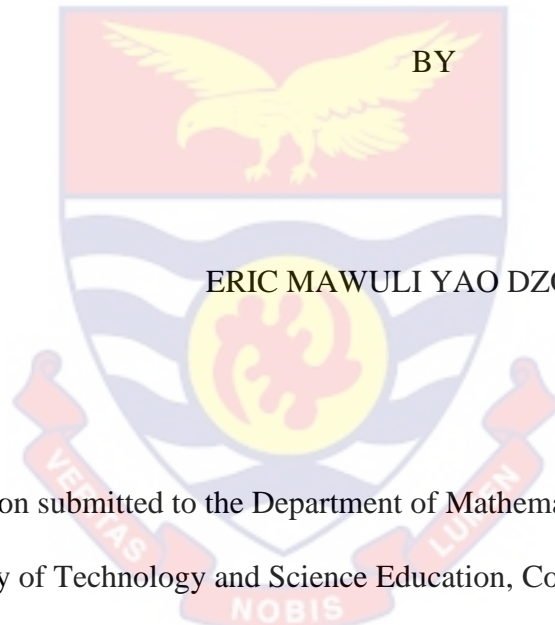


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University of Cape Coast

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS AT THE TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN
GHANA. A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



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Dissertation submitted to the Department of Mathematics and ICT Education of
the Faculty of Technology and Science Education, College of Education Studies,
University of Cape Coast in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
Master of Education degree in Information Technology.

SEPTEMBER 2024

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature  Date: 20th September 2024

Name: Eric Mawuli Yao Dzontoh

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name: Dr. Nelly Abaidoo

ABSTRACT

This dissertation conducted a study into the impact of utilizing social media platforms on the academic accomplishment of students within the University of Cape Coast, located in Ghana. The research studied the strategies employed by students to manage academic stress through social media and assesses the resulting impact on their scholastic accomplishments. The outcomes of this inquiry unveiled a favourable correlation between social media engagement and students' academic achievements. Employing a quantitative approach and utilizing a descriptive survey method, the research did not identify any noteworthy gender-based disparities in the use of social media. The study recommended that educational stakeholders support the responsible use of social media for educational purposes. School counsellors should organize programmes to teach students how to balance social media engagement with academics. The university's management should address social media addiction by educating students on effective usage to enhance academic performance.

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DEDICATION

To my family and friends.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The World Wide Web, which started in the 1990s, changed online communication dramatically. It enables the creation of social media networks, where users could share their own content. This had a profound impact on communication across various spheres, as aptly demonstrated by Ellison and Vitak (2015). Their research elucidated the significant effects on interpersonal interactions and information exchange. They found that the internet became the main way of communicating, as many users used social networking sites (SNSs) to make and interact with contacts. These platforms are often called social media.

According to Brown (2016), the widespread availability, ease of use, versatility, and adaptability of social technologies were key factors driving their adoption. Brown emphasizes that these factors made social media universally accessible, enriching people's lives through new methods of information creation and sharing. Internet-based social technologies are often cheap or free, which makes them available to many people, as Brown pointed out in 2016. However, we need to recognize that social media has two sides, both good and bad, as the study of Kolan and Dzandza (2018) showed.

Social media has different views in higher education, but most people agree that it has four main benefits: making better relationships, motivating more involvement in learning, customizing course materials, and developing teamwork

skills, Fang et al. (2021) . Furthermore, social media platforms enable students to engage in communication, share their learning experiences, and exchange opinions on various subjects (Liccardi et al., 2018). However, (Ojo, 2022) delve into the potential drawbacks of social networking sites, such as diverting students towards non-academic activities like casual conversations, which can hinder learning.

Research indicates the considerable adoption of social media platforms among student populations. For instance, Hossain (2017) observed that 85% of college students at Comilla University used Facebook to communicate with their friends and others, both on campus and from their former high schools. Furthermore, it was revealed that a substantial number of students habitually invest approximately thirty minutes daily on social networking sites, as identified by Hwang et al. (2019). These findings show how social media can affect students' academic results, both positively and negatively.

