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The Social Media Scourge among University Students: A Study of the University for Development Studies, Ghana

Damasus Tuurosong¹ and Amadu Mohammed Faisal²

Abstract

In spite of the development potential of social media, various studies have revealed worrying trends of such media's abuse especially among students of tertiary institutions. Using interviews conducted with students and staff of the University for Development Studies, the study set out to establish the frequency of social media usage among students, their reasons for using such media and the harmful effects of new media usage on the academic and socio-economic lives of students. The study found that Facebook and Whatsapp are the most frequently used social media followed by Twitter, Skype and YouTube. Also, more than a quarter of respondents use such media more than once a day while over half of them engaged in social media usage once a day. Moreover, more than half of the respondents used social media mainly to chat with friends and relations while a fifth used it for academic purposes. Respondents admitted that social media usage took time from their academic work. Some indicated that they spent about two United States dollars each day on social media and that they used such media during lectures, thereby making them lose concentration during lectures. It also emerged from the study that students put such media to perpetuate fraud. The study recommends that university authorities should regulate usage of social media. In particular, students should be prevented from using phones during lectures. Ghana's National Media Commission and National Communications Authority must enact cyber protection regulations to reduce the harmful effects of social media usage on tertiary students.

Keywords: Social Media, University Students, Mobile Phones, Computers, Websites

Introduction

In the last ten years, there has been such phenomenal revolution in communication technology that has left both users and observers gasping for breath. Social networking became popular between 2004 and 2006, after Facebook and MySpace were created. Today, new media come in various shapes and forms including magazines, internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, micro blogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). From their initial usage as simple platforms for sharing photos, discussing issues of common interests and supplementing traditional social interactions, social media sites have now become the source of change in various areas of human endeavour to the extent that they have revolutionized the way people interact, the way they communicate, and even the way they think (Weisgerber & Butler, 2010).

In 2011, Facebook controlled more than 800 million active users sharing more than 30 billion pieces of content each month in the form of web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photo albums and many more (Facebook Statistics, 2011). Twitter, a social networking and micro-blogging service, also hosted about 140 million tweets per day, up from 50 million in

¹ Ph.D and Lecturer in the Department of African and General Studies, University for Development Studies, Wa Campus, Ghana

² Senior Research Assistant in the Department of African and General Studies, University for Development Studies, Wa Campus, Ghana

2010. As many as 460,000 new twitter accounts were also opened every day (Twitter Statistics, 2011).

Young people are particularly drawn to new media. It is common finding the youth hooked onto their cell phones accessing social networking sites while on the streets, aboard transports, in schools and at home. Based on nationally representative data, a Kaiser Family Foundation Study conducted in five-year intervals found that with technology allowing nearly 24-hour media access, the amount of time young people spend on entertainment media has risen dramatically, especially among Black and Hispanic youth. According to the study, in a typical day, 8-18 year-olds devote an average of 7 hours, 38 minutes (7:38) on entertainment media (more than 53 hours a week). This is about the same amount of time that most adults spend at work per day (Kaiser Family Foundation Study, 1998-1999, 2003-2004 and 2008-2009).

New media "radically break the connection between physical place and social place, making physical location much less significant for our social relationships" (Croteau and Hoynes, 2003: 311). For instance, virtual communities are being established online and transcend geographical boundaries and social restrictions. "People in virtual communities use words on screens to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, create a little high art and a lot of idle talk" (Rheingold cited in Slevin, 2000: 91). Some even argue that "making the computer into a second self, finding a soul in the machine can substitute for human relationships" (Holmes, 2005: 184). This shows that new media has the ability to connect like-minded others worldwide.

Indeed social media has provided avenues for greater participation and collaboration in the learning process and changed the way people think (Parker and Chao, 2008; Prensky, 2011). Additionally, social media allow individuals to establish connections with others and share information using facebook, wikis, blogs, tweets and podcasts (McCarthy, 2010).

