and schools also cause issues for students because they make students more tired and less likely to pay proper attention in class. (Mushtaq & Khan 2012.)

An important factor that has emerged during the COVID19-pandemic is how online teaching affects students and their academic performance compared to contact lessons. The lack of a traditional classroom environment has made some students feel like it is more difficult to study and as such their grades have suffered. Online teaching has also been a problem for teachers since some of them were not prepared skill-wise for digital teaching. This could have affected their students' academic performance.

To summarize this chapter would be to state that there is no one easy answer to what affects academic performance. Instead, it is a complex web of many different factors that are also very highly individualized per person.

2.3 Psychological aspect of social media usage

In this chapter the psychological effects of using social media are introduced. As most of us use social media daily, it is bound to be having some effects on our brain and may even develop into an addiction. Addiction is defined by the American Society of Addiction Medicine thusly:

Addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences.

Prevention efforts and treatment approaches for addiction are generally as successful as those for other chronic diseases. (American Society of Addiction Medicine, Inc. 2019)

The following subchapters will go more into the psychological details about how social media usage can cause changes in us and our behaviour. The very basis of this study is on the psychological effects of social media so it is very important to understand how and why it causes these effects in us.

2.3.1 How social media affects the brain

Receiving and giving likes or other forms of upvoting and reactions on social media can have similar reactions in the brain compared to receiving social or monetary rewards. To be more specific, this triggers the dopamine receptors in the brain. (Sherman, Hernandez, Greenfield & Dapretto 2018.)

This can lead to negative effects comparable to the effects of gambling or drug usage. In this regard, social media can be viciously addictive (King University Online 2019). The attitudes, thoughts, and behaviours mimic those of people addicted to serious drugs (Gordon 2019). In a different study the conclusion was that there is a correlation between viewing photos with many likes and more brain activity in neural regions governing the processing of rewards, social cognition, imitation, and attention. (Sherman, Payton, Hernandez, Greenfield & Dapretto 2016.)

Social media usage and addiction has similar risks compared to these two and can cause the reward system of the brain to be compromised. Another negative impact social media can cause is the feeling of social exclusion. Being left out of online group chats and events has similar effects on adolescent brains as being left out on the outside world. (Crone & Konjin 2018.)

2.3.2 Psychological reasons for using social media

The reasons why we use social media can be fit into Maslow's hierarchy of human needs which is depicted below in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (McLeod 2020)

How physiological needs fit together with social media might not be readily apparent. The argument can be made that sharing information online about services or products that fulfil these needs is this connection. According to one study, 49 per cent of people share content because to them it allows their friends and family to learn about potentially useful products and services. So, the connection is there, even though it is not a direct one and more of an indirect one. (Contentworks Agency 2018.)

Safety needs are easier to understand in connection with social media than physiological needs. Searching for employment has almost completely moved online and a person's social media presence can also be an influencing factor when it comes to companies deciding on whether to hire them. There are also social media platforms that are ostensibly based on job searching and work-related networking such as LinkedIn that have been growing in popularity. (Contentworks Agency 2018.)

The middle tier of the hierarchy of needs is what the whole idea of the internet was built on: connecting people. Social media has made it even more easy to stay connect with friends and family even when separated by large geographical distances. One can easily follow what they are doing and update them on what one has been doing too. Social media can also be used to seek popularity which in case can lead to intimacy. (Contentworks Agency 2018.)

The fourth tier is also apparent when reflected on social media. Likes and other various forms of upvoting or downvoting content can have numerous effects on one's self-esteem. Social media has also been a source of freedom such as in cases where it has been used

in protests against tyrannical governments and as a source of information that is not censored by governments. Social media has also created new celebrities outside of the traditional media outlets which in the past have been the way for celebrities to be noticed. (Contentworks Agency 2018.)

The top of the pyramid of needs is about self-actualization and social media can be an embodiment of this thought. Sharing news about finding a new job or other achievement is meant to satisfy that desire of reaching your full potential. For some people, this desire for self-actualization is so strong that they end sharing everything on social media, even things that would be better if not told to big audiences. (Contentworks Agency 2018.)

2.3.3 How social media shapes your self-image

Since its creation, the internet has been a place where people can create entirely new identities for themselves. A big difference to modern times is that the users of bulletin boards systems and internet relay chat were living in an era of internet that was not very visual. Slow data speeds limited the number of images and as a result, the internet was mostly text based. The rise of blogging websites and early social media networks such as MySpace presented a paradigm shift in how people approached the internet: no longer mostly anonymous users behind nicknames and no longer limited to just a smaller portion of the population. This phenomenon goes back even further in time to what is known as the Eternal September. In the early dawn of the internet era, those with access to the world wide web were limited in number and Usenet was one of the most popular platforms for discussions. Usenet can be thought as a precursor to more recent discussions forums that eventually replaced the usage of Usenet. A lot of these people were students at various universities and would receive access to the internet at the beginning of their first semester, which in America is September most commonly. This led to a yearly influx of new users who had not learn the proper etiquette, or netiquette, and would be taught it by the older and more experienced users. This all changed in the year 1993 after America Online added access to Usenet as part of the package they offered home internet users. The amount of people accessing the internet and Usenet was now no longer limited to only September of each year, as new users kept joining in large numbers and overwhelmed the capacity of older users to properly teach them the netiquette. Hence, the nickname Eternal September. (Koebler 2015.)

