

# The Impact of Social Media on the Academic Development of School Students

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## Abstract

Today, it is crucial to determine the impact of social media on the academic performance of students. Technology is booming rapidly from year to year, and the younger generations are the ones caught in this rapid change. Questionnaires were distributed through Facebook and E-mails, to find out whether students academic performance is impacted by social media or not. The findings demonstrate that there is no relationship between social media and academic performance; this is clearly projected in their overall grade average.

**Keywords:** social media, education, younger generation, academic development, Egypt

## 1. Introduction

Mike Moran, Jeff Seaman and Hester Tinti-Kane, for a long period of time believed that the term social media does not have a clear definition, however, when one platform emerged, that gave people an opportunity to be content creators, controllers and transparent users, to a great extent. Once this content is shared, it becomes a conversation, because all users who have accounts on social media platforms can interact with all posts (Moran, Seaman and Tinti-Kane, 2011). Social Networking is “the act of engagement,” while social media is the tool used to communicate with mass audience (Hartshorn, 2010). Social Media is the platform that give individuals the opportunity to interact, using two way communication; meaning, that anyone who has online accounts can share their opinions with other social media users.

There are two types of social media users; digital natives and digital immigrants. Digital natives are the ones who were born after 1980, they came to this world when the digital media existed. However, digital immigrants are the ones who were born before 1980 and adapted their lives to digital media (AntonSon and Christopher, 2014). Social media platforms vary from Web blogs, to micro-sharing platforms, to livestreams to social networks and much more (AntonSon and Christopher, 2014).

The younger generation discussed in this research paper are school students between the ages of 12 to 19 years old. A few of the platforms they use are Facebook, YouTube, Google, and many others that will be discussed in the findings of this research. The younger generation are the individuals that will lead our world in the future, they must be well educated to be able to impact this world and make Egypt a better country on the road to success. Therefore, research must be conducted about the different things they are exposed to, that may effect them negatively or positively. This research aims to asses the frequency at which the students are social networking, and whether it has any effect on their academic performance. If there is an impact on their academic performance, in what way does it effect it. All these questions will be answered through this research paper.

Social media has been utilised in so many different ways through out the years. Egypt is known to be one of the heavy users of social media, specifically Facebook. It dominates 25% of the total MENA region, having almost 11 million users, even though the penetration rate is only about 13%. In the first six months of the year 2012, Egypt had an additional 1,608,420 users on Facebook, which is the highest number in the MENA region. Luke Richards stated that 46% of Egyptian social media users believe that social media has great influence in empowering them to change their country (Richards, 2012). According to Dr. Anthony Curtis, in 2014, there is about 1.28 billion Facebook users

and 255 million Twitter users, 55 million of the Facebook users and 3.7 million of the Twitter users are from the Arab world (Curtis, 2013).

This research aims at measuring the impact of social media on the younger generation's academic performance; therefore, this paper is structured in the following order: the literature review outlining previous research conducted on university students and high-school students outside of Egypt. Following with the research methodology and the results obtained from the distribution of the questionnaires; followed by the discussion that will answer the suggested hypotheses of the paper. The final part will be the conclusion and the limitations of this study.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Social Media and Its Uses

Paul Kirschner and Aryn Karpinski define Facebook and other social network sites as an online directory that allows people to find their friends, family and colleagues through looking them up on social network sites (Kirschner and Karpinski, 2010). Curtis states that teens all over the world are starting to lose interest in the use of Facebook and are using Snapchat, Twitter and Instagram (Curtis, 2013).

Victoria Rideout states that, among the younger generation, the time they spend on social media, what she calls 'entertainment media' is "more than twice the average amount of time spent in school each year." (Rideout, 2012, p. 5) She also adds that an American child spends on average seven and a half hours a day just for having fun on the media, not only that, but they multi-task, between all the different media they use. For example, they can be listening to music, sending a tweet and also posting on Facebook. Rideout says, that since social media is seven days a week, unlike school or having a full-time job, over the years the amount of time one could spend over the internet "has exploded" (Rideout, 2012, p. 5).