Social media has contributed phenomenally to development work by building awareness of the need for development through virtual campaign, fund raising and mobilization of collective resources for social change. Social media applications, especially text-based blogs, internet forums and social networking sites, are used to generate resources for development purposes. They generate social interactions among users to raise awareness about crucial development programmes (Kaplan, 2012).

Besides, social media applications are being used in public relations. This often takes the form of communicating organizations' values to the public, educating the public on the vision and mission of the organization, how the organization works, why public should support them, and what the organization's achievement have been. Also, social media applications create opportunities for feedback from the public regarding an organization's operations, thereby building credibility and transparency in its operations (Kaplan, 2012).

In the area of democracy and governance, social media offer new possibilities to people to express themselves in a variety of ways and freely participate in major events. Being decentralized and less hierarchical in nature, social media platforms allow users to interact and collaborate with each other as creators of user-generated content, exploiting different tools, interfaces, software, and storage facilities to add value to content. As a result of this, they offer a means for self-mass communication, previously restricted by temporal or spatial constraints (Castells, 2009).

Indeed with new media, audiences have the power to transform their personal social networks by connecting and developing intimate bonds with unfamiliar people (Kaplan and Blakley 2009). The fact that users can generate content is a means of reshaping power relations between individuals and media actors (Hinchcliffe 2006; O'Reilly 2005). As Jenkins et al. (2005: 10) observed, "we are moving away from a world in which some produce and

many consume media, toward one in which everyone has a more active stake in the culture that is produced.” Similarly, Kietzmann and Kristopher (2011: 250) contend that “social media introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between individuals, communities, and organizations.”

For Jenkins et al. (2005), social media empowers people and makes them aspire to use technology to shape their lives. This enhances participatory development since it makes ordinary people believe that their contributions matter. In addition, social media play a key role in promoting democratic participation and generating well informed pluralist society. This is as a result of the fact that, at relatively low transaction costs, social media makes it possible for citizens to confront a diverse range of public affairs and initiate public mobilization against their governments (Salmon, Fernandez and Post, 2010). This has been instrumental in shaping and catalyzing social changes driven by democratic participation in public spheres. It corroborates what Jakubowicz (2007: 137) refers to as “alternative and opposition public spheres”. This unprecedented decentralization of information and communication brought by social media has empowered citizens and enabled marginalized people to express themselves by utilizing independent channels to voice their opinions and take part directly or indirectly in social change processes.

Many studies have done impact assessments, with some concentrating on the internet’s social networks and their consequences on a range of disciplines (Wellman, 2004). In particular, Maddel and Muncer (2005) indicate that young people use both the internet and mobile phones for complementary communication purposes. According to them, internet users build more social networks than non-users. Similarly, Jung et al. (2005) found that young people used internet mostly to email, for chatting, games, mailing list, newsgroups, or surfing web sites, maintaining a personal web, listening to or downloading music and reading online newspapers. Also, the Pew Internet and American Life Project established that American college students are not only early adopters and heavy internet users but that the internet had also become an essential tool of the learning environment for students both inside and outside of the classroom (Pew Internet, 2001).

Over the years, much research has also brought to light the positive and negative roles that new media and the internet have played in enhancing or retarding student learning. While Akbulut et al. (2007), studied students’ internet usage and the impact this has on academic dishonesty, MacAuley (1997) explored distance education and library use and (Looi & Ang, 2000; Looi, 2001) studied the internet in learning ecology and Lu et al. (2007) researched wireless internet and student-centered learning.

More than any particular group of new media users, college students make extensive use of new media. For instance, Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr (2010) established that 72% of all college students have a social media profile with 45% of college students using a social media site at least once a day. Many reasons have been assigned for high levels of internet usage among college students. Studies have shown that majority of college students own or have ready access to computers. Moreover, present day students were brought up on internet technology, while computers are no longer regarded as negative influences on the youth as was the case previously, particularly among males (Morahan-Martin, 1998).