Blogging websites and other sites such as MySpace allowed people to be more active as themselves on the internet. Their online personae became even more based on their real-life personalities. This became even more drastic as social media platforms such as Facebook gave even those with less technological skills reasons to use computers and

smartphones. It also seems logical to assume that if a person is now more involved online as their real self, it would also affect their self-image on a more serious level, both in good and bad. On the other hand, this does not mean that everyone is participating as a realistic depiction of themselves. Users can easily create new personalities that are idealized depictions of themselves or outright deception to maximize their attractiveness. This fabrication of personalities or physical qualities is something that people with low levels of self-esteem were more likely to be doing. (King University Online 2019.)

A big part of social media is being a part of various groups and this also shapes one's self-identity. Social media allows a user to connect with people who share similar interests and hobbies. An example of this can be seen in various groups dedicated to learning a specific language for example. A negative effect of this is that sometimes belonging to such a group can also make them more easily change their thoughts and behaviour to mimic the other people in the group they are a part of to try and garner their acceptance. (King University Online 2019.)

2.3.4 The impact of social media on mental wellbeing

Social media has been shown to have both positive and negative impacts on mental wellbeing. Young people have demonstrated greater amounts of friendship and happiness because social media allows them to create stronger bonds with their compatriots. These bonds can also lead to opportunities for greater independence and autonomy, which in turn can improve their capability for critical thinking and decision-making. (King University Online 2019.) Another study (Naruse 2020) named the following as possible positive aspects of social media on mental health:

- Social integration with similar interest groups
- Healthy and body-positive lifestyle motivations
- The availability of support groups
- Maintaining and building new relationships
- An introduction into new modes of thinking

Social media can also have negative effects on mental health. Issues like bullying and social isolation do exist online as well. These effects are even more present, but not limited to, in teenagers than other age groups. Cyberbullying can happen even with older generations and many people find their entertainment in trolling, or being annoying on purpose, in online environments. (King University Online 2019). One study (Steers, Wickham &

Acitelli 2014) also found a correlation between depression and Facebook usage. Comparing one's own position to those seen on Facebook and other social media platforms can make one feel worse, especially because what can often be seen is an idealized image and not something that is reflective of real-life. Another study arrived in a similar conclusion that increased usage of social media can be a sign and symptom of depression (Pantic 2014). However, correlation does not necessarily equal causation.

2.4 Impact of social media on academic performance

The following chapters will be explaining various positives and negatives that are associated with social media usage. In the previous chapters the concepts of what academic performance is, and social media and the different psychological aspects of it were introduced so this chapter will be combining them into one to discuss what the impact of social media is on academic performance.

2.4.1 Advantages of social media on students' academic work

With the increasing popularity of smartphones in present-day society, the use of social media in learning has grown rapidly in higher education. Both students and teachers can use a variety of software tools and social network applications to enhance learning, interaction, and engagement in education environment. Social media also provides flexible modes of studying. It can be used as a selection of useful tools to support teaching and learning so students can use it to fit their individual learning styles and promote their academic results. (Emeka & Nyeche 2016.)

Particularly, social media applications and social networks encourage students to connect to each other in teamwork, assignments, and projects. Through collaboration in projects, students can communicate and share information easily, therefore, saving much time, effort and boosting their confidence while doing tasks. In addition, social media also associates the collaboration between students and lecturers to enhance deep learning. Especially in e-learning, social media provides many platforms for studying. For example, YouTube is a free online learning repository with videos. Lecturers can easily access their recorded videos and share them with students to help students dig into the topics. Today, almost all the information students need can be found on YouTube. In detail, YouTube contains many channels relating to educational fields such as programming, languages, technology, sciences and more. (Pappas 2013.)

Moreover, YouTube also offers live-stream function to e-learning so lectures can connect directly to students and receive real-time feedback from them. Plus, when students are

working with new technologies, they can get familiar with computers and different electronic equipment through videos. Another platform of social media is Facebook. Students can use Facebook to form a comfortable studying environment where they can make questions, talk, discuss freely and practice working in group to improve their confidence, share ideas, materials and information. In this modern world, students receive all the information of new upcoming events, study seminars, career orientation, and academic courses through Facebook. Facebook provides many chances for study activities. For instance, teachers can create a new page on Facebook for conducting courses they are instructing. They can upload materials, assignments and share links, information for students and allow students access to that page. (Pappas 2013.)

Especially in this present situation affected by Covid-19, the traditional teaching method face-to-face is cancelled and remote e-learning methods are applied broadly in the world. With the support of social media, students can study actively in the studying process by accessing course content anywhere and anytime. Moreover, getting familiar with using social media also means that students have access to different websites and technology easily and their knowledge of these also evolves. They also can collect up-to-date information about such topics as changing trends or scientific technology progress. (Wheeler, Yeomans and Wheeler, (2008); Rifkin, Longnecker, Leach and Ortia,(2009).)

In their study, Jain, Verma, Verma and Tiwari (2012), claim that in higher education, social media helps student to collaborate and promote their relationships as well as increase motivation to study and contributes to their persistence. Particularly, according to one study, students acquire new knowledge and receive great advantages when using social media to chat with other classmates and instructors, and when accessing research sources in learning.