Abelardo Pardo believes that technology offers a platform for innovation, and allows its users to express their opinions about how they feel towards the information being published. He adds that, social media is also a platform that allows students to interact with one another, with their teachers and communities that share their same education. Pardo also states that these types of interaction are "an essential part of how humans learn." (Pardo, 2013, p. 45)

Kirschner and Karpinski, discuss Wim Veen's new term, "Homo Zappiens", which refers to the learners of the new generation, and the new way they use to learn. This new way is known as "meta-cognitive skills," meaning they learn on their own without the need for instructions, it is also called "discover-based learning." They also add that, the younger generation shares an unclear bond with technology since their birth, leading them to multi-task. They note that 46% of the younger generation who access the internet use it to help them with their school assignments (Kirschner and Karpinski, 2010).

June Ahn discusses in her research a theory called 'Signalling Theory', this theory refers to how individuals on social network sites present themselves, and develop their identities and build trust with others. She also adds that, by having many friends on the different platforms, this causes the individual to lose the trust of their friends because they start adding people they do not know, to show others how popular they are (Ahn, 2011b).

### 2.2 Social Media's Effect on Academic Performance

Kaveri Subrahmanyam and Patricia Greenfield state that using online communication has both negative and positive effects, because there are harmful ways in which the internet could be used. They also state that nowadays, schools are trying their best to control how students use digital media on school grounds (Subrahmanyam and Greenfield, 2008). In some schools, leaders believe that social media has a positive impact on the development of the students' education. In other schools, leaders have banned the access of social network sites, because they fear the students' interaction on them, although, they know the positive impact social media has on the students' education (Ahn, 2010). Ahn also states that the examples of the media platforms the younger generation use are: YouTube, to share and stream videos, and Facebook, to have a complete identity online, and a network of friends. Ahn says, researchers look at the profiles of the social media users as part of the process needed for the students to develop their identity (Ahn, 2010).

Gwenn Schurgin O'Keeffe and Kathleen Clarke-Pearson believe that there are negative impacts caused by social media, which include accessing inappropriate content and not "understanding online privacy." They also say that, there is online harassment and cyberbullying, which is mostly caused by risks of peer to peer engagement (O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

Rideout, has interviewed teachers, to find out their opinions regarding the effect entertainment media has on the students' academic performance; 71% of the teachers believe it has negatively impacted the students' attention span; 58% of teachers believe that social media has negatively impacted their writing skills, due to their regular use of

slang language and word abbreviations. The rest of the teachers believed it impacted both their face-to-face communication skills and their critical thinking skills (Rideout, 2012). She quotes a middle school math teacher who said, "The instant rewards of video games have made activities that require depth of commitment much harder for the kids." (Rideout, 2012, p. 8) Rideout adds that the positive impact caused by the students' use of the entertainment media according to the teachers she interviewed is their reading skills, it improved 46%, their math skills improved 54%, their writing skills improved 39% and their science skills improved 51%. More of the positive impacts caused by entertainment media in the opinion of 63% of the teachers is their ability to look-up information and find it, and another 34% of the teachers believe it improved their skills in "multi-tasking effectively" (Rideout, 2012).

According to O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, in the American Academy of Pediatrics, there are a couple of benefits to social media use. They believe one of the most important benefits of social media is that it enhances how an individual understands himself by engaging with others, and becoming creative through blogging. This leads to better outcomes in their individual school work. Another important benefit according to O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, is the fact that using social media gives students the opportunity to improve their learning, since they have the chance to share knowledge with one another and conduct group projects more efficiently (O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

Victor Lavy and Edith Sand's research was conducted in a Tel Aviv School to determine the effect of the types of friends on social media platforms of middle-school students. They divided the types of friends into categories. "Reciprocal friends" which are friends that have something in common with each other, such as academics and interests. A second group was the "non-reciprocal friends", those who turned down the "friendship offer" of another student. They found that students with reciprocal friends in their class had a significant positive effect on three of their test scores; Hebrew, Math and English. On the other hand, students that had no common friends showed that there was a negative effect on the same three test scores. This tells us that if students are in contact with friends who share the same interests, goals and education on social media, then they are more likely to help each other in performing well in their studies, due to motivation and other factors (Lavy, 2012).

A new term regarding education has been introduced by Jeff Cain and Katherine Chretien and this term is known as 'interprofessional education'. It means that, instead of each individual learning on his/her own, different individuals come together to share the piece of knowledge they have with others. This leads to improved outcomes as they learn from each others experiences. This was first introduced amongst the health departments (Cain and Chretien, 2013). Therefore, there is an opportunity to make use of it within the students. This can be achieved by utilising social media to create study groups on Facebook, Skype, Blogs or any medium that allows multi contact conversations and allowing them to share their assignments, asking their peers questions they don't understand.