More to the point, college students have more free time to spend on internet usage compared to workers. The students also have easy access through direct Internet connections in dormitories, libraries, and computer labs (Kandell, 1998). Moreover, most college campuses have the latest technologies in their computer laboratories with high-speed connections, allowing for faster downloads and Internet surfing (Scherer, 1997). At any rate, many colleges even rely on the Internet as a means of disseminating information. For instance, professors use the Internet as a means of giving assignments, reading lists and course outlines.

Dealing with social pressure and emotional stress are also significant reasons for the high numbers of college students who use the internet. Having left home for school, students often find it difficult settling into their new school environment. The internet helps students to deal with the stress of academic work and serves as companions for those who find themselves in the school environment for the first time (Kandell, 1998).

Similarly, Ellison et al. (2007) established a relationship between Facebook usage and various forms of social capital. Similarly, Donath & Boyd (2004) found that when students connect with one another on a social media site before arrival on campus, they may enter college with a more expansive social network than they otherwise might have had. This makes it possible for them to bridge social capital once they enter campus. Besides, researchers have found that social media sites like Facebook have the ability to guide students entering an unfamiliar social environment. For Scherer (1997: 18), Facebook has “become an important site for the informal, cultural learning of ‘being’ a student, with online interactions and experiences allowing roles to be learned, values understood and identities shaped”. Yu, Tian, Vogel, and Kwok (2010) corroborate Scherer’s study with the suggestion that social network sites offer a unique opportunity to promote socialization to the college environment. They established that social network sites can help students to learn more about their colleagues and the university they were enrolled into. Indeed, social network sites may assist students socialize to their new environment and establish a sense of connection with their institution. Haythornthwaite and Kazmer (2002) provide further evidence to show that social media can strengthen student-to-student and student-to-instructor relations.

Having the ability to seek out help and express feelings and concerns has been shown to play a role in students’ adjustment to college. For instance, Srivastava, Tamir, McGonigal, John, and Gross (2009) showed that among students entering college, emotional suppression was the result of students getting less social support or those who were less close to others as well as students who had less satisfaction with their social network. Therefore, affording students the opportunity to express their concerns and seek feedback from the new media before they entered college could enhance their perceptions of social support.

However, research on social network sites has also discovered many negative influences of social media on students of tertiary institutions. For instance, Kolek & Saunders (2008) argued that college and high school students often use Facebook to post pictures of excessive drinking behavior. Indeed, social media usage has several negative effects on university students. Schill (2011) found that the social media sites encourage negative behaviors for teen students. The most common of such bad behaviours are procrastination, likelihood of drunkenness and drug use. Similarly, Haris (2008) argued that students spend countless hours immersed in social media, such as Facebook, MySpace, World of Warcraft, or Sims City and that many parents were getting worried that their university students spent too much time on Facebook and other social media sites at the expense of their studies. Kaplan (2012) also argued that there seemed to be a positive correlation between the use of social media and cyber bullying as well as online sexual predators. Likewise, media seem to be influencing kids’ lives in terms of exposing them to images of alcohol, tobacco and sexual behaviors. Among college students, excessive use of new media has been associated with absenteeism from lectures, course failure and dismissal from college. For example, an Alfred University study found that 43% of dropouts in a given semester had been staying up until early morning hours using the internet (Young, 1998).

In Ghana, a TV3 program, “You and The Police”, recounted an incident where some university students were caught and prosecuted by the police for abusing the use of social media. According to the edition of this program, a student of the University of Education, Winneba was arrested by the Police for using another lady’s profile picture to create a page on Facebook, saying that the lady was an HIV patient and, therefore, needed help from people

to survive. The programme also indicated that two other students used facebook to feign love for a lady whom they eventually defrauded of three hundred Ghana cedis, the equivalent of one hundred and fifty United States dollars (TV 3, 2013).

