

## INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING ON ACADEMIC

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### ABSTRACT

*The future generation's competency in the English language is highly dependent on the performance of our very own TESL students as they are the future English language teachers who must be efficacious to make all the difference. Hence, any issues that could jeopardize their performance can never be taken lightly. This research was carried out to investigate whether TESL students' level of addiction to social networking sites (SNSs) influences their academic performance. A questionnaire was used to gather data from ninety-three Semester 8 TESL students from the Faculty of Education, UiTM Shah Alam. SPSS version 16.0 was used to analyse the data obtained. Despite the initial prediction that students' addiction towards SNSs is interrelated with their academic performance, this study found that there is no significant relationship between the two aforementioned variables. The finding contradicts several other studies on the relationship between SNSs addiction and academic achievement.*

**Keywords:** *Social Networking Sites (SNSs), Internet Addiction and Academic Performance*

### ABSTRAK

*Kompetensi berbahasa Inggeris generasi yang akan datang adalah amat bergantung pada tahap pencapaian para pelajar TESL memandangkan mereka adalah merupakan guru Bahasa Inggeris di masa akan datang yang mampu melaksanakan segala perubahan. Oleh itu, semua isu yang boleh menjejaskan pencapaian mereka tidak boleh dipandang ringan. Penyelidikan ini telah dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti samada tahap ketagihan para pelajar TESL terhadap media sosial mempengaruhi pencapaian akademik mereka. Soal selidik telah digunakan untuk memperoleh data daripada sembilan puluh tiga para pelajar TESL Semester 8 dari Fakulti Pendidikan, UiTM Shah Alam. SPSS versi 16.0 telah digunakan untuk menganalisis data yang diperolehi. Hasil dapatan penyelidikan ini mendapati bahawa hubungan yang signifikan antara ketagihan terhadap media sosial dan pencapaian akademik pelajar tidak wujud walaupun ramalan awalnya adalah sedemikian. Hasil dapatan ini adalah bertentangan dengan penyelidikan-penyelidikan sebelum ini yang dijalankan untuk mengenal pasti hubungan antara ketagihan media sosial dengan pencapaian akademik.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Media Sosial, Ketagihan Internet, Pencapaian Akademik*

## INTRODUCTION

SNSs as defined by Boyd & Ellison (2008) are “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”. In particular, SNSs are websites or applications (app) that can be accessed on various devices that allow users to get instant updates from anyone in their contact list, be it in the form of newsfeed, tweets, status updates, picture uploads, comments on the ‘Wall’ and the list goes on.

It has been observed that students tend to be logged on to SNSs while doing tasks or assignments through the multiple devices they possess. Despite the common scenario where students would browse through their smartphones to check for the latest updates on their SNSs accounts while listening to lectures, very little did we know whether the academic grades are affected, particularly that of TESL students. It is true that SNSs could serve as a tool to enable instructors and students to communicate virtually regarding academic matters. The website *edudemic.com* provides immensely useful information on the positive use of social media in education. Any academic-related announcements and information could be made available on the SNSs, especially Facebook.

However, heavy usage of SNSs could also have an adverse effect on students’ academic performance. This claim could be further supported by several studies that have been conducted previously (Karpinski & Duberstein, 2009; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Glass et al., 2013; Ahsan ul Haq & Sohail Chand, 2012; and Junco, 2012). Nevertheless, there are always two sides of a coin; there are also studies that show contradictory findings, (Kolek & Saunders, 2008; Martin, 2009; Syarif Husin et al., 2011; and Moon, 2011) which means that the addiction is not interrelated with their CGPA.

In any case, when it concerns TESL students and their academic grades, however, the stake is higher. TESL students are our future English teachers who must perform well and be efficacious in order to become effective English teachers. They are responsible for shaping the mastery of English language skills in our young generation. Just last year it was reported in the news that two-thirds of the English language teachers in the country are not fit to teach English (The Star, 11 Sept 2013). This was not a finding gleaned from armchair research papers but information reported by the Education Ministry in Malaysia. Of the 60,000 English language teachers who took the Cambridge Placement Test in 2012, only around 20,000 passed the test. Passing the test in this context means that the teachers are within the accepted standards to teach the English language. Therefore, whenever the academic performance of our TESL students is the issue, we need to determine whether they would be affected. The findings of this study may provide significant implications that could be taken into account by relevant parties such as the students’

scholarship provider, the Ministry of Education.