Quayle et al. (2018) assert that the Internet has become an integral part of global societies, with 78.1% of the US population extensively utilizing it. According to data from Statista, the United States boasts approximately 343.48 million internet users as of July 2024. This substantial user base positions the U.S. among the top ten countries globally in terms of online access. Moreover, the National Centre for Education Statistics (2012) reveals that over 90% of US college students, approximately twenty million individuals, actively use the Internet. Many students perceive the Internet as a valuable tool that enhances their education, facilitating studying and communication with peers and instructors Quayle et al. (2018).

According to American Educational Research Association (2009), Social Network Sites (SNSS) users tended to have lower academic achievement. According to Arjun and Juna (2015), Social Networking Sites (SNSS) users have a consistent drop in their academic performance. Contrary to previous findings, Ladrón de Guevara Rodríguez et al. (2022) argued that internet use and social networking site usage (SNSS) can have a positive impact on students' academic performance, as the internet offers a vast array of learning opportunities, providing access to a wealth of information that can accelerate the educational process and enhance learning outcomes. Arjun and Juna (2015) supported this by noting higher marks on reading skills tests for regular SNSS users.

The internet has become more dynamic and user-generated over time. This change has led to a significant rise in social media use among students, which has harmed their study habits, writing skills, and concentration, as Wong and Tee (2018) argues. According to Hwang et al. (2019), Facebook ranks among the preeminent and widely embraced social media platforms on a global scale. It began as a hobby for tech enthusiasts but now it is an essential part of students' lives everywhere Hwang et al. (2019). Naturally, as Hwang et al posits, students are attracted to these platforms owing to their capacity to facilitate connections with friends, disseminate information, self-expression, and the presentation of their social experiences.

Saha and Karpinski (2016) argue that social media use can hinder students' academic success and undermine their academic performance. She thinks that the problems with platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp are bigger than the benefits.

Many students depend on these platforms, which reduces the time they spend on academics, and consequently lowers their grades and GPAs. Liu et al. (2017) say that social networking sites distract the current generation. Muhingi et al. (2015) supported this view with their research that links academic success and social media use.

Social networking platforms, including but not limited to Facebook, Snapchat, Bebo, Friendster, WhatsApp, Telegram, LinkedIn, Instagram, and the notably recent TikTok, possess worldwide accessibility, affording individuals the means to maintain connections, exchange information, and exhibit their social experiences, as noted by Ellison and Vitak (2015).

The pervasive utilization of communication technology and the internet in contemporary society has rendered this phenomenon highly prevalent (Coyle, Smith, & Platt, 2012). The younger generation exhibits a greater reliance on online resources for their daily requirements and information, as indicated by findings from Lewis and Kaufman (2018). Nesi et al. (2018) underscores this transformation by observing that 90% of American adolescents possess internet connectivity, with 75% of them engaging online daily, primarily employing social networking platforms for interpersonal communication and collaborative planning. The proportion of adult internet users aged 18 to 29 who actively participate in social networking has also witnessed a remarkable surge, surging from 16% in September 2005, as evidenced in Jamili Oskouei and Farokhbalaghi (2016) study.

Tuckman (1975) defined academic performance broadly, encompassing four key aspects: knowledge acquisition, skill development, understanding, and

learning. He equated academic performance with a student's grades, which reflect their mastery of these areas. The influence of the internet on students' scholastic achievements exhibits a spectrum of outcomes, characterized by both favourable and adverse consequences, which hinge significantly on the specific purposes for which the internet is employed. Phua et al. (2012) demonstrate the internet's potential to enhance student learning and highlight its positive impact on education. At the same time, they point out its bad side when used for fun.

Jamili Oskouei and Farokhbalaghi (2016) says that the internet is a great tool for education, helping both students and teachers with many resources. However, Oskouei also warns about the negative effect of social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter on students' grades.