Besides, Yunus and Salehi (2012) pointed out that by using social media, students increase their vocabulary with new ways of expression, developing their writing ability, reading skill, and decreasing their spelling mistakes. Many educators utilize blogs as a beneficial tool in teaching how to hone writing skill and creativity (Borja, 2005). Besides, based on a study conducted by Apeanti and Danso (2014), students think that their teacher should use social media in teaching to make the lessons become more interesting. The author also claimed that students suppose their grades could be improved if they can connect to teachers freely through social media. It is easier for them to ask questions and get their doubts clarified by using social media as a direct communications tool. Additionally, teachers can provide class hours with social media platforms as the author suggested. Besides, students can get the connection to different educational groups at schools that

are linked to their study major via social media. Especially, students have opportunities to access lots of essential and authentic information shared by alumni and other students. Deng and Tavares (2013) claimed that participating in group discussions on social media can have a positive effect on the ability to think critically and to self-reflect.

Consequently, widely applying social media in teaching and learning can bring vital advantages on students' academic performance. However, the use of social media platforms also can cause negative impacts on students' academic work if they use them in improper way.

2.4.2 Disadvantages of social media on students' academic work

With the growing prevalence of mobile phones, social media applications and social networking sites have become ubiquitous in the last couples of decades. Though social media brings undeniable benefits to students, much research revealed that social media is considered as one of the reasons causing a negative impact on students' productivity. When students are involved in social media, they spend too much time on social media sites or applications, so they do not have enough time for schoolwork. For instance, students waste their time on updating their status, following people online, chatting with friends, and so on. (Teacherboards 2021.) Therefore, wasting time on those platforms makes students procrastinate, reduce their focus on the learning process and unable to finish their assignments and projects before deadlines. Besides during lessons, using mobile phones to update their accounts, check notifications or reading unnecessary news on social media also causes interruptions and distractions for students. As a result, students pay less attention during lesson contents and suffer from a loss of important information taught in the class. This impacts students' work in a negative way with the reduction of their grade-point average. (D'avila 2017.) When students spend much time on social media, it also means that they spend less time contacting directly with other people. They become dependent on online interactions, communication through chatting, comments or sending emojis. This can affect the students' social skills. Consequently, it is difficult for students to express their ideas, thoughts or interact face to face with others. Besides, they even become more unconfident in sharing their viewpoints with other members when working in a team and their communication skills are weakened as well. Thus, students may end up with lowered academic results. (Le Roux & Parry 2017.)

In addition, the excessive use of social networks can make students become addicted to it. In 2014, Wallace pointed that there is a tight relationship between obsessive use and the social media addiction. Particularly, behavioural patterns like erratic moods, trying to avoid

real life issues, hiding addictive actions, low self-esteem, and having feelings of anxiousness and stress are signs of addiction to social networking. (Guedes, Sancassiani, Carta, Campos, Machado, King et al. 2016.) Related to this, a survey conducted by Al-Yafi, El-Masri, and Tsai (2018) pointed out that students who are addicted to social media have lower average grades compared to other students.

Moreover, inordinate social media use also can cause many psychological issues such as stress, depression, isolation and many more. For instance, on Instagram and Facebook platforms, users can see the lives of rich strangers with good jobs, luxury travel tours and expensive possessions so they may feel envious and depressed. The reason is that their lives are not perfect as those ones they see on social media. (Hilliard 2021.) As a result, students' academic results are affected negatively due to their mental health problems, which is reported in a study in India (Kumar, Kumar, Badjyani, Singh, Gupta, and Ismail 2018).

There are concerns about how the language used in social media platforms can affect the writing skills of students. This language often differs from formal language by having its own slang words and abbreviations. According to a study that was conducted with both students and teachers, the results are a little inconclusive. 89 per cent of students interviewed said that the language they use on social media sites does not affect them when they are doing formal writing assignments (Belal 2014, 29). However, 73 per cent of the teachers interviewed said that social media usage influences the language that the students use and 92 per cent of the teachers agreed with the statement that the quality of writing has lowered (Belal 2014, 30).

Another problem when using social media is cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs through the usage of digital devices and platforms. Common platforms where cyberbullying happened include social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, communication apps such as WhatsApp, blogs, forums, online communities, and other websites. Cyberbullying has comparable effects to traditional bullying in that it can make the victims become shameful, stressed, depressed, scared, angry, or even kill themselves. Cyberbullying can be done by many ways, such as sharing negative messages, sending lies, threats, private photos, personal messages, or isolation from social activities online. Students are one of the most vulnerable groups to cyberbullying on social media. They can be damaged by cyberbullying in both emotional and physical ways. Cyberbullying also can cause other mental problems such as anxiety, depression, isolation, and low self-esteem. (Unicef 2021.) According to Faryadi (2011), students being cyberbullied could not focus on their studying and are blocked from expressing their ideas.

Therefore, their academic results were reduced significantly. In 2018, Akcil also pointed that among all international students, 20.7 per cent of them suffered from cyberbullying at least once a month.

2.4.3 Summary

To summarize this chapter, it can be seen that social media can have a significant impact, both good and bad, on the academic performance of students. The connectivity and communal aspects of social media can make it easier for even those students who might have trouble with communicating or forming relationships with their peers to still find and develop friendships. The internet in general makes distances become irrelevant since you can easily communicate with someone who is hundreds of kilometres away from you. For the purposes of studying, it can also provide many benefits related to the ease of access to vast amounts of data and easier communication with your peers or other figures.