At an Academic Board Meeting of the University for Development Studies in Ghana, held on 26th November, 2013, many lecturers including the Vice Chancellor expressed worry about the fact that students used their mobile phones to whatsapp and go on facebook during lectures. The lecturers lamented that social media usage during lectures led to loss of concentration and eventually affected students' performance. Therefore, this study set out to investigate the harmful effects of new media usage among university students.

The study is aimed at:

1. Examining the reasons for social media usage;
2. Finding out the range of uses to which students put social media;
3. Determining the effects of new media usage on the academic performance of university students;
4. Finding out the types of new media students use; and
5. Establishing how students get access to such media.

Uses and Gratifications Theory of New Media

This study was informed by the Uses and gratifications theory of communication, a theory that examines how media audiences consume specific media to satisfy certain needs. It is an audience-centred theory which focuses less on what the media do to people and rather pays attention to what people do with the media (Katz, 1959). The theory concentrates on how audiences deliberately choose media that enhances knowledge, relaxation, social interactions/companionship, diversion, or escape (Tankard, 2000; McQuail, 2010).

Contrary to other communications theories, the uses and gratifications theory postulates that media users are not passive receptacles of messages but active in interpreting messages and applying such messages to their lives. Since audiences make their own media choices, the media compete with other sources of information for audiences' gratification (Palmgreen, Wenner and Rosengren, 1985). Mark Levy and [Sven Windahl](#) (cited from Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974: 509) explained the term "active consumer" of media as:

a volunatistic and selective orientation by audiences toward the communication process... it suggests that media use is motivated by needs and goals that are defined by audience members themselves, and that active participation in the communication process may facilitate, limit, or otherwise influence the gratifications and effects associated with exposure.

The theory operates on the assumption that audiences are active and their media uses are goal oriented. The theory also assumes that the initiative in linking need gratification to a specific medium choice rest with audience members and that the media compete with other channels of communication to satisfy people's needs (West and Lynn, 2007). Studies into the theory came up with five goals of media usage. It emerged from the research that people used the media to obtain information or education, identify with characters of the situation in the media environment and to entertain themselves. That aside, some people also used the media to enhance social interaction or escape from the stresses of daily life (McQuail, 2010).

Leung (2013) applied the theory to mobile phone usage and reported that people use mobile phones for the following uses and gratifications: affection/sociability, entertainment, instrumentality, psychological reassurance, fashion/status, mobility and immediate access. Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, (2008), on the other hand, studied the specific function of text messaging to determine its uses and gratifications and explore any potential gender

differences. The study resulted in seven uses and gratifications of text messages, ranked from the highest to lowest as follows:

1. Accessibility/mobility
2. Relaxation
3. Escape
4. Entertainment
5. Information seeking
6. Coordination for business
7. Socialization/affection seeking
8. Status seeking

The results also showed gender differences (in an undergraduate population), with women scoring the uses and gratifications of accessibility/mobility, relaxation and escape, and coordination higher than the men.

Related to mobile phone and text messaging, Namsu, Kee and Valenzuela (2009) researched into what people used the internet for and found three main categories of gratifications for internet usage: content gratification, process gratification, and social gratification. Content gratification referred to internet usage for researching or finding specific information or material. Process gratification, on the other hand, described the satisfaction one obtained by purposefully navigating or randomly browsing the internet, while social gratification came in the form of using the internet to form and deepen social ties.

University students are active users of new media. They are capable of selecting various new media types to satisfy their needs for knowledge, relaxation, social interactions/companionship, diversion, or escape. Therefore, the present study employs the uses and gratifications theory to determine the types of new media which university students frequently use and range of uses that they put the various new media devices to. Based on the theory, the study also seeks to establish the forms of gratification students derive from new media usage.