Oye in 2012 supports this idea, showing that students mostly use these platforms to socialize, not to study. Oye et al. (2012) found a contradictory view, with some students believing social media supports their academic goals, challenging the common assumption of social media as a hindrance to learning..

Mensah and Nizam (2016) highlight that students primarily use social media platforms as tools for interpersonal communication and fostering friendships, rather than for academic purposes. Young's work in 2006, meanwhile, underscored the pivotal role that the internet and social media play in the scholastic lives of students. These platforms have become instrumental in their quest for academic information and in indulging their personal interests and hobbies.

The influence of the internet and social networking on students' academic endeavours has sparked significant debate within the academic community.

Notably, Young (n.d.) posited the notion that the internet's influence on academic performance remains inconsequential. However, this perspective diverges from the findings of other scholars, such as Wang (2011), who have contended that the effect of social platforms on scholastic accomplishments is contingent on the extent and manner of their utilization.

Excessive internet use can have detrimental effects on students' academic performance and emotional well-being, as reported by Kim et al. (2019). This suggests that students who overuse the internet may face difficulties in their academic and emotional lives. However, Seo et al. (2021) noted that not all students who use the internet extensively will suffer from such problems, as the negative effects are usually seen in extreme cases.

Parents and educators need to keep an eye on how students use social networking sites (SNSs) because they can cause many problems (Bugeja & Grech, 2020). Scholars and researchers are also studying the effects of these platforms on higher education (Al - Zahrani, 2015). Social networking is a common part of young people's internet habits (Chatterjee, 2018). These platforms allow people or groups to connect for varied reasons, such as friendship, family, or knowledge sharing Adeboye and Agunbiade (2017), as cited in Munir et al. (2021). Students' use of social media can make things harder and more complex for higher education experts.

An individual's social network shows their connections with others, which are expressed by nodes that indicate diverse types of relationships, such as family or friends Munir et al. (2021), citing Adeboye and Agunbiade (2017)). This network

also includes their social capital, which means the advantages gained from these social connections. Many popular social networking platforms, such as TikTok, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and now Threads app by Instagram, enable communication with both known and unknown contacts, whether online or offline.

However, the internet's lack of proper regulation has led to excessive usage, with more families accessing it and young people using it in inappropriate settings like schools and religious places Bartau-Rojas et al. (2018). This problem is worsened by the widespread availability of advanced mobile phones, allowing teenagers to message without depending on cybercafés (Third et al., 2017). As a result, the attention has shifted from real friends to virtual ones, affecting important environments like workplaces and schools and raising concerns about the deterioration in writing skills (Alfailakawi, 2022) . This phenomenon is disturbing for individuals who value knowledge and skill development.

Social media platforms, including TikTok, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and the recent Threads app by Instagram, have achieved remarkable popularity within contemporary society, particularly among the younger generation, encompassing teenagers and students pursuing higher education. These platforms have become instrumental tools for their exploration of the world and their engagement with the digital environment (Chatterjee, 2018).

The rapid evolution of media technology has wrought profound transformations in the landscape of everyday communication. Students not only leverage social networking sites within the confines of their educational institutions

but also extend their usage to connect with individuals beyond these boundaries, thereby cultivating a profound sense of inclusion within a broader and more expansive community, as aptly noted by Al-Bahrani et al. (2015).

It is noteworthy that the widespread popularity of social media has raised concerns regarding its potential impact on students' academic performance (Kolan & Dzandza, 2018). The amount of time spent on these platforms is a particular area of concern, as it may have implications for academic achievement (Abuhassna et al., 2020).

Social networking offers students the opportunity to connect with individuals from both their school and beyond, enabling them to broaden their social circles (Greenhow & Askari, 2017). This aspect makes social networking highly attractive to students, as it fosters a sense of belonging to a larger community (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). Nonetheless, there are concerns among educators and economists regarding the potential impact of excessive time spent on these platforms on students' academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

The internet affects students' academics in diverse ways. Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) have shown this in their studies. Social media platforms, like Facebook, are attractive to students. Parents and guardians are concerned that their children may neglect their studies due to social media usage. This concern is particularly pertinent for students at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana (Turkson, 2017), who have been found to spend a significant amount of time online.