Social media also has those similar problems that many students face at school in person, but perhaps nothing is more serious than bullying. Bullying has no limits and can easily extend to online platforms as well, as was previously discussed. Even if the more immediate forms of physical harm are removed, there are still numerous issues that may arise from cyberbullying as are illustrated by Figure 3 which was based on the data of a survey of 10 000 young people. The results show that over one third of the respondents developed psychological issues such as social anxiety and depression after being cyberbullied. One fourth of respondents even resorted to physically harming themselves and one tenth said that they had begun using alcohol or drugs because of being cyberbullied. (BroadbandSearch 2021.)

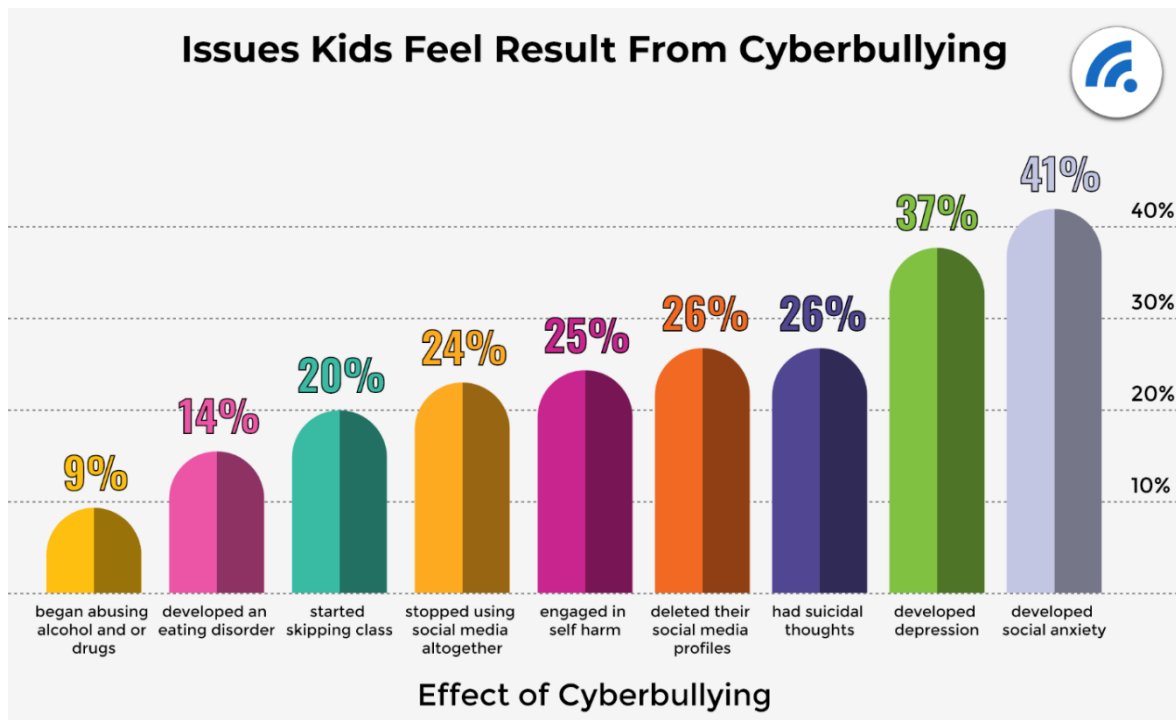


Figure 3. Issues Kids Feel Result From Cyberbullying, (BroadbandSearch 2021)

Since the empirical part of this thesis will be an interview with students from LAB University of Applied Sciences, it would be most relevant to ask the students if they have been victims of cyberbullying and to compare them to the figures presented by Akcil (2018) where 20.7 of international students had been victims of cyberbullying.

3 Study and analysis

3.1 Overview

In order to achieve the research goals set out in the beginning and to gather the necessary data for this qualitative research, it was necessary to gather data from the international students at LAB University of Applied Sciences. For this purpose, it was decided to utilize interviews as the method of data gathering for this empirical part of the study. First, the interview and the questions were designed in the beginning of April 2021. The interviews were then conducted between the 10th and the 19th of April. The data was then collected after this and analyzed during the last weeks of April. The following subchapters will introduce the interview design, the results of the interviews, analysis of the data collected, and conclusions drawn from the analysis.

3.2 Interview design

An individual interview is created for international students at LAB to discover different opinions as well as their knowledge on the impacts of social media on students' academic work. Wilson (2014) categorized interviews into three different types: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. A structured interview has a clearly defined set of questions that generate shorter and more succinct answers from respondents but may not allow respondents to elaborate on the answers which might lead to losing potentially relevant data. An unstructured interview or in-depth interview is the opposite and deals with broader questions that can be discussed in a freer manner. This can lead to answers that are not that useful and at worse, lead to the talk being about matters that are entirely off-topic. (Wilson 2014, 176.) This research makes use of the third, a hybrid approach – the semi-structured interview. According to Wilson (2014, 177), a semi-structured interview combines features from both structured and unstructured interviews. It has the set of structured questions, but with a much more flexible scope to allow the interviewer to also introduce other relevant questions and ideas. These interview questions conducted with 10 questions, aimed at how students use social media in general and their experiences of using social media in studying.

