

**THE RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN LEARNING
AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG
UNDERGRADUATES IN FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL
STUDIES, UPM**

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Abstract

There has been increasing use of Social Media among students across the world. Literature regards social media as websites and software that primarily allow users to “connect, communicate, and interact with each other”. Therefore, research is needed to describe undergraduate students' experiences on using social media for learning. Previous studies have looked at the utilization of specific social media tools.. Each focused on a particular tool, such as the usage of blogs or podcasts. Other studies investigated just the role of frequently-used social media among university students. This research project will focus on undergraduate students' use of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter for learning and academic performance at the context of UPM. This paper has summarized about the problem statement, objective of study and theoretical framework. It has described and explained that forms at basis and direction of this study according to objective. Objectives of the study will establish the goals to be achieved at the end of the study. Then, several questions will develop based on the objectives of the study. The study will be beneficial to the undergraduates, teachers, universities and educators. Four theories have been explained and very related to the study, which include theories of Ecological Systems by Urie Bronfenbrenner, Greeno's (1997) by situated learning theory, social learning theory by Albert Bandura (1977) and Connectivism theoretical framework by Siemens (2005) and Downes (2005) .

Introduction

There has been increasing use of Social Media among students across the world. Literature regards social media as websites and software that primarily allow users to “connect, communicate, and interact with each other” (Correa, Hinsley, & De Zuniga, 2010) through posting, sharing, or co-producing information (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). Various terms such as new media, new technology, social networking, social software, alternative media, social computing, digital media and internet media are used synonymously for social media. In the proposed study, social media entails overlapping domains: social networking sites (including Facebook, LinkedIn), tools for communication with others (such as email, instant messaging), and sites for information sharing, which generally can be commented on or altered by others (like blogs and YouTube). Since teens and young adults are among the first to adopt and utilize variety of social media tools, that experience makes them amongst the most knowledgeable on how to employ them for different scenarios (Lewis, 2010) (Coleman, 2009; a cited in Lewis, 2009). For that reason, students have become the ideal space to exchange information and knowledge in a swift, simple and convenient way, as they have fully incorporated social media into their lives throughout.

In 2007, Malaysian government introduced National Higher Education Strategic Plan beyond 2020 and National Higher Education Action Plan 2007-2010 (Sirat, 2009a), as a strategy to channel forces of social media, for academic excellence and quality education (Reports, 2007). Studies consider students in Malaysian higher education among the major users of social media, for instance, Gruber (2009) maintains that Malaysian universities take advantage of social networking technologies to communicate with current and prospective students (Gruber, 2009). In this way, students become at the centre of the process on using social media, for either academic or social purposes, with cell phones and Internet applications being an integral part of their daily life (Bradley, 2006).

To date, Malaysia being the fastest developing country in South East Asia (acited in Alsagoff, Abdullah, & Hassan, 2011), while exposed university students and lecturers to engaging networking practices through social media. Despite obvious increase of incorrect postings of diabolic materials, question on students' right to privacy, censorship, and cyber stalking (Lenartz, 2012), social media has provided engaging teaching and learning ground

for lecturers and students to share information, exchange experiences and express opinions between and direct to each the others. In this way, social media has proven to be useful and strategic partner to students' learning in higher learning institutions.

This chapter addresses the background of the study on relationship between social media use in learning and academic performance among Malaysian undergraduate students at the Universiti Putra Malaysia. The university focuses on use and practice on social media and expectations on students learning. Besides, it examines whether undergraduate students are able to fulfill the expectations in the light of the present policy guidelines. Moreover, it addresses importance of using social media for learning along improving students' academic performance.

Research shows that the increase use of social media amongst students, obligates universities to reorganize curriculum for those changes (Martínez-Alemán & Wartman, 2008). The aim is to help students' learning, relearning and unlearning from various domains in the new world order. In this case, the usage of social media in higher education combines students' task assignment and examination. Moreover, it covers class rescheduling, task/schedule negotiation and resource or material searching and sharing.