Kolan and Dzandza (2018) found that more social media use means lower grades for university students. Social media use and academic success is not clearly linked, especially in terms of the impact on student success (Kolan & Dzandza, 2018). How often and how long students use social media platforms are key factors that could shape their academic outcomes. The amount and length of their social media engagement have the possibility to affect their educational achievements. The constant influx of notifications and updates from these platforms can divert the attention of students across various academic strata, thereby diverting their focus from their scholastic responsibilities (Githinji, 2019). The question of whether social media platforms offer educational opportunities remains open. Social media platforms can serve as valuable resources, providing students with access to information and tools that enhance their educational pursuits. However, social media also has the capacity to distract and divert attention, potentially leading to a dilution of focus and commitment to academic endeavours (Kazakov et al., 2024).

To sum up, technology, especially social media, can have both positive and negative impacts on students' academic results. More research is needed to get a deeper understanding of how the level of social media use relates to academic outcomes among tertiary students. Even though social media platforms have educational advantages, the main worry is about their ability to divert students from their academic duties.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study aimed to examine how the use of social media influences the academic performance of students at the tertiary institution level in Ghana, using the University of Cape Coast as a case study.

Research objectives

The study aimed to:

1. Find out how students at the University of Cape Coast use social media.
2. Assess the impact of the time devoted to social media on the academic excellence of students.
3. Examine possible gender-related variations in the level of social media engagement among students at the University of Cape Coast.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the main reasons for students at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) to use social media?
2. How much time do students spend on social media daily relate to their academic performance at UCC?
3. Do students of different genders at the University of Cape Coast have unusual ways of using social media?

Hypothesis

1. Students at the University of Cape Coast primarily use social media for socialization and entertainment, rather than academic purposes.

2. There is a significant negative correlation between the amount of time students spend on social media daily and their academic performance at UCC.
3. Female students at the University of Cape Coast are more likely to use social media for social support and relationships, while male students are more likely to use social media for entertainment and information-seeking.

Significance of the Study

This research is important for diverse groups of people, including educators, parents, students, and administrators. Its main goal is to give useful insights into how social media influences University of Cape Coast students, helping teachers better understand how social media usage can affect their students' lives.

This research endeavour holds the potential to furnish parents with insights into the possible links between excessive social media utilization and increased risk of mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression), sleep disturbances, or cyberbullying victimization among their children. Furthermore, it aims to provide University of Cape Coast students with a comprehensive awareness of the multifaceted impact of social media on their lives, encompassing not only its sociocultural advantages but also its broader repercussions. By delivering a more holistic comprehension of the consequences associated with social media engagement, this study aspires to benefit both students and parents alike.

Moreover, this research will be a useful source for scholars and researchers doing related studies in the field. By providing rich data and insights into how social media influences student academic performance, this project will improve future

research efforts and help to create effective educational policies. This research is a valuable contribution to improve our understanding of how social media affects students, benefiting many diverse groups of people involved in education.

Delimitation

This contemporary study examined the usage patterns of five popular social media platforms, namely Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, among University of Cape Coast students. These platforms hold substantial user bases not only within the Ghanaian academic community but also on a global scale. The research participants were undergraduate students in their second, third, and fourth (final) year at the Department of Mathematics and ICT Education, University of Cape Coast. This ensured that the findings would reflect the social media habits of students who are at similar points in their academic journey. Students with visual impairments were not part of the research because they could not access the written materials. This research adds to the growing knowledge of how students are influenced by social media and provides useful information for various people in the education field. The study examined four main aspects of social media use: academic goals, social interactions, entertainment, and news updates. The survey asked students about their use of social media for academic help, social connections, fun and relaxation, and current affairs.