According to Napoleon Egedegbe, the result that different researchers and scholars have reached regarding the impact of social media on the academic performance of students is that there is no impact (Egedegbe, 2013). On the other hand, Dr. Patient Rambe states that social media gives different drawbacks and opportunities that distinctively enable and disable possibilities of having face-to-face interaction, as it liberates them from this obligation to the availability of everything online. He also adds that Facebook as a learning environment has given the opportunity to have multiple representations of students voices and has created an "educative and aesthetic space." Taking into consideration the opposing side, Facebook's learning environment has caused limitations of individuals to realise their "self-interests" (Rambe, 2011).

Sanzhar Naizabekov concluded that social media causes procrastination as a result of its distracting nature. It would take an individual who uses social media much more time than it would take a focused individual to finish a task. Through procrastination emerges the second negative impact, which is lack of motivation, because using social media with studying develops negative attitude towards their individual work at school (Naizabekov, 2012).

### 3. Research Methods

This research aims to find the impact of social media on the academic performance of the younger generation in Egypt. Questionnaires were distributed through the social media platform, Facebook and emails, amongst a sample of students aged 12-19:

The sample consisted of 110 male and female students aged 12-19, which are in grades 7 to 12. They are from different socioeconomic classes and the types of school programs varied between IG, American, French, German and National. The research also has a mini-comparison between the students frequency of using the following social media platforms: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat, Google, and Instagram. A Likert Scale was used where the respondents were asked to rate them from 1-6, according to the level they use the platform most; one being the most and six being the least.

The questionnaires consisted of questions regarding the number of hours they use social media per day and for what they use social media for. Other questions included the number of hours they study per day, whether they use social media to study or not, and if they do, how do they use it to study and which platforms they use.

The data obtained was analyzed in several ways, with grouping the students with similar answers together, then applying the cross tabulation method to measure the impact and effect of two things, first the frequency of the students usage of social media daily, against their overall grade average, and also the number of hours they spend daily on studying with the hours spent on social media.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

There was a total of 110 responses received. The demographics were 68% females and 32% males. The majority of the respondents were between 16 and 17 years old and they made up 72% of the respondents. The rest of the 28% were 14, 15, 18 and 19 years old. This means the majority were from grades 11 and 12, which are 85% of the respondents.

The respondents were asked to mention their overall grade range at school. 61% of the respondents were between the 90-100% grade range, 20% were of the 80-90% grade range and 9% were of the 70-80% grade range, leaving 10% of the grade range 70% and below.

When it came to looking at which platforms students use mostly, 41% mostly used Facebook and 32% used Google. The least platform that was used was SnapChat since 40% of the respondents voted for it the least. The other platforms were, Instagram 27% used most frequent. Twitter and YouTube, their level of usage was a three out of five, as observed by the scores on the Likert Scale used in the questionnaire

They were also asked to mention whether they use social media to study or not and how they use social media to study. 92% of the respondents use the internet to study. Others students stated clearly, that they use social media platforms with their math homework since they can Google equations. Therefore, most of them use social media in a positive way, which helps them do better at school.

The respondents were also asked to mention the number of hours they spend daily on social media and studying; the results were quite surprising. 50% of the respondents spend 1-3 hours studying a day and 33% spent that same amount of time on social media per day. From this it is clear that the respondents do not study more often than they browse social media, and the overall grade averages of the majority is quite high.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the number of hours the students spend daily on social media networks versus their overall grade range in school. Looking at the results, it is clear that the number of students within the grade range of 90%-100% are 67 in total, which is almost 61% of the total respondents. Looking deeper into the bar graph, it is clear that among the 67 students, the majority of them spend between one to three hours a day, three to six hours a day and more than six hours a day on social media. A minority of them spend less than an hour a day on social media. Moving on to the grade range of 80%-90%, there are a total of 22 students, which is about 20% of the respondents. They are also distributed throughout the four categories of number of hours spent daily on social media. The majority spend between one to three hours on social media, and the second half spend between three to six hours and more than six hours daily on social media.