In Malaysian, Embi and Hassan (2012) in a survey study of about 6358 respondents on the Use of Social Networking Sites among Malaysian University Students show that about 97.8% of the sampled population own computing devices including computer, laptops or notebooks, though 19.2% (1922) of the respondents reported not having any social networking site accounts at the time of the survey. Accordingly, Social Networking in the form of Face book, Twitter, MySpace and Linked take more of students' time than Learning and Blogging. These findings concur to the other study by Tham and Ahmed (2011) in USA and Manjunatha (2013) of India. There is also concern that a good number of students tend to use SNS to communicate with their peers and respective teachers and or lecturers for informal discussions and learning. Similarly, Fischman (2008) report online preferences of participants at about 39% to discuss with their teachers in SNS. However, the relationship between Twitter, You Tube and Face book is not addressed. The results from these studies reported that the majority of students have been using social software tools and perceived that these tools are easy to be used. Therefore, Malaysian universities largely have a positive attitude and intention to the use of these tools (Mason & Rennie, 2007).

Research shows that individuals vary on the use of social media across generation, as (Komarraju, Karau, & Schmeck, 2009), maintain that how individuals' access new media varies based on motivation and goals which can influence academic success among college students. In line with the proposed study, that observation suggests that UPM undergraduates who are academically motivated may utilize various technological means in order to succeed than less motivated one. Having been raised in a digital world, majority of young adults such as undergraduates are more proficient on using technology than older individuals (Jones, Ramanau, Cross, & Healing, 2010). In this way, the use of cell phones and Internet applications has become an integral part of their daily life (Bradley, 2006) which regulates their life through technology (O'reilly, 2005; Scolari, 2009).

Given statistics show that Internet is popular amongst Malaysians students. According to Zin, Muda, and Nordin (2013), students in Malaysian higher institutes of education are active users of technology and Internet which offer an excess of multiple sort of content. Elsewhere, it is suggested that due to intense academic demands most students become stressful. For that reason, they resort to lessen stress through the use of entertaining social media programmers and internet games, emailing, chatting and visiting all kinds of social networking websites (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007). For that reason, Kraut et al., (1998) conclude that increasing amount of Internet use and social media among students is the response to the rising level of loneliness. In essence, when university students find what they are searching through social media use, by coincidence they become addictive to the extent of spending hours in a day.

In the light of UPM commitments to social media and interactive Internet services for academic purposes and learning, the extent of its undergraduates' use of social media is unknown. Recent study (A. Hamat et al, 2012) has shed the light on the use of social network

sites among the students in Malaysian universities in general. The findings show that students spend most of the time on socializing online (Isa, Rozaimée, Hassan, & Tahir, 2012), whereas, the time for academic purpose is not significantly different. This information ties the present genuine UPM social media and internet facilities, and the Malaysian government encouragement to students' use of social media towards digitalization (Zin, Muda, & Nordin, 2013). However, it scarcely addresses relationship between undergraduate usages of social media for learning at UPM context, while the relationship of social media use and academic performance among UPM undergraduates is also unknown (Hamat et al,2012).

Problem of Statement

Social media and its impact on strategic communication is fairly recent phenomenon, so the empirical research on the topic is somewhat limited. While social media presents a new world of opportunity in education, it also presents a new wave of potential problems. Social media allows creation, collaboration and communication through blogs, content communities, social networks, collaborative projects, and virtual worlds. The utilization of new media, for both educational and social reasons, is common among most college students. Whether academically related, or socially related, interactive technology, such as cell phones and Internet applications, has become an integral part of students' daily lives (Bradley, 2006). Through novel technology and interactive Internet applications, a considerable number of college students are regularly utilizing technology (O'reilly, 2005; Scolari, 2009).

It is worth mentioning that online social network sites such as Facebook serve as a significant distraction for undergraduates. Therefore, time spent on Facebook may affect academic performance. For example, time spent on Facebook may directly affect and/or moderate the relationship between traditional predictors of academic performance (i.e. GPA, study time etc.). Vital to the lives of many college students, Facebook and other online social network sites are here to stay. Facebook is the main outlet for online social activity amongst college students today (Martínez-Alemán & Wartman, 2009). There is little research on the relationship between social media use in learning and academic performance amongst students at university level.

Therefore, research is needed to describe undergraduate students' experiences on using social media for learning. Previous studies have looked at the utilization of specific social media tools. (Engebritson, 2011; Hew, 2009; Stock, 2009). Each focused on a particular tool, such as the usage of blogs or podcasts. Other studies investigated just the role of frequently-used social media among university students. This research project will focus on undergraduate students' use of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter for learning and academic performance at the context of UPM

Research objectives

The objective of this study is to examine the relationship of social media use in learning and academic performance among undergraduates in University Putra Malaysia. The focus is to find out to what extent using Facebook, You Tube and Twitter and their relationship to their academic performance. By examining the extent aspect, the researcher will be able to suggest how institutions of higher education can make use of present social media to enhance students' learning and reduce associated potential negative consequences. In this way, the study will ascertain potentiality of social media and enrich best practices into the educational setting.