The research was intentionally delimited to focus on studying how often and how deeply students used social media platforms. While acknowledging the inherent limitations of this approach, which focused exclusively on specific aspects

relevant to the study, it was emphasized that this targeted methodology was essential for achieving the specific objectives of the research.

Limitations

During this research, several noteworthy limitations emerged. Respondent reluctance was observed, potentially influencing response bias and sample representativeness. Additionally, concerns were voiced regarding the length of the questionnaire, which could have affected both response rates and response quality. Despite assurances of anonymity, some participants hesitated to share their GPAs, raising questions about data accuracy and completeness.

Moreover, participation was encouraged, highlighting the potential influence on response rates and necessitating consideration of feasibility in future research endeavours.. Lastly, the research process was impeded by network connectivity issues, preventing some prospective participants from taking part. These limitations, though encountered, serve as valuable insights for interpreting the findings of this study and refining future research in this domain.

Definition of Concepts

Social Media Usage: This involves ways people use online platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. These platforms are common ways for people to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, while also offering a way to distribute multimedia content such as pictures, videos, and music. The current research aims to examine and understand how students interact with online platforms, showing their social media habits and actions. By looking into these aspects, the study hopes to get useful insights into how students use social media.

Academic Performance: is the extent to which students achieve their academic goals and demonstrate their learning outcomes. This study measured academic performance with the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA), a numerical value representing a student's overall academic achievement on a 4.0 scale. The CGPA is a usual way to evaluate a student's overall academic success by considering their performance in different academic terms. The CGPA reflects the students' overall academic progress and performance during that period.

Organization of the Study

The research study was organized into a structured framework comprising five distinct chapters, numbered from 1 to 5.

Chapter 1 functions as the introductory segment, delivering a comprehensive exposition of the research's backdrop and its contextual underpinnings. Within this section, various components such as the problem statement, research questions, objectives, key terminology, scope, limitations, and significance of the study are elaborated.

Chapter 2 was dedicated to an extensive review of pertinent literature, encompassing both theoretical and conceptual dimensions, empirical investigations, and the conceptual framework that informs the research.

Chapter 3 delineated the research methodology, expounding the methodologies employed for data collection, sampling techniques, research instruments, participant demographics, and analytical approaches.

Chapter 4 presented and analysed the data gathered, accompanied by a thorough examination of the findings.

Chapter 5 summarized the main results, drew conclusions, and made recommendations based on the research findings, and potential areas for future research questions were explored.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study aimed to explore how social media use affect the academic performance of students at the University of Cape Coast in the Central Region. This chapter includes a thorough literature review, which covers four main themes. These themes involved the analysis of the theory, concept, and evidence that are relevant to the research topic.

Theoretical Review

The literature review critically analysed three key theories, namely the Technology Adoption Model (TAM), Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT), and the gratification theory. These theories guided the research's direction and methods.

Technology Adoption Model (TAM)

Based on a theory that explains how beliefs shape attitudes, intentions, and actions, Davis (1989) created a model to understand how people accept modern technologies. This model focuses on two main factors that affect people's acceptance of technology - how easy and how helpful they think it is. The Technology Adoption Model, as established by Davis (1989), provides a predictive framework for understanding how individuals think, feel, plan, and act when they engage with information technology. When applied to the context of social media, these factors influence an individual's decision to adopt or reject its use (Davis et al., 1989).

According to Davis (1989), 'perceived usefulness' means how useful technology is for one's work or tasks. For this study, 'perceived usefulness' is how much students in different educational programs value the use of social media platforms for their academic goals. This value is based on their belief that using specific social media platforms can improve their academic performance and educational experiences. Davis (1989) explain that this perception of usefulness is how much users see a link between their academic success and the use of the system, making it a useful tool for their learning.

Also, Sugden (2000) said that how much an individual expects to benefit from a certain behaviour depends on how useful they think it is. This means that students may not use social networking technology, even if it is easy to use if they think that it does not help them achieve their academic goals.