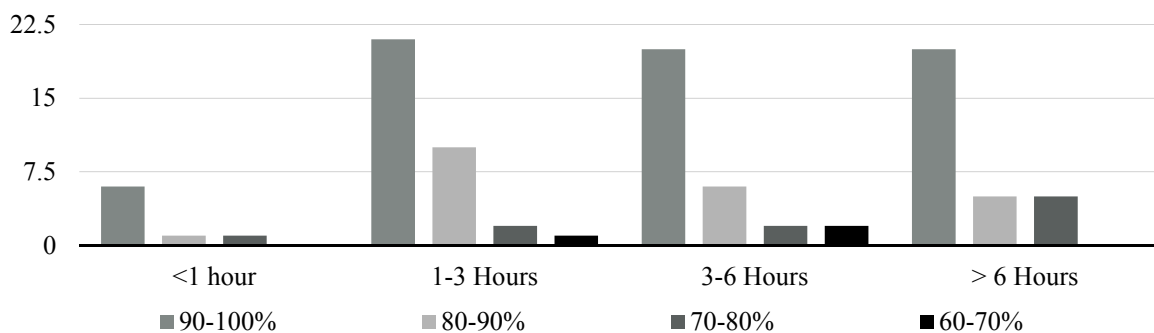


Figure 1. The number of hours spent daily on studying .vs. the overall grade range average

A Chi Square analysis was conducted to find out whether the differences are significant or not between, the overall grade average, the frequency of using social media and studying daily. Assuming that the significant level is .05 or 5%, and for the first analysis our Null Hypothesis will be ‘the frequency of using social media, impacts the students overall grade average in school’.

Table 1. Frequency of social media usage and the number overall grade average of the students

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1317.463 <sup>a</sup>	24	.000
Likelihood Ratio	735.781	24	.000
N of Valid Cases	1109		

a. 26 cells (74.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

Table 1 illustrates the Chi Square analysis conducted, between the frequency of social media usage and their overall grade range average, take a look at the note written underneath the table, there is a violation since 74.3% have an expected count less than 5, and this percentage must not exceed 20%. So, the ‘Likelihood Ratio’ will be considered, which has a significant level of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, therefore the null hypothesis will be rejected.

Table 2. Frequency of social media usage and the number of hours studied per day

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1313.947 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	740.285	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	1109		

a. 16 cells (64.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

Table 2 is another Chi Square analysis conducted, between the use of social media and the number of hours spent daily on studying. The null hypothesis in this case is that ‘the usage of social media, effects the number of ours the students study daily; looking at the Chi Square analysis, it is shown again, that, there is a violation regarding the expected count, so the ‘Likelihood Ratio’ will be considered, and the significant level is 0.000, therefore, the null hypothesis will be rejected. The students use of social media does not affect the number of hours they study daily.

According to the above findings, it contradicts what Sanzhar Naizabekov has said, that social media causes procrastination as a result of its distracting nature (Naizabekov, 2012). In this research’s case, there is no significant relationship between using social media and the students’ academic performance. On the other hand, the results of this research, somehow agrees with the conclusion stated by Napoleon Egedegbe, that, there is no impact either positive or negative, by using social media, on the academic performance of students (Egedegbe, 2013).

## 5. Conclusion

June Ahn stated, “emerging studies find that youth spend a considerable portion of their daily life interacting through social media.” (Ahn, 2011b, p. 1435) According to this study, it is a true statement given that the majority of the Egyptian students spend between one to more than six hours daily on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Google.

As noticed in the discussion, whether the students spend less than one hour on social media or more than six hours on social media, or even the average amount of time which is between one to three and three to six hours a day,

students still share the same grade range average. 61% of the respondents have the highest grade ranges which is 90%-100% and they varied between all four time ranges on social media per day. By this, it is safe to conclude that there is no negative impact from the use of social media on the academic performance of the school students, and it is proven by the Chi Square analysis, which resulted with no significant relationship or difference between both the frequency of using social media with the overall grade average; and with the number of hours spent daily on studying.

The objective of this research was to find out the type of impact that is caused by social media on the students' academic performance, why this impact is caused, and how. After conducting the research, it is clear that social media does not impact school students academic performance in any way because although they spend hours on social media, they still manage to find time to study, and achieve good grades.

## 6. Limitations

The first limitation of this research is the small range of respondents that were contacted to test the effects of social media on Egyptian youth. As a result of the small range, these generalisations cannot be made to the whole of Egypt. Another limitation of this study was that not much research has been done regarding the impact of social media on the academic performance of the young generation. It was difficult to find a starting point to build on as the majority of the studies conducted regarding the impact of social media was done either on university students' academic performance, or the effects it causes psychologically, and even these were not conducted in Egypt. A third limitation to this study was having a short-period of time to conduct the research. A result of this, is that the generalization of there being no relationship between the use of social media on the academic performance of school students, is not 100% accurate.

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