This study aims to examine the relationship between the level of students' addiction towards SNSs and their academic performance. In particular, the study is conducted to fulfill the following objectives:

1. To investigate the frequency of SNSs usage among TESL students
2. To investigate the level of SNSs addiction among TESL students
3. To investigate the influence of SNSs addiction on TESL students' academic

Meanwhile, the hypothesis of this particular study is, students who spend too much time on SNSs tend to possess lower Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) as compared to those students who do not spend as much time on SNSs.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

It could be true that students who are obsessed and addicted to SNSs tend to neglect studies although they do not intend to do so in the first place. That is due to the fact that sometimes, students tend to get carried away with what SNSs have in store for them and this leads to the negligence of everything else that is external to their online world. Being overly obsessed with SNSs has somehow made people to become out of touch with the reality to such an extent that everything around them is affected, including job as well as school (Brick, 2008). In addition, students also tend to avoid academic materials once they get connected to SNSs. According to CBS News (2008), on campuses such as in the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), seeing students busily typing on their laptops, logging onto Facebook is a very common scenario. By getting connected to the site, students are more likely to avoid and neglect their academic matters. In its interview with Dr. Jerald Brock, a psychiatrist who treats patients who use the Internet excessively, this is because people are trying to extend their sense of identity and their sense of self through being connected to Facebook.

In an exploratory study conducted by Karpinski & Duberstein (2009), it was found that Facebook use negatively affects students' academic performance in that higher usage leads to lower academic performance as measured by grades and hours spent studying per week. Using the same data set, Kirschner & Karpinski (2010) found a similar finding in which Facebook use does affect students' academic achievement and this is measured using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the study, the exam results of Facebook users are significantly lower than nonusers and were evident in their Grade Point Average (GPA). In this study, the users' GPA average is 3.06 while the nonusers' average is 3.82. It is clear that the GPA gap is significant since they both differ by 0.76 which could determine whether a particular student will be graduating with First Class honours or Second Class honours. To further solidify this, the researchers have also found that Facebook users spend

fewer hours per week studying on average than Facebook nonusers. Interestingly, according to the qualitative data yielded, a majority of students overwhelmingly reported that Facebook use does not give a negative impact on their academic performance. On the other hand, some other users reported that its use does have impacts on their academic performance which include procrastination behaviour, poor time management skills and the tendency to put off studying.

Another study that supports the claim that the use of social networking sites has an adverse effect on students' academic performance is the one conducted by Glass et al. (2013). In the study, students' Facebook use was measured by having the students self-report the number of hours they spend on Facebook a day and it involves 255 undergraduate freshman and junior college students at a private university in the northeast United States. This study yielded a similar finding as the preceding studies (Karpinski & Duberstein, 2009; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010) in which the amount of time that students spend on Facebook was found to negatively affect the students' self-reported academic performance. Similarly, Ahsan ul Haq & Sohail Chand (2012) who studied similar subject have found an adverse effect of Facebook use on the students' academic achievement and it seems that more male students are adversely affected. Congruent with findings by the studies above, the research conducted by Junco (2012) also found that the time spent on Facebook is strongly and significantly negatively related to overall GPA.

Conversely, Kolek & Saunders (2008) have conducted similar research but the finding is totally contradictory with the aforementioned studies. In this particular study, they found that correlation does not exist between Facebook use and students' GPA. Martin (2009) has conducted similar research and found no significant relationship between the amount of time spent by students on social media and their grades. In the study, the grades of heavy Facebook users as well as light Facebook users were measured. It is found that among the heavy Facebook users, 62 percent received high grades and 38 percent received low grades, and the grade percentage among light users showed an exact similar pattern. Another study that yielded similar finding is the one conducted by Syarif Husin et al. (2011) among 78 third year Biomedical Science students in Faculty of Health Sciences, University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in which they conclude that the students' CGPA is not significantly associated with the time spent on Facebook. Likewise, Moon (2011) who studied 400 undergraduate students using a Web-based survey reported that there is no strong relationship or correlation between Facebook use and the students' academic performance. In Moon's study, Facebook use is measured by hours spent on the site and academic performance is measured using students' GPA. Given the two ranges of findings, this paper is keen to investigate at which end the TESL students' academic grades would be based on their constant use of the SNSs.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The target population of this study is TESL (Teaching English as a Second

Language) students of Faculty of Education, UiTM Section 17, Shah Alam, Selangor. The sample of students for this particular study was chosen using simple random sampling. Basically, simple random sampling is done in such a way that all individuals in the population selected have an equal and independent chance to be selected as the sample. Both male and female were selected as samples. In this study, samples selected were 93 Semester 8 TESL students of the Faculty of Education, UiTM Section 17, Shah Alam. Students from this urban university were selected because they are expected to be computer literate and have at least one SNS account.