Specific objectives of the study

1. To identify to what extent social media tools are utilized by undergraduates in Faculty of Educational Studies in UPM.
2. To identify the social media use in learning among undergraduates in Faculty of Educational Studies in UPM.
3. To identify the purpose of social media use among undergraduates in Faculty of Educational Studies in UPM.

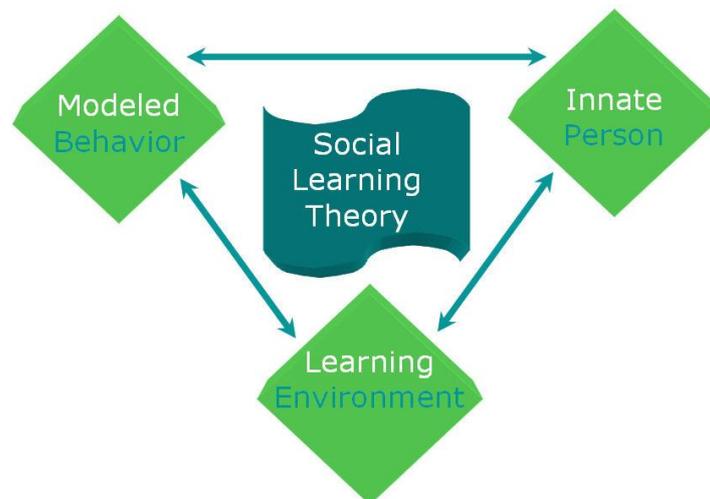
4. To compare the use of social media between UPM undergraduate students' peer groups and lecturers in the faculty of educational studies (gender, age, academic performance).
5. To examine the relationship between social media use in learning and academic performance of peer groups among UPM undergraduates at the faculty of educational studies.

Theoretical Framework

The first theory situated learning by Greeno (1997) which states that learning is the function of situation and social context which is also the principal methodological unit. In this way, interaction between learners and materials that contains required knowledge and skills is vital in the learning process. Greeno's (1997) focus on situation and context in orienting interactive learning is reflected in this proposed study by researcher's support for UPM undergraduate students' attachment to the use of Face book, twitter and You Tube with the intention of attempting given classroom assignments and preparation to the examinations and related learning activities. In this case, students deserve to be active in the using of social media for learning and lecturers can use the said tools to engage learners throughout the learning sessions in the interactive basis. Moreover, lecturers can present their work through these media in a more accessible language, examples with the reflection of the actual learning context in mind. The proposed study is focused to bring into attention the relationship of supposed students' social media use in line with learning and their academic performance in the context of UPM as one of the higher learning institution.

The second one is the social learning theory by Albert Bandura (1977) which is rooted on Vygotskian world view on the question of learning and socio-cultural realities (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The main message of this theory is the question of learning and engagement in social interaction. In this way, it is held that learning occurs within a given social context wherein people learn from one another in the form of observational learning, imitation and modeling (Bandura, 1977). In practice this theory brings a related message of students' interactive learning in the form of engagement. In this way, social media such as You Tube, Twitter and Face book can be very useful in providing effective collaboration and communication environment to enhance students' learning and expressing their own thoughts.

Figure (1) Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977)



The third related in the list is the Connectivism theoretical framework for understanding learning by Siemens (2005) and Downes (2005). It is argued that, learning starts to occur when knowledge is activated through the process of a learner connecting to and feeding information into a learning community with similar interests (Siemens, 2005), which functions as a joint of a larger network (Downes, 2005) comprised of two or more joint to

share learning resources (Kop & Hill, 2008). In this way, interaction, sharing, dialoguing and joint thinking among learning community members (Siemens, 2005), organized in varying size and strength occur (Downes, 2008). In essence, Connectivism is the "learning theory for the digital age" (Siemens, 2005, p.1). Similarly to the above other theories, Connectivism acknowledges the centrality of interaction, collaboration and engagement for meaningful learning (Siemens, 2008), with respect to the current digital realities (T. Anderson, 2008).