The Table 1 below shows ten interview questions. Questions 1 through 3 aim to discover what platforms the respondents use as well as their reason for doing so and how much time they spend on each platform. The fourth question is more in-depth and tries to scope out how dependant they are on social media usage. The fifth question is a simple question to find out what kind of social media users the respondents are. Questions 6 through 10

are more focused on the research topic and ask various question related to academic performance and usage of social media within the learning process.

Number	Questions
1	Name some of the social media platforms you usually use?
2	How often do you use social media sites or applications (answer in hours/minutes per day)? Do you feel like you spend too much time on social media?
3	What are your purposes for using social media?
4	How do you feel when you are without social media for a long period?
5	How often do you upload your self-images and share your personal information on social media?
6	What do you like and dislike about social media in your learning process?
7	What do you think about the using of social media to support classroom activities?
8	What is the most challenge you cope with when using social media? Do you think social media cause the heavy addiction to students? What do you think about this issue?
9	How does social media influence your academic results after using it?
10	Do you have any suggestions or methods to help students increase their academic performance by using social media?

Table 1. Interview questions

3.3 Collected data results

There were five interviewees participating in the interview for this research. Their responses are displayed below.

3.3.1 Respondent 1

The first interviewee is a second-year student majoring in international business. She is between 19 and 22 years old. The social media platforms she most often uses are Facebook, Instagram, Viber, and WhatsApp. Talking about how much time she spends using social media per day, she stated that “I usually spend about two or three hours every day

on using social media applications. For the purposes of using social media, social media is a tool to get in touch with my friends and family, look for jobs, and searching for information related to studying and entertainment. I did not upload my self-images or update my status on social media for a long time". In a situation where she cannot use social media for a long time, she cannot keep in touch with her family and friends, so then she feels disconnected but otherwise, everything is fine with her.

In the learning process, she can work in a team, discuss, and connect with teammates easily through social media channels. Besides, she also mentions that she must study online all the time in the Covid-19 pandemic so social media is a useful channel for supporting the learning process, especially group assignments and classroom activities. In addition, she also accesses lots of documents, resources and finds new ideas when discussing a topic on social media. However, she sometimes gets confused because there is so much unclear or incorrect information on social media. Every time when discovering new information, she needs to check the sources first. Moreover, the content, photos, or videos on social media can make her distracted from her learning process.

In her opinion, the biggest challenge when using social media is how to assure the time spent on social media would not negatively affect other activities. She thought that social media can cause heavy addiction to students because they easily lose the control of their timetable and become addicted to the diverse content on the social media.

In general, social media positively affects her academic results. She suggested that "we should take advantage of the diverse sources on social media and look for the study materials on the social media but be careful with sources. They should also control the time spent on social media to avoid reducing the time being distracted when we study".

3.3.2 Respondent 2

The second interviewee is a third-year student majoring in international business. She is between 20 and 25 years old. The social media platforms she usually uses are Microsoft team, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, WeChat, WhatsApp, and Zalo. When discussing the time of using social media, she shared that: "I usually spend about 3-4 hours per day in these social media platforms. Honestly, I think I have wasted lots of time on these platforms. So, I am trying to set up the time limitation for them."

For her reason of using social media, she stated that "These platforms are used as easy means to keep in touch with my family and friends. Also, updating news from others." Without using these platforms, she felt isolated and left behind. She rarely shares personal information as well as self-images on social media, only on some special occasions.

In the learning process, she has gathered important information and learnt some useful things shared by her friends through social media. However, there are also lots of irrelevant information such as advertisements and fake news which make her feel unpleasant. Especially, in classroom activities, she stated that “I think these platforms (Facebook, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp) support us to keep connecting with other classmates and teachers closely. Thanks to group chat on Facebook and Microsoft Teams, my group discussion skills improved a lot. Now, it is easier for me to work in a team compared to before. I feel more confident to start conversations in groups if I face any problems. However, in some cases, they also make me annoyed because of spam and irrelevant messages”.

On the most challenging aspect of using social media, she commented that “For me, the biggest challenge with social media is how to manage time using them and how to maximize the advantages of them without addiction.” She agreed with the statement that social media causes heavy addiction to students. In her opinion, she thought that students should limit the time of using social media to avoid addiction. Though social media provides lots of chances to connect widely with others around the world, they cannot replace other practical activities and interpersonal communication in real life. Therefore, balancing both virtual network and real connections is truly important and should be taken into account.

About the influences of social media on her academic performance, she shared that “In the positive way, I think in this pandemic situation, it helps me maintaining the studying networks conveniently. However, on the other side, it also causes me some distractions and waste energy in nonsense things, so the result is that academic plans have been pushed back so long time.” Finally, she recommended that “students should set up the time management tools and have clear and specific goals to enhance the performance.”

3.3.3 Respondent 3

The third interviewee is a fourth-year student majoring in business information technology. He is between 20 and 25 years old. He often uses these social media channels such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and spends about three hours per day on them. He said that “I keep myself away from social media during casual working and studying hours, probably from nine AM to five PM, so I do not feel I am spending too much time on them.”

On his aim of using social media, he shared that “For Facebook, mostly to chat with my family and see what my friends are doing. In the case of LinkedIn, it is for getting new in-

formation, trends, ideas, motivations, and get new connections in my field of work - software development and other fields. For Instagram, mostly checking out aesthetic pictures, ideas and updates of my friends”.

