

Solving Problems Through Research

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Introduction

In recent times, technology has been the focus of the world. It's become a means of work and income, socializing with others, learning, and much more. One of the most popular uses of technology is the internet and, more specifically, social media. Social media is essentially used by all sorts of people, but younger generations are the primary clientele for such sites. To be more specific, college students are known to be some of the most active people on social media (Lau, 2017). Which begs the question, how does social media usage affect undergraduate college students' success?

Synthesis

A common theme amongst all the articles was the possible negative effects of social media usage on undergraduate college students' success. However, each article took a different interpretation of the negative. Mishna & e.t. all (2018) stated that social media usage can have a significant negative effect on one's mental health; this usually stems from the prevalence of cyberbullying on the internet. A student's mental health is a very important factor when looking at their success in college. Success can be interpreted in many ways and I took it as a range of variants, such as: GPA (grade point average), overall happiness, health, and the ability to make and maintain relationships. Poor mental health as a result of social media usage can negatively affect a student's GPA, overall happiness, health, and possibly relationships. It was noted that "students with mental health difficulties do poorly on course work" and oftentimes "drop out of school" (Consequences of Student Mental Health Issues, n.d.). In addition to that, specifically,

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depression and anxiety can result in “harmful effects on relationships” (Consequences of Student Mental Health Issues, n.d.).

In the article by Lau (2017), the author specifically looked at the effect of social media usage on students’ cumulative GPA. The author included video game usage in their research. I find this to be wonderful, as video games have become a social media platform. For example, PlayStations and Xboxes have servers and group chats where one can make new friends and “hang out” with current ones. It was concluded that social media usage for academic purposes didn’t have negative effects on students’ grades, however; social media usage for non-academic purposes, specifically video gaming, resulted in bad academic performance (Lau, 2017, p. 286).

In contrast to the previous theme, there were many positive effects in relation to social media activity. Lau (2017) found that if social media was used for academic reasons then there wasn’t a negative effect on students’ GPAs. A similar conclusion was drawn by Arslan (2018). In that article, it was concluded that social media usage for intellectual purposes has a positive effect on one’s GPA, especially if social network sites are being used in class (Arslan, 2018, p. 329).

Another common theme amongst the journal articles’ research was the logging of uses of social media. The specifics vary study to study, but they range from books and movies to the sharing of photos and email or other forms of messaging. This added specificity allows for there to be more accurate data as to what is and isn’t being used for scholarly purposes. Along with how much usage of specific sites affects the dependent variable in question. Another additive measure for specificity are the demographics collected. Research conducted by Arslan (2018), Lau (2017), and Mishna & e.t. all (2018) included the surveying of socioeconomic status,

gender, age, race, and ethnicity. This data was used to monitor which groups were most active on social media and what purpose they had for using it.

Limitations

There were many limitations to researching this topic. In the first place, it was difficult finding scholarly journal articles that remotely related to the research question. It appears that social media isn't as researched as I had previously believed, even less so in correlation to college students. It was a lengthy process to find the sources that I used for this paper.

Another issue, more specific to the research of the articles, was the sample sizes used in the studies. All studies, except for the one conducted by Mishna & e.t. all, had relatively small sample sizes in the mere hundreds. In the study conducted by Arslan (2018) they used a sample of 394 college students. Another study, conducted by Lau (2017), used a sample of 348 students. The limited amount of people participating in the studies allows for a larger margin of error and forces the information to be generalized.

It also specified in the articles by Lewis and McLean, and Lau that only one college was surveyed. This was particularly concerning, as it was yet another area where the results could be skewed. I was far more pleased with the article by Arslan, as it conducted research at 13 universities (Arslan, 2018, p. 335). The last article, by Mishna & e.t. all, surveyed 1350 college students, but failed to note whether they attended the same college or multiple (Mishna & e.t. All, 2018, p. 222).

Suggestions For Solutions

From research gathered, it can be determined that social media usage can both negatively and positively affect college student success. The type of impact it has is heavily dependent on the way social networking sites are used and where they are used. For a positive effect on the academic performance of undergraduate college students, social media must be used for academic purposes. For a more significant positive effect, using these sites in classes for intellectual purposes was established. Some examples for scholarly purposes of use are as follows: communicating with other students and lecturers, means of completing assignments, and to add to the content being taught (Arslan, 2018, pp. 332-336).

In order to increase academic performance, professors should include the use of social networking sites into their classes. Rules should also be implemented as to what sites to use during class. Sharing the results of this research with students could also affect the way they use social media outside of class, and increase their success as college students. Depending on the progress attained by applying these practices and rules, this could also be used in K-12 public schools.

While many positives have been recorded, there have been multiple negatives as well. The use of social media for non-intellectual purposes has a rather large adverse impact on the success of students. A possible solution to this could be a worldwide or national policy that forces social media sites with non-academic activities (i.e. video games) to create a limit of use per person. Such limits could be a daily use time limit, weekly use time limit, or use limit per sitting with a cool-down period. A policy like this could drastically change college students' GPA (grade point average), overall happiness, health, and the ability to make and maintain

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relationships for the better. Not only would this policy affect college students, but it would affect all students who use social media. The potential for profound positive change is limitless.

Conclusion

From the research gathered, we can now conclude how social media usage affects college students' success. Social networking can both negatively and positively impact undergraduate college students' performance. It is up to each user as to how they use social media, which can determine how they will perform throughout college. Encouraging academic usage of social networking sites by professors, and colleges as a whole, could help students to succeed. This topic is rather new, and research on it has just recently begun. As time goes on, more surveys will be conducted and more accurate data will be collected. Eventually, change will occur based on those findings, and hopefully such change will have a positive impact on both college students and everyone else as well.

References

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