The exploration of perceived usefulness concerning social media platforms and its ramifications on user engagement and satisfaction has been a focal point in numerous research endeavours (Hsu et al., 2014). These studies highlight the work of Davis (1989) and Sago (2013), who all agree that users' involvement with and enjoyment of social media depend on how useful they think it is. For example, Sago (2013) showed that users who thought that social media platforms were helpful used them more often. Likewise, Lu et al. (2009) reported that users were more willing to use a specific social media platform if they believed that instant messaging would improve their communication efficiency and make it easier to chat with friends, colleagues, and others.

Farhangi et al. (2018) study looked at how social media affected communication in the MENA region. It showed how it could improve participation and action in debates and movements. This shows the importance of social media platforms for communication and social networking, something that Hamadeh (2019) also agreed with.

It is important to acknowledge that the link between perceived usefulness and the practical usage of social media platforms does not always follow a straightforward pattern, as evidenced by the findings of prior studies. Lee et al. (2007) and Strader et al. (2015) found examples where social media use did not match how useful people thought it was. This observation suggests that a multitude of factors and intricacies may impact the congruence between individuals' perceptions of usefulness and their tangible behaviours concerning the use of social media tools. For instance, Strader et al. (2007) showed that how useful instant messaging was did not affect how much people wanted to use it. This was true for both undergraduate and graduate business students. Lee et al. (2007) also found that how easy instant messaging was mattered more than how useful it was for students' adoption of this platform. These findings came from an online survey with business students.

Perceived ease of use, first proposed by Davis (1986), is relevant here, meaning how easy a user thinks a system can be used. Users tend to choose applications that are easier to use, because of human effort limitations (Davis et al., 1989). Hence, it can be inferred that user-friendly social media platforms are more prone to find acceptance and utilization among students in educational institutions,

spanning from primary and secondary schools to colleges and universities. On the other hand, lack of familiarity with certain types of social media in academic settings may cause difficulties for students in using them effectively.

Ease of use is a key factor that affects how people feel about using social media technology, as many studies show (Burton-Jones & Hubona, 2006; Lee et al., 2007; Sago, 2013; Setterstrom et al., 2013). Sago (2013) emphasizes that social media platforms should be simple and easy to use, as this makes them more popular and common. Lee et al. (2007) also found that business students were more likely to use instant messaging if it was easy to use.

Strader et al. (2007) showed that the easier instant messaging was, the more people wanted to use it. They used an online survey with undergraduate and graduate business students. Van Slyke et al. (2007) also found that the perceived benefits and ease of use of instant messaging influenced business students' adoption of this tool. These results highlight the importance of ease of use for communication technologies, especially in academics.

These studies highlight the key role that ease of use has in influencing individuals' attitudes and intentions toward adopting social media technology, especially among student groups. Easier and user-friendly interfaces are likely to increase adoption rates and create positive perceptions of these platforms.

Social Learning Theory (SLT)

Bandura (1969) social learning theory posits that a learner's acquisition of knowledge hinges on the social and environmental context in which they are immersed. Ainin et al. (2015) agree with this notion, claiming that learning and

behaviour are shaped by both cognitive and environmental factors. The theory proposes that learning is a social process where individuals take charge of their own learning and construct knowledge through information collection and organization (Yu et al., 2010).

Bandura (1969) also argues that social media usage, especially by students, can affect academic performance. According to Ainin et al. (2015), cognition and behaviour can be influenced by peer observation and interaction, as well as environmental norms. Therefore, peers can affect how students think and act on social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, resulting in good or adverse consequences.

According to Bandura, behavioural outcomes are based on an individual's interactions with their environment. Thus, their peer relationships, the amount of social support they get, and their perception of events are all key factors in determining their learning outcomes (DeAndrea et al., 2012). Therefore, peers on social media platforms can influence students' academic performance by what they see, do, and learn from them. This can be good or bad (Mingle & Adams, 2015). The social learning theory shows how important social and environmental factors are for learning. This is clear when students use social media platforms to share ideas, information, and learn together.