This research is quantitative in nature, and the data was gathered using questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire is to elicit information regarding the samples' demographic data, their levels of addiction towards SNSs as well as their current academic performance. The questionnaire is divided into three sections, which are Demographic details for the first part, Part A and also Part B. As for the first part, which is the Demographic details part, it consisted of 3 questions that aimed to elicit the respondents' demographic information. The demographic details asked for participants' gender, CGPA range, as well as specific CGPA. Part A consisted of 4 questions aimed at eliciting the respondents' frequency of SNSs usage. The respondents were required to tick the appropriate boxes provided. Finally, Part B consisted of 20 questions meant to elicit the students' information pertaining to their levels of addiction towards SNSs. This particular part made use of the adapted questions from The Internet Addiction Test (IAT) (1998), the first validated measures for Internet addiction developed by Dr. Kimberly Young.

The information on the total number of students in the population was obtained from the main office of the Faculty of Education, UiTM Section 17, Shah Alam. The questionnaire was then distributed to the samples that consisted of 93 Semester 8 students. It took three weeks for all the samples to complete and return the questionnaires.

Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0 was used in order to analyse the quantitative data obtained in this study. The demographic details and the SNSs usage frequency were analysed using descriptive statistics in order to obtain both the frequency and percentage for the data. Meanwhile, data pertaining to the influence of SNSs addiction on students' academic achievement was analysed using the Pearson correlation coefficient. Basically, Pearson correlation coefficient functions as a tool that is used to analyse the relationship between variables used in a research. Using Pearson correlation coefficient, both the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables were determined. The variables' relationship strength was determined by the Pearson correlation value. Values ranging between 0.10 to 0.29 indicate the relationship as "Small". Meanwhile, values ranging between 0.30 to 0.49 indicate the relationship as "Medium", and for values ranging between .50 to 1.0 indicate the relationship as "Large". Regardless of the sign in front of the value, whether it is a negative or a positive, the strength

for both  $r = .5$  and  $r = -.5$ , for example, is the same. The positive and negative signs in front of the value will determine its direction (Cohen, 1988).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section discusses the salient findings from the data which are presented in table forms.

**Table 1: CGPA**

	Frequency	Percent
3.50-4.00	27	29.0
3.00-3.49	60	64.5
2.50-2.99	4	4.3
2.00-2.49	2	2.2
Total	93	100.0

From the table above, it can be seen that 27 students (29%) have CGPA ranging from 3.50-4.00. It is also apparent that the CGPA range of 3.00-3.49 is the one with the most number of students, which are 60 (64.5%). There are 4 students (4.3%) who possess CGPA ranging from 2.50-2.49. The least number of students, which is only 2 (2.2%), possesses CGPA ranging from 2.00-2.49.

**Table 2: Mean of CGPA**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CGPA2	74	2.47	3.78	3.3836	.27558
Valid N (list wise)	74				

Based on the table above, the mean of Semester 8 TESL students' CGPA is 3.38, which falls under the second CGPA range, 3.00-3.49. Nevertheless, the mean is only based on 74 out of 93 participants as the remaining students did not fill in their specific CGPA.

**Table 3: SNSs Ownership**

	Frequency	Percent	
Valid	yes	93	100.0

It is found that 93 students (100%) own at least one SNS account. This shows that SNSs are widely used among Semester 8 TESL students. Facebook seems to be the most popular SNS as each and every respondent has a Facebook account.

**Table 4: Weekly Usage**

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Valid	Everyday	78	83.9
	2-3 times per week	13	14.0
	once a week	2	2.2
	Total	93	100.0

From the above table, it is shown that 78 students (83.9%) log in to any of their SNS accounts every day. It can also be seen that 13 students (14%) log in to any of their accounts 2-3 times per week. Apart from that, there were only 2 students (2.2%) responded that they only log in to any of their accounts once a week.