Talking about life without social media for a long period, he commented that “Usually feel that I am enjoying more of real life than a virtual one. However, I do feel disconnected with my friends and family from time to time. As we are living in different countries, social media is what is keeping us together”. He also mentioned that he often uploaded his self-images and shared personal information on social media in the past two years to be impressed by people on the internet. However, in the present day, he only shares these self-images and personal information with a small group of friends and family.

In his study, he shared that “I mostly use social media for relaxing purposes and not for learning purposes. However, I do follow and subscribe to some pages for getting updated information about IT trends and feel somewhat productive learning new things from these pages while relaxing. Another use of social media in my learning process is “study group chat”. I have a group chat for learning programming where I meet up online once a week with the members. These semi-formal meetups help me relax and keep up with my learning.”

He also mentioned that in this pandemic, social media supports classroom activities effectively due to cannot meeting physically. For example, he said that “My former internship ed-tech company (Integrify) only started using the online-classroom format to provide their courses and to cope with the pandemic situation. Now, they are using this online-learning format to get students from not only from Finland but also from other European countries (Germany, Sweden, Norway and so on). Social media, in this case, helps bringing education to more people”.

His biggest problem when using social media is that social media knows how to get his attention. He told that “The thought of new videos, posts, images, advertisements just one click away is distracting and prevents me from focusing and doing quality work. I think students also have this problem and that is why they are also addicted to social media (to please themselves with unexpected rewarding information). I am not actively using social media in my study, so my opinions might not represent the majority.”

He also shared that his grades are negatively affected in most cases because he cannot focus when using social media and studying at the same time. For him, he chooses to be notified of new activities from only pages supporting his studies on Facebook. He suggested that it is better if social media is not involved in study time.

3.3.4 Respondent 4

The fourth interviewee is a second-year student majoring in international business. She is between 20 and 25 years old. Some social media channels she often uses are Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn. Every day, she spends around seven hours on social media. In detail, she spends around three or four hours on Facebook and Instagram and four hours on YouTube per day. Some other social media channels such as Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn are used less, around 30 minutes for all of them every day. Her main reason of using social media is for entertainment, reading news, playing online games, keeping up with friends' daily activities and connecting with her family. Sometimes she uses social media to find learning materials and to study. She often shares and uploads self-images, videos, and private information on social media. Discussing about life without social media for a long time, she shared that: "I cannot even stop using Facebook, Instagram or YouTube for one day. I might feel restless and miserable if not using social media for a long period. Because every time waking up, I immediately check notification, messages, newsfeeds on Facebook and Instagram. It is my habit I could not give up".

In her study process, she commented that social media provides lots of interesting learning materials and useful sources for studying. She also uses it to connect and asks questions with other students. She mentioned that "There are a lot of benefits that social media can bring to the classroom. First, it serves as an effective communication channel between teachers and students as well as among students themselves. Second, social media is a great source of information, teachers and share it directly for the class to watch or read. Finally, learning with support of social media would be more appealing and interesting to students. Students might feel more relax and confident as they are very used to social media. Hence, it also gives students a sense of community which is beneficial to doing group work". However, she noted that social media otherwise causes distraction from studying. Additionally, news and information can be false or misleading.

The hardest challenges she faces are how much time and how to spend time wisely on social media. She thought that social media cause heavy addiction to students. She shared that she herself is an example because she is addicted to social media, without being conscious about it. She lost track of time when using social media and becomes dependent on it. Every time playing online games on social media applications, she always forgets the time and skipping meals then she felt tired and needed more time to recover. Many times, she did not meet the deadline of assignments due to thinking that just use it for few minutes and it became many hours after that. Then she felt regret and stressed

because she could spend that time on doing something valuable. She also shared that spending lots of time on social media leads to some sleeping problems. She is often insomniac because of browsing social media before going to sleep.

According to her statement, on the one side, social media helps her with many good ideas and solutions for her assignments. On the other side, she stated that “most of my academic results also were affected negatively due to being distracted on social media for many hours. Besides, when I saw gorgeous photos of traveling, richness, and people’s happy lives with lots of valuable properties on Facebook or Instagram, I got jealous, sad, angry and depressed when comparing myself to them.”.

She suggested that students should set boundaries for social media. Besides, they also should determine the purpose of using social media, set time limitations, resist temptations, and stay focused on studying.

3.3.5 Respondent 5

The fifth respondent is a second-year student who is between 18 and 22 years old. These social media platforms she uses the most include Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter. Discussing about how much time spending on social media every day, she commented that “I think around 7 hours a day. I think I do spend too much time on social media. Because of Covid-19 and quarantine I find myself using it even more.”

For her purposes of using social media, she said “Usually for finding entertainment, chatting with my friends, sometimes just to pass time but I do talk to my family every day for at least 30 minutes. Especially in the winter here, it is too dark, cold, long, and sad. It makes me feel depressed and miss my family so much. Talking to my mom helps my mental health becomes better. Thanks to her encouragement, I think positively about the future, especially in this long pandemic.” Without using social media for a long time, she stated that she would miss her family and then feel stressful, depressed if she cannot connect to them because there are lots of problems she cannot share with her friends. She mentioned that she often uploads her photos or status on social media and likes to see how people react to it.

In her learning process, she shared that “I like that I can reach people easily and doing groupwork online is easier. But it can also be distracting. Someone posts and you might get a notification and then you get the urge to check it immediately. Social media can be a great source of information, but it is difficult to realize what is reliable or just fake news and sources”.