Gratification Theory

The satisfaction hypothesis, originally formulated by Katz et al. (1973), posits that individuals opt for media platforms that align with their personal preferences and needs. Furthermore, it contends that media platforms vie for

attention with other information sources, striving to captivate their audience. Therefore, the symmetry between students' engagement in social media interactions and their academic commitments may indeed wield an impact on the academic performance of students enrolled at the University of Cape Coast. This equilibrium can influence the allocation of time that students devote to their academic pursuits, potentially resulting in adverse consequences for their learning outcomes, as indicated by Mingle and Adams (2015).

On the other side, the gratification approach, as explored by Mowafy (2018), delves into the motives and requirements underpinning online media consumption. According to the uses and gratification theory, social media users actively and intentionally select and interpret media content that aligns with their individual aspirations and desires (Olise & Makka, 2013). Furthermore, the social media approach directs attention towards a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms and motivations that underlie individuals' utilization of social media to fulfil their needs, as prominently emphasized by Throuvala et al. (2019). This approach delves into the intricacies of the reasons and methods through which individuals harness social media platforms to satisfy their various requirements and objectives.

By examining both the satisfaction hypothesis and the gratification approach, it becomes evident that individuals' choices and involvement with media, including social media, are propelled by their quest for content that caters to their preferences and fulfils their personal objectives. Media use and personal needs influence how students at the University of Cape Coast allocate their time and

maintain academic focus. This may impact their academic performance based on how much they use social media platforms.

Conceptual Review

The study was based on some key ideas about social media, such as how it started, how it relates to education in Ghana, and how it affects students' performance.

Social Media Concept

The concept of social media is multifaceted and extensive, marked by numerous interpretations and descriptions. Carr and Hayes (2015) point out that there is no clear and agreed-upon definition of social media among scholars. Drury (2008), however, describes social media as an online platform that allows users to share diverse types of content, such as videos, images, photos, texts, ideas, opinions, jokes, debates, and news. Sultan et al. (2021) view social media as web-based applications that use internet principles and technologies to enable the production and dissemination of user-generated content.

Thomas (2020) offers an intelligible definition of social media, portraying it as a platform that facilitates the establishment of connections, networking, and the exchange of information and ideas within the expansive realm of online communities and networks. Similarly, Tuten (2023) characterizes social media as the use of various platforms, including Facebook, blogs, Twitter, Myspace, and LinkedIn, for engaging in conversational exchanges, sharing photos, and disseminating videos. Leppänen et al. (2017) delve deeper into the multifaceted nature of social media, portraying it as the collective actions, practices, and

behaviours demonstrated by online groups actively involved in the exchange of information, expertise, and opinions through conversational media. These diverse and comprehensive descriptions collectively contribute to the intricate and dynamic tapestry that defines the evolving concept of social media.

To sum up, social media refers to an online platform where individuals share diverse types of user-generated content, including videos, photos, images, text, ideas, insights, comedy, opinions, gossip, and news. Although different researchers and writers have given different views on social media, they all agree that it is a constantly changing phenomenon with a wide range of purposes and functions. Social media can be classified into diverse types based on various criteria. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) suggested six types of social media, which are:

- Collaborative Projects (e.g., Wikipedia)
- Blogs and Microblogs (e.g., Twitter)
- Content Communities (e.g., YouTube)
- Social Networking Sites (e.g., Facebook, 2go, BB chat)
- Virtual Game Worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft)
- Virtual Second Worlds (e.g., Second Life)

Other social media websites identified by Peter (2015) include:

1. Collaborative bookmarking (e.g., Blink list, Simple) - enables users to label websites and browse through bookmarks made by others.
2. Collaborative news (e.g., Digg, Propello) - lets users vote on news stories and leave comments.

3. Social networking (e.g., Facebook, 2go, BB chat) - allows users to connect with others, comment on profiles and photos, and join discussion groups.
4. Social photo and video sharing (e.g., Flickr, YouTube) - enables users to share and comment on photos and videos.
5. Wikis (e.g., Wikipedia, Wikia) - lets users contribute and edit articles collaboratively.