The fourth related theory is by Urie Bronfenbrenner, who centralizes reciprocated interactions between the individual and their family, peers, school, neighborhood, and society in addressing development and possible learning gain (Webb, 2011). In this respect, Urie Bronfenbrenner conceptualizes the ecology of human development as:

“ ... the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the life span between a growing human organism and the changing immediate environments in which it lives, as this process affected by reflections obtaining within and between these immediate settings as well as the larger social controls, both formal and informal, in which the settings are embedded”

(Bronfenbrenner, 1997)

This suggests that environment is an integral part in the question of human development and cognitive gain (Wilson 2012). More specifically, Bronfenbrenner is concerned with individual's environment structure: the *micro system, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem* (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1992/2005). In the context of the proposed study, the importance of micro system and mesosystem nested structures by Bronfenbrenner will be considered.

Micro system

This refers to “ a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and mental characteristics, and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of belief” (1992/2005, p. 148). According to Wilson (2012) settings entail physical places where an individual is engaged in social contact. In the context of the Bronfenbrenner's observation activities, roles and interpersonal relations are inseparable ingredients of the given settings. In line with the proposed study, these elements can reflect interpersonal relations between students and respective lecturers. There is also the chance to relate the concept "experienced" to focus only students' interpersonal relationships and the predominance of their perspectives in attempting assigned learning activities through You Tube, Twitter and Face book. In this case, it is their interpersonal settings and relationships that define what they communicate and learn through than the prescribed reality by outsiders (Wilson, 2012)

Mesosystem

This concept refers a single actor involved in activities in more than one setting, such as at home and at school (Wilson, 2012; Webb, 2011). In this respect, university can be a unique setting after home where communications can take place across settings in the form of what Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 210) calls it “intersetting knowledge”, in which knowledge about one setting exists in another setting (Wilson, 2012). This in turn suggests that a mesosystem can be multiply linked and be favorable environment for cognitive development (Wilson, 2012; Webb, 2011). This is in line with the fact that mesosystem focuses on the reciprocated interactions that occur in a particular environment at a particular point in a person's life (Wilson, 2012). For the sake of this study university related activities through You Tube, Twitter and Face book can serve as multiple linked mesosystem that can favour peer interactions and communications.

In line with the proposed study, the situated, social learning, Connectivism and ecology of human development theories are a significant in addressing relationship of social media such as Twitter, You Tube and Face book and undergraduate UPM students' learning

and academic performance. Firstly, understanding how these social media function and how they are employed in teaching and learning setting, is central in understanding how undergraduate students can be helped to focus on using them for learning than none learning activities. Research into using these theories for the proposed study will translate into practice how the selected social media are useful as far as the question of learning is concerned. Secondly, with Connectivism theory in mind, since it appreciates learning in digital context as the social engaging process (Kop & Hill, 2008), the undergraduate students at UPM as well can make use of Twitter, You Tube and Face book to collaborate and engage, as the joint of larger networked community (Downes, 2008). That is certain when both students with the support of respective lecturers develop capacity to know which is central than what is essentially known (Siemens, 2008). This is what Kop & Hill (2008) call as the ability of learners to remain updated with the capacity to sort out useful and related information from useless and unconnected ones.

In short, learning is an active and engaging social process. In this age of digitization, lecturers in higher learning institutions can capitalize of the available social media such as Twitter, You Tube and Face book as the means towards effective teaching for students' meaningful learning. The situated learning theory for example, appreciates individual learner's position but insists on interaction with other others (Greeno, 1997) because learning by itself is engaging, collaborative, communicated, discussed and can effectively occurs in a well networked community (Siemens, 2005; Downes, 2005; Kop & Hill, 2008). The most important thing throughout the use of social media in learning among students is to remain, conscientious with emerging new information and develop ability to filter it accordingly (Kop & Hill, 2008). Therefore, there is a need to know the relationship of social media use in learning and academic performance amongst undergraduate students in UPM.

Conclusion

This paper has summarized about the problem statement, objective study and theoretical framework. It has described and explained that forms at basis and direction of this study according to objective. Objectives of the study will establish the goals to be achieved at the end of the study. Then, several questions will develop based on the objectives of the study. The study will be beneficial to the undergraduates, teachers, universities and educators. Four theories have been explained and very related to the study, which include theories of Ecological Systems by Urie Bronfenbrenner, Greeno's (1997) by situated learning theory, social learning theory by Albert Bandura (1977) and Connectivism theoretical framework by Siemens (2005) and Downes (2005) .

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