Her trouble when using social media is that it causes distraction and wastes lots of time. Because she wants to be perfect on each photo and status she uploads. It takes her long time to think about what is interesting enough to post and what she would say to make people notice her status. She feels more happier when seeing many people react on her status updates. For her, she thought that “social media can definitely lead to addiction and it’s a huge issue”. Even she knows that the number of likes and comments are virtual, but it still affects her if she got less likes number than usual.

She confirmed that her GPA was decreased significantly last semesters when comparing to previous time when she did not have an account on social media. Because she wasted tons of time on building her profile on social media as well as reading news on it every day.

3.4 Data analysis

The data was analysed using a method of thematic analysis that was mentioned in the first chapter of the thesis. The first step was to get familiar with the data and after receiving the responses and reading through them, it was clear that certain words and phrases kept getting repeated through all of them. This led to the second part of the thematic analysis: coding. Coding means gathering words and phrases that share something with each other into groups, or themes.

As an example of this coding process, words related to communication such as discuss, connect, and chat were found in all the responses. This can be seen in this quotation from the first respondent: “I usually spend about two or three hours every day on using social media applications. For the purposes of using social media, social media is a tool to get in touch with my friends and family, look for jobs, and searching for information related to studying and entertainment. I did not upload my self-images or update my status on social media for a long time”. This led to the creation of the first theme, communication. This process was then repeated until several themes were formed as illustrated by the examples below. It could also see another word that repeats in every answer: information. All the respondents mentioned using social media as a form of finding or gathering information. This formed the second theme of information. She also was quoted as thinking that the biggest challenge when using social media is to assure the time spent on social media would not negatively affect other activities, that is, not cause a distraction and that social media can cause heavy addiction. These sentiments were also expressed in similar ways by all the other respondents. Lastly, she also mentioned that the students should be care-

ful with the sources of information they find on social media. A similar idea was also proposed by respondents 4 and 5 which ended up forming the fifth and final theme that was not part of the original four: critical thinking.

After going through a few revisions of mostly renaming the themes to be more descriptive, the themes were as follows:

- Communication
- Information
- Distractions
- Addiction
- Critical thinking

These themes are clearly present in the literary material that was introduced earlier in the thesis as well.

All of students interviewed mentioned how important social media was for helping them keep in contact with their family and friends. Many of them would feel disconnected if they were not able to keep up with what their family and friends are doing in their lives. It also functions to keep them updated on what is happening with your own life, but at least for one respondent this was not a priority when using social media. Another important reason why the respondents use social media is for entertainment purposes. Of all the different platforms available Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the platforms mentioned the most often. All the respondents also mentioned spending multiple hours on different social media platforms every day. They did not specify how this time is spread during the day, which should have been a follow up question. Another good follow up question would have been to ask how much time they spend on social media during school or work hours. This would have been closely related to the research question of the thesis and would have provided valuable data for the purpose of answering the research question. None of the respondent mentioned cyberbullying which was an interesting discovery considering the fact how common cyberbullying is as was shown in the literary sources.

When it comes to how social media affects their academic performance, both positive and negative effects were mentioned, just as expected. On the positive side, social media was mentioned as being a great way to communicate with others, be they students or teachers, as it relates to studying. Respondents also mentioned that social media can be used to improve your communication skills. On the negative side, it was mentioned that social

media is a big cause of distractions that might hamper the studying process. One respondent also mentioned social media as a direct cause of her lowered grades, as she has become quite addicted and spends a lot of time social media. All the respondents agreed that the threat of addiction is a real problem for students. Another problem with social media that respondents mentioned was the problem of fake news and how to be able to critically process the information that the students read. The power to critically think about the material you read on the internet is important for students as well, so they do not end up using weak or even false sources for their work. Most of the respondents also suggested that students should be aware of how much time they spend on social media and to set usage limits for themselves in order to avoid.

Overall, it can be concluded that the results and information gained from the interview have a high correlation rate with the information that was in the literary review for this study. Wigmore (2020) mentioned that social media refers to communication tools and all the respondents mentioned how important it was for them to be able to communicate with their friends and family. Both the negative and the positive effects of social media in general and on the academic process specifically for students that were mentioned by the respondents of the interview match up with those that were mentioned in different literary sources. On the positive side the responses line up with Madaiah, Seshaiyengar, Suresh, Munipapanna & Sonnappa (2017): social media allows for the gathering of information quickly and facilitates communication with peers and students. On the negative side the respondents mentioned social media being a distraction and causing them to waste time, and this is exactly what D'avila (2017) mentioned.

3.5 Suggestions

Social media itself is not harmful, only the way how it is used causes advantageous and disadvantageous effects. To improve students' academic performance, social media should be used in a proper way. Recommendations based on the research of this can be given to both the students and their educational institutions.

Because social media can lead to addiction and cause the students to be distracted for long periods of time, they should minimize the amount of time for using social media per day when not studying to avoid wasting time and becoming obsessed with social media. Students can run some control time applications on their devices (smart phones, laptops) to limit social media time such as Strict Workflow. In their free time, students can engage in hobbies relating to arts, outdoor activities, or sports to have better mental wellbeing and stay away from social media. A simple way to get out of technology devices is that students can leave them outside their room to prevent them checking it every few minutes.