Research Methodology

The study adopted survey approach and indepth interviews for data collection. The population of the study was 12,001 undergraduates of the three faculties which make up the Wa Campus of the University for Development Studies. The faculties are: Integrated Development Studies (IDS), Education, Business and Law (EBL) and Planning and Land Management (PLM). For the survey, the researchers validated the questionnaire used through a pilot testing on 25 students of the Faculty of Integrated Development Studies. In selecting 450 respondents to the study, the following quotas were allotted to the three faculties: IDS – 180, EBL – 160 and PLM – 110. Within each Faculty, simple sampling was used to select the required number of respondents.

On the other hand, purposive sampling technique was used to select the Student Representative Council President, Secretary and the Women's Commissioner of the University for in-depth interviews. As student leaders, the President and Secretary could articulate views regarding new media usage among students more than anyone else. As both the President and Secretary were male students, we selected the Women's Commissioner to bring a female perspective to the subject being discussed. It was believed that the three student leaders also communicate to students using the new media and would therefore be in a position to give informed views on social media usage on the University Campus. Besides, the Head of the Department of Development Communications of the University was purposively sampled since as a communications researcher he was more likely to be informed on the uses and gratifications which motivate students' use of new media. The Vice Dean of Students of the Wa Campus was also sampled for the simple reason that he interacts with

students most often and was likely to be better informed about their communication habits and behaviors.

Findings and Discussion

Majority of respondents to the survey were female undergraduate students (55%), aged between 20 and 29 years (82%). Respondents below the age of 20 constituted 12% of the sample and those aged 30 years and above constituted 6%. Also, majority of respondents were third-year students of the University (33%) while final year students constituted 28% of the sample, first year students were a fifth of respondents (20%) and second-year students were made up of 19% of the sample.

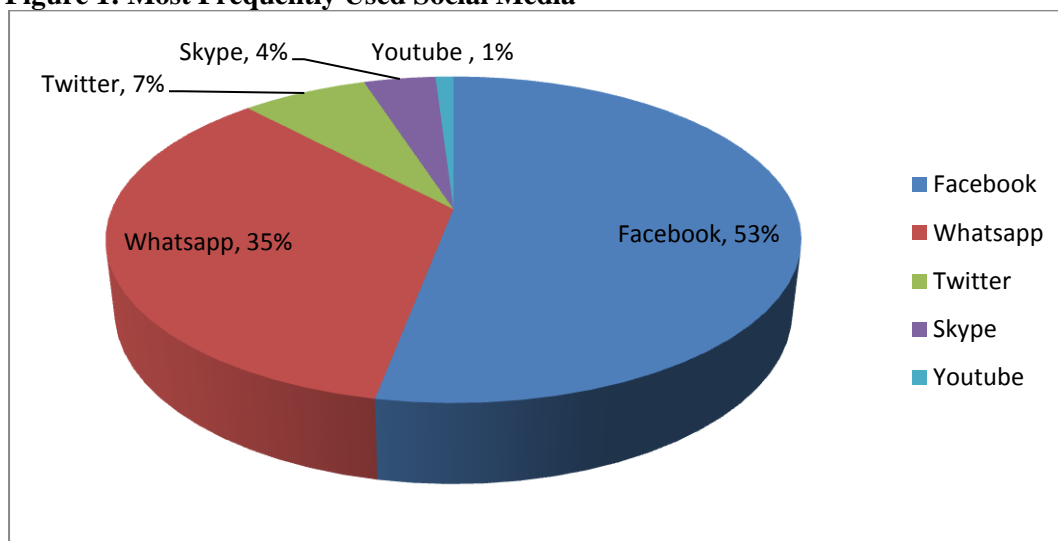
Types and Frequency of Social Media Used

The study showed that all respondents use social media. Majority of the respondents (75%) have used social media for more than two years, while a little more than a fifth (21%) have used such media for between one and two years. Only 4% of the respondents had had access to social media for less than one year. The study was also interested in establishing the types of social media that students used. Results of the survey were as follows:

| | | | |
|-----|----------|---|-----|
| 9. | Facebook | - | 85% |
| 10. | Whatsapp | - | 65% |
| 11. | Twitter | - | 45% |
| 12. | Skype | - | 30% |
| 13. | YouTube | - | 30% |

It emerged from the study that the most frequently used social medium among university students is Facebook (53%), while the least used is YouTube (1%). Figure 1 shows the most frequently used social media.