**Table 5: Usage Duration per Session**

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Valid	21-24 hours	5	5.4
	17-20 hours	3	3.2
	13-16 hours	7	7.5
	9-12 hours	5	5.4
	5-8 hours	22	23.7
	1-4 hours	38	40.9
	<1 hour	13	14.0
	Total	93	100.0

As for the usage duration per session, it is found that most students' usage duration per session ranging between 1-4 hours, with a total of 38 students (40.9%). The number of students whose usage duration ranging between 5-8 hours was 22 (23.7%). Meanwhile, there were 13 students (14%) whose usage duration was less than 1 hour per session. Apart from that, there were 7 students (7.5%) whose usage duration per session ranging between 13-16 hours, 5 students (5.4%) for both durations ranging between 9-12 hours and 21-24 hours, and finally, there were 3 students (3.2%) whose usage duration ranging between 17-20 hours per session.

**Table 6: Level of Addiction**

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Valid	low	51	54.8
	average	37	39.8
	high	5	5.4
	Total	93	100.0

Twenty items were used in the questionnaire in order to determine the respondents' level of addiction towards SNSs. There were three scales for the twenty items in which the first scale was labeled 'rarely/ Does not apply', the second scale was labeled 'Frequently' and the third scale was labeled 'Always'. The maximum score a respondent could get was 60, while the minimum score was 20. Thus, in order to determine the level of addiction, the difference between the maximum and minimum score was calculated, which was 40, and it was further divided into three categories representing three different levels of addiction. As for those who scored between 20 to 33, they fell under 'Low addiction' group. Meanwhile, as for those scored between 34 to 46, they fell under 'Average addiction' group, and for those who scored between 47 and 60, they fell under 'High addiction' group.

In the table above, it is apparent that a majority number of Semester 8 TESL students were not severely addicted towards SNSs because more than half, accumulating 51 out of 93 students (54.8%) possessed low addiction level towards SNSs. Meanwhile, 37 students (39.8%) possessed average level of addiction. Remarkably, the number of students who possessed high addiction level towards SNSs was not high, with only 5 students (5.4%) altogether, making it the least number of all.

**Table 7: Correlation between Addiction and CGPA**

		<b>addict</b>
CGPA2	Pearson Correlation	-.167
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.154
	N	74

The correlations between students' CGPA and their addiction towards SNSs were calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient. Addiction in this case was treated as ratio variable using students' total mean score summed from the twenty items in the questionnaire. From the above table, it is shown that the correlation coefficient between CGPA and addiction is  $-.167$ , indicating that there is no relationship between students' CGPA and their addiction level towards SNSs. The strength is obviously insignificant with the total score of  $0.154$ . Hence, it can be concluded that there is no relationship between SNSs addiction and students' academic achievement, and the strength is also insignificant.

This study has succeeded in achieving all the research objectives listed. As for the first research objective which was to investigate the frequency of SNSs usage among TESL students, it is found that the students' usage is moderately frequent. That is due to the finding of this study which noted the moderate duration per session of a majority of the students despite the fact that they log in to their accounts on a daily basis. In particular, a majority of students get connected only between 1-4 hours per session and a minority of students gets connected for long hours (17-



20 hours) per session. Other than that, the number of students who log in to their accounts once a week is very small. This finding showed that the TESL students' usage of SNSs is moderately frequent as a majority of them get connected to SNSs for short hours only. This could imply that a majority of the students do have their limitations when it comes to getting connected on the SNSs.

As for the second objective which was to investigate the level of SNSs addiction among TESL students, it is found that a majority of the TESL students are not severely addicted to SNSs, indicating that only a minority is highly addicted. It can be concluded that the majority of the TESL students in this study are not addicted to the SNSs despite the fact that more than 80% of them use the SNSs daily. This usage may be for non-addictive purposes and only briefly such as flicking through family members' status. Although a majority of these students do use SNSs on a daily basis, they do not get addicted to them and this could imply that these students could still manage their time pretty well.

Finally, the third research objective, which was to investigate the influence of SNSs addiction on TESL students' academic achievement, has also been achieved. It is found that SNSs addiction has no influence on TESL students' academic achievement. This is proven through the calculation using the Pearson correlation coefficient in which it could be clearly seen that there is no relationship between the students' addiction and their academic achievement. Additionally, the strength was also insignificant which demonstrates that the two variables are not related in any way. Another findings which can further support and solidify this are the students' mean of CGPA, which is 3.38, and the CGPA range possessed by a majority of the students which is between 3.00-3.49, and only a minority possess CGPA ranging from 2.00-2.49. Semester 8 students are already students in their final semester and, in this context, over 90% of the students managed to retain CGPAs over 3.00. This suggests that the students are academically successful as well as connected on their SNSs of choice. Their academic grades are not negatively affected by the amount of time they spend on the SNS.