Based on how it was shown that using social media is a big distraction for students, the university should set restrictions on every students' account for accessing social media platforms during contact lessons to help them focus on their studying. Another problem from an academic perspective is the proliferation of false information that is spread on social media. Because of this, when using social media, students need to be taught about evaluating sources and the importance of critical thinking so that they can know how to search for reliable and precise sources, documents, and information. The university should raise students' awareness about the impact of social media such as security, safety, privacy, and digital literacy, and the way of using it properly through seminars, courses, and group discussions. Based on how common cyberbullying is, the university should also try to raise awareness for this problem.

Teachers also should encourage students to share about their problems with social media. Besides, they can help students understand the usage of social media and other platforms to support their studies as well as support students when they have problems on social media. Moreover, the school can provide online services for students who want to connect to the teachers or seek help but cannot do it in person for some reason. There are various social media channels and each of them has its own advantages. Lecturers can choose the suitable social media platforms to build new habits for students by assigning homework for students on these platforms to help them get used to using it for studying purpose. The university can periodically create statistic surveys about how students use social media for their studying. Each classroom should have a box where students can put their phones and tablets away during the lectures to help them avoid distractions.

3.6 Conclusions

This thesis dug into the influence of social media on students' academic work. Based on the results, the most common social media channels used by international students are Facebook, followed by WhatsApp and Instagram. This chapter summarizes and concludes the research by answering the main research question "What is the impact of social media on students' academic performance?". Through the theoretical research, and as results of interviews and data analysis, it can be concluded that social media influences students' academic result in both ways: positive and negative. In the learning process, social media brings lots of advantages, including:

- Being a useful tool to help students connect to each other and teachers, promoting their relationships, supporting classroom activities such as teamwork, assignments, and projects.
- Improving teamwork and communication skills.
- In e-learning, social media offers many platforms for studying, especially in this pandemic.
- Saving time and access to many kinds of documents, resources, and information anytime and anywhere.
- Keep up to date with new information, trends and provide opportunities and expand network of contacts.

However, social media also influences students' academic results negatively, including:

- Fake news and irrelevant information can be misleading and cause distractions.
- Addiction, dependence, wasting time, and reduced concentration on studying.
- Causing depression and other mental health problems such as feelings of being isolated, disconnected, or left behind without using it.
- Cyberbullying can be just as serious as regular bullying and is a problem many students face these days.

This research has some limitations. Firstly, this research only aims at a small group with the restriction of sample size. Therefore, that sample only represents a small group of international students, not all students. The second limitation is that the impact of other factors such as the studying environment in classes, classmate relationship, family support, genders and students' cognitive ability have not been measured in this research. These factors should be involved into evaluating students' academic work in future research. Thirdly, all collected data depends on self-reported measure that can impact the accuracy of the results. Finally, this research only used the interview method.

4 Summary

This research was to measure the influence of social media on the international students' academic results. To find out what that influence is, a comprehensive literary review was combined with an empirical study conducted on five international students at LAB University of Applied Sciences.

Social media has become more and more popular and essential today. Together with its development, students use social media platforms frequently not only in studying but also in their daily lives. The key findings of the research were that social media has both positive and negative effects on their academic work. There is no denying about the positive aspect of social media on students' studying process. Students can share academic resources, documents fast and easily. They also can find many new ideas or good resources on social media by different ways like images, audios, videos, or text. With social media, students' activities are more than the traditional activities in classrooms. Students and teachers can discuss and support each other anytime via many types of social media.

Though many utilities and conveniences social media brings to students, it can lead to a significant decrease of students' academic performance. Commonly, students are attracted by social media. They spend most of their time checking and updating new things on social media and playing online games. This can lead to students spending most of their waking moments using different social media platforms. Students confirmed that they use social media to interact with others and for entertainment other than for studying. Excessive use of social media for a long time causes addiction, distractions, wasting time, and mental health problems that reduce academic performance. Among those factors caused by social media, addiction and time wasting are those that impact students' academic result significantly because students' grades going down are strongly connected with amount of time spending on social media. Other factors like privacy or security issues and cyberbullying do not cause a big impact on students' study in this research based on the interview conducted, but they are still real issues that should be considered as other research material provides a contrary view.

This thesis answers the research question and provides credible reasons for the findings. The positive and negative effects of social media are corroborated by both the literary sources and the interview that was included as part of the research process. The methodology and research method chosen were conducive in providing proper answers to the research question. Therefore, the research is valid. It is reasonable to assume, that if the interview was conducted on a larger scale, the findings would still be similar, outside of those outliers who do not use social media platforms at all. The assumption could be

made that these results would be similar even if the study was conducted on students at other universities. This means that the results of the study fill the criteria of reliability. This research can then be considered to have reached both meta-goals of validity and reliability that are the hallmarks of good research. (Middleton 2019.)

This research fills the criteria of good research concerning referencing and plagiarism. All the referencing was done according to the guidelines of LAB University of Applied Sciences and proper credit was always given. No text was directly copied and pasted from other sources with incorrect referencing. In the interview, the privacy of the respondents was respected and no specific details about them were published that could lead to them being identified. For example, instead of a specific age, an age range was instead used to help the respondents stay anonymous.

For future research, this topic can attract other research because social media is still developing rapidly, which leads to certain problems for students. Future research can use different research methods to reshape the factors that form the effect of social media on students' academic performance. Future research could also be more focused on certain aspects like cyberbullying that was not the focus of this study but could be a research topic on its own. Finally, this research is limited by a small sample so a larger sample can achieve better results and improve the knowledge of this field.

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