Figure 1: Most Frequently Used Social Media



Asked the frequency with which respondents used social media, majority indicated that they use social media once a day (59%), more than a day (26%), while 9% and 8% reported using social media twice a week and once a week respectively.

Ways through which Students Access Social Media

The survey revealed that, 58% of respondents accessed social media through phones, 28% through both internet modems on their laptops, while 6% accessed social media through internet cafés. Finally, 8% of respondents accessed social media using all the three sources namely phones, modems and internet cafés.

Reasons for Using Social Media

In keeping with the uses and gratifications theory of the media, it emerged that students used social media to satisfy various gratuitous needs. Similar to the findings of Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008), socialization and entertainment emerged as leading reasons for using social media. For 39% of students surveyed, chatting with friends was the most compelling reason for using new media. On the other hand, 24% use such media to entertain themselves with games and music while 19% use new media for academic research. In an interview, the SRC President lamented that life on the Wa Campus of the University for Development Studies is rather dull and uneventful since there are few entertaining programmes to enable students relax after strenuous academic work. According to him, this explains why students use social media to either chat or entertain themselves. Aside socialization and entertainment, students also use the new media for business purposes (11%), to have access to religious literature (4%) and for sexual gratification (3%).

Respondents who have some business interest while studying at the University indicated that they use social media to search for business prospects and communicate with their partners. Those who utilize social media for religious reasons indicated that they download religious messages using social media and share messages with their pastors on the internet. Respondents who seek sexual gratification from social media, do so by visiting pornographic websites and downloading nude pictures. According to them, the upsurge in sexually transmitted diseases makes internet sex a safer means of satisfying one's sexual passions.

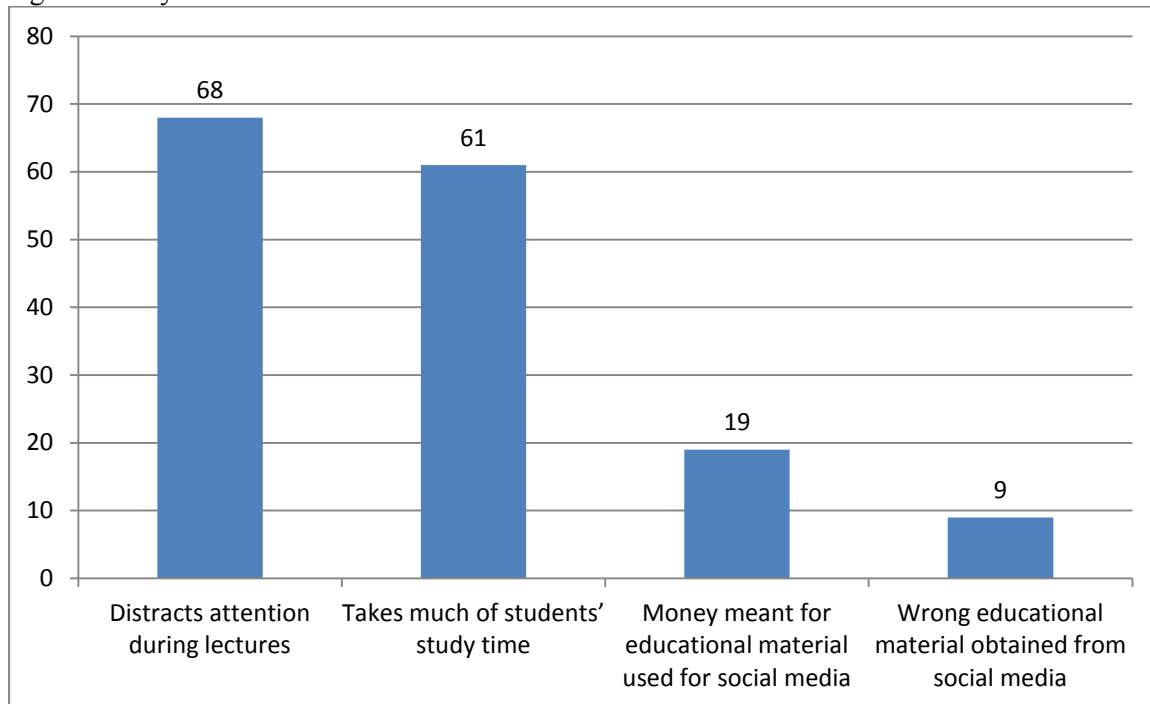
If our respondents are to be believed, lecturers of the University for Development Studies need not worry much about students accessing new media during lectures since majority of the respondents (71%) stated that they mostly use new media during their leisure hours. However, more than a fifth (22%) admitted to frequent use of new media during lectures and 7% used the media during their study periods. Students who use new media during lectures assigned numerous reasons for this habit. Such reasons include:

- | | | | |
|-----|--|---|----------|
| 14. | The need to respond to emergency messages or calls | - | 41%; |
| 15. | To entertain themselves when lectures are uninteresting and tiresome | - | 38%; |
| 16. | To find quick answers to questions posed by the lecturer | - | 32%; |
| 17. | Chatting with friends | - | 26%; and |
| 18. | To keep awake during lectures | - | 19%. |

Effects of Social Media Usage on Students' Academic Work

It is not as if students who spend their lecture time on social media are oblivious of the negative effects of such action on their academic output. Majority of the students interviewed (63%) admitted that the use of social media negatively impacted upon their academic work. According to our respondents, new media usage affected their academic work in various ways. As indicated in Figure 2, majority of respondents said social media distracted their concentration during lectures.

Figure 2: Ways in which social media affected students' academic work



Both the Head of African and General Studies Department of the University for Development Studies and the Vice Dean of Students of the same University expressed their concern about the negative effects of social media usage on the academic performance of students. According to the Head of Department, lecturers find it difficult gaining the attention of students who use social media during lectures. Additionally, students who concentrate on social media rather than paying attention to lecturers waste other students' time since the lecturer often has to repeat lectures already delivered for the benefit of the social media users.

"In a lecture of about two hundred students, you can find more than twenty either on facebook or whatsapp. While you are busy lecturing they are also busy chatting away with friends on new media. One day, I mentioned a student's name to answer a question. There was no response from him and he seemed to be asleep. But then I observed his eyes were not closed and he was actually so engrossed in something else that he had not heard me call. When I walked up to him and tapped his shoulder, I noticed he was watch his favourite TV telenovella on his phone", the Head of Department said.

The Vice Dean of Students also attributed students' poor performance partly to social media addiction among students. According to him, not only are students hooked onto social media during lectures, they spend their private study time on social media. He indicated that each time he visited students at their hostels, he often found almost all of them using one type of new medium or another. Echoing the findings of Young (1998) who found that among college students, excessive use of new media has been associated with absenteeism from lectures, course failure and dismissal from college, the Vice Dean of Students said some students even avoid lectures and stayed back in the hostels to entertain themselves on social media. According to him, some of those who attend lectures or visited libraries spent the time visiting social media sites rather than concentrating on their studies. He was of the view that the main reason for the worsening academic performance of students was that students do not read anything other than the lecture notes.

"Students just spend endless hours on facebook and whatsapp. Few of them

undertake independent research to challenge their lecturers with questions during lectures. You will not believe that some students refuse to attend lectures and instead stay back in their hostels to spend their time on social media. That is why we are producing half-baked graduates”, the Vice Dean of Students stated.