Based on the discussion above, the findings of this study show that they are not parallel to the researcher's initial hypothesis. In fact, the findings contradict the findings of previously discussed research which show SNSs use has an adverse effect to the students' academic achievement (Karpinski & Duberstein, 2009; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Glass et al., 2013; Ahsan ul Haq & Sohail Chand, 2012; and Junco, 2012). The finding of this study that indicates an insignificant relationship between SNSs use and academic achievement is instead parallel with previous researches such as Kolek & Saunders (2008), Martin (2009), Syarif Husin et al. (2011), and Moon (2011). In these studies, the researchers found that SNSs use has no significant relationship with the students' academic achievement. This study clearly depicts a similar finding and contributes to the literature, particularly in the context of TESL students which, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, is not yet available. Based on these findings, this study posits that the TESL students'

use of SNSs, either as addicted user or non-addicted user, does not influence their academic achievement. In short, the students' Internet addiction per se, is not a factor in their academic achievement. Interestingly, there are several implications that could arise out of the findings of this study.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

Firstly, instead of putting blame on Internet usage per se, we can look at the student's health as the main cause for his or her poor academic results. Spending hours on the Internet either updating status, checking other peoples' status, chatting with friends or even finding new friends has an effect on a person's stress levels. In their study of 300 21-year-olds, researchers at the University of Edinburgh Business School found that "the more social circles a person is linked to online the more likely social media will be a source of stress" (Ngak, 2012, CBS News). In addition, Rosen (2012), author of *Disorder*, found that teens and young adults become anxious if they cannot check their text messages. It is therefore possible to argue that, compared to Internet addiction; the student's health status may be a more accurate prediction of achieving academic success (Ickovics et al., 2014).

Secondly, the academics or the university instructors can take the opportunity to fully integrate their teaching and learning using SNSs as it is made evident through this study that TESL students do log in to their account on a daily basis. The instructors might specifically set a "Page" or a "Group" in Facebook, for example, which could enable the students to communicate with them virtually in a more fun and less stressful manner. Since a majority of the students do log in to their SNS account every day anyway, the tendency that the students might miss any important academic-related announcements, information or instructions is very small. This will encourage the students to not only keep track with any latest information from their instructors, but it will also provide the opportunity for them to either synchronously or asynchronously discuss their academic matters through the "Chat" feature in Facebook, for instance. In short, university academics can make maximum use of everything that the SNSs have to offer in order to bring their teaching and learning beyond the formal lectures so that both instructors and students can benefit from it. In addition, students could also make full use of their time while being connected on SNSs to do something much more beneficial rather than just do the norms on SNSs.

Thirdly, more SNS-like Learning Management System (LMS) such as Schoology should be developed in order to encourage online learning. Schoology is a type of LMS that resembles Facebook; however, its use is purely for the purpose of academic work. What we can start to think about now is the appropriateness of the development of SNS-like LMS that enables some non-academic social features. This is because it is proven through this research that the correlation between SNSs use and students' academic achievement does not exist, so perhaps we might want to let the students to multitask and enjoy the social, non-academic features offered

in SNS-like LMS. So far, Schoology is widely known as one of the most popular LMS platforms out there with Facebook-like interface, however, its straightforward academic purpose interface might throw students off the application. Other LMS platforms mostly function purely as an academic tool without any resemblance of SNS. Perhaps, other LMS platforms that look like Twitter or even Instagram could be developed in order to enhance the students' learning.

As for TESL students, since they are language students, mobile SNSs such as Viber, LINE, and WhatsApp could also be beneficial for them. This is due to the fact that these applications allow voice recording, and the voice recording might be used to record the students' voice for speaking exercises, pronunciation of phonetic symbols and many others. Such mobile SNSs are also downloadable on multiple devices especially smartphones, so TESL students and their instructors might utilize the function so that learning can happen in a more casual and fun manner.

In conclusion, this study found that there is no significant relationship between the levels of SNSs addiction with the TESL students' academic achievement. Thus, TESL students, their instructors and even LMS developers can make full use of this outcome in order to enhance the learning of TESL students. Learning can indeed take place outside of classroom, and if SNSs use does not affect the students' academic achievement, why hesitate to make use of all that it has to offer to create a more fun and creative learning experience?

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