Nineteen percent of students interviewed indicated that they used social media for academic research and this improved their academic performance. The Head of the Department of African and General Studies of the University for Development Studies agreed with the students adding that since most lecturers reward, with high marks, students who undertake independent research, those who use social media for research purposes were more likely to earn higher marks than students who reproduced their lecture notes to answer examination questions. He explained that new media served as an excellent supplement to students' in-class work. The Head of Department was also of the view that if new media is used effectively, it could enforce inter and intra-campus information sharing within the multi-campus UDS. He added that the facilitation of communication among students and between students and staff of the University which results from new media usage has enhanced academic work. According to him, the lack of offices for lecturers had made it difficult for students and lecturers to interact outside normal lecture hours. Therefore, students with difficulties consult some lecturers on facebook and whatsapp. The Head of Department's statement supports the findings of Haythornthwaite and Kazmer (2002) which provided evidence to the effect that social media strengthen student-to-student and student-to-instructor relations. That apart, the Head of Department indicated that lecturers send lecture information across to students using social media sites. The Head of Department revealed that there is a Tele-lecture Centre which enables students to benefit from online lectures.

Apart from their negative impact on students' academic work social media also affect students negatively in several ways. Similar to Haris (2008) who argued that students spend countless hours engrossed in social media and that parents were getting worried that their university students spent too much time on Facebook and other social media sites at the expense of their studies, students in the present study admitted that social media is not only time-consuming, it also costs them money. Majority of students (64%) said social media costs them between five and ten United States dollars each month. Twenty three percent said they spend less than five dollars each month on social media, while 13% have to cough up more than ten dollars each month to satisfy their crave for social media usage. Besides, some students admitted that social media corrupts their morals. They explained that watching of pornographic websites increased their appetite for sex. This resulted in them engaging in illicit sexual adventures.

The Vice Dean of Students corroborated what the students said regarding the negative impact of social media usage. According to him, students are more antisocial because rather than organizing social events at their hostels to fraternize with colleagues, they prefer to spend their leisure time on social media. The SRC President re-emphasized the Vice Dean of Student's point by saying that even when the SRC organized social events especially during SRC Week celebrations, such events were poorly patronized, as most students stayed back in their hostels to spend time on social media.

“This year, we spend a lot of money bringing a top musician to campus to entertain students for free. However, we got so disappointed because less than one hundred students [5% of total student population] turned up. The SRC executives went around the hostels trying to convince students to patronize the event. But few came. Even some of those who attended sat fidgeting with their smart phones rather than dancing to the music”, the SRC President said.

Conclusions

Results of this study showed that though almost every student on the Wa Campus of the University for Development Studies uses social media, they do so with moderation because majority use such media only once a day. However, the students are better off without social media as it impacts negatively on their academic performance. Students visit social media sites to socialize and entertain themselves rather than to research. Indeed, students will perform better academically if they were not exposed to social media. Usage of such media during lectures distracted students and slowed down their academic performance. Authorities of the University for Development Studies need not worry about social media leading to crimes like drug abuse, alcoholism and internet fraud among students. In contrast with earlier research which identified these crimes as consequences of social media usage, this study showed that students do not identify these crimes as consequences of their social media use.

Recommendations to minimize negative effects of social media

All respondents to this study agreed that there was the need to curtail the use of social media during lectures. They proposed that the University authorities should ban the use of mobile phones during lectures and institute severe sanctions against any student who violated such a ban. That aside, respondents came up with the following recommendations:

19. The University authorities and SRC must create awareness among students on the negative impact of social media. Students should be encouraged to use social media more for academic purposes than for socialization or other purposes.
20. The National Media Commission and the National Communications Authority must enact legislation to curb the unbridled use of social media. In particular, they must regulate the availability of some social media sites to students.
21. Majority of students accessed social media through their mobile phones. Therefore, authorities of the University can prevent students from using social media during lectures by banning possession of mobile phones at lectures.

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