History of Social Media

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), the genesis of social networks can be traced back to the Web 2.0 era, characterized by features like blogging and posting. The inaugural social network, 'sixdegrees.com,' made its debut in 1997, grounded in the notion of 'Six Degrees of Separation,' which posits that individuals are connected through a chain of just six connections. This platform afforded users the capacity to establish profiles, form groups, seek out and extend friend invitations, as well as engage in messaging. However, it encountered challenges, including an overzealous pursuit of membership and the inundation of spam invitations, culminating in its closure in 2002, despite having been sold for a substantial sum of \$125 million in 2001. Concurrently, alongside 'sixdegrees.com,' specialized portals like Asian Avenue, Black Planet, and MiGente.com also surfaced, providing users with the ability to create personal, professional, and dating accounts without necessitating approval from pre-identified friends.

Khan (2012) observes that while 'sixdegrees.com' had millions of users, it failed to become a profitable company, with its founder admitting that it was too early for its time. The evolution of social networking sites continued with

LinkedIn.com and Myspace.com introducing new features in 2003. However, the real breakthroughs were Facebook.com and Orkut.com, which transformed social networks in 2003 and redefined the whole concept. This led to the increasing popularity of social networks, with Facebook reaching one billion global users by November 2012 and Twitter having an estimated 517 million users in July 2012 Roberts (2020).

The pervasive adoption of social networking sites has prompted the establishment of social media regulations aimed at mitigating their impact on younger users. Notwithstanding the global guidelines stipulating that users should be a minimum of 18 years old to access social networking sites, research conducted by Barbovski et al. (2015) brought to light a troubling trend in which a considerable number of underage individuals were disregarding these age restrictions. This study also shed light on the heightened proclivity of students to engage with social networking sites, with half of teenagers and 69% of young adults actively participating as users.

In clear contrast, the use of social networks for communication among adults lagged, with only 20% of the adult population engaging in such platforms. Among those adults, 42% reported visiting these social networks daily or even more frequently. This differentiation in usage patterns highlights the distinctive dynamics of social media engagement across different age groups, underlining the pervasive influence and appeal of social networking sites, particularly among younger demographics.

Ghanaian Education and Social Media

The landscape of social media in Ghana has undergone a notable transformation, as substantiated by the research of Kolan and Dzandza (2018). Their study draws from data provided by the Ghana National Communication Authority, which illuminates a modest upswing in mobile subscriptions, rising from 36,138,706 in the first quarter of 2016 to 36,613,987 in the subsequent quarter. Additionally, they underscore the escalating utilization of mobile data within the country, with 18.8 million mobile data subscriptions recorded in the second quarter of 2016. This widespread access to mobile data encompasses approximately 67.6% of the population, thereby facilitating their engagement with digital content.

As mobile data access grows, more people will use the internet and join social media platforms, boosting the online visibility of social media in Ghana (Atiso & Kammer, 2018). These changes reflect the evolving nature of the digital landscape and the growing role of social media as a medium for communication, information exchange, and social engagement in the country.

The impact of social media utilization on the academic performance of tertiary students in Ghana has been the focal point of investigation in a dedicated study conducted by Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015). Their research sheds light on the fact that a sizeable portion of students actively engage with social networking sites, primarily employing them for activities such as chatting and downloading. Regrettably, their findings underscore that these activities have adverse repercussions on the academic accomplishments of these students. These outcomes resonate with the conclusions drawn by Mingle and Adams (2015), further

strengthening the notion that social media usage patterns, particularly those oriented toward non-academic activities, may indeed exert an unfavourable influence on the scholastic performance of tertiary students in Ghana.

The research by Otibar et al. (2023) reveals a range of detrimental effects associated with social media usage for the study's participants, including diminished proficiency in spelling and grammar, delayed submission of assignments, reduced study time, and diminished academic performance. Although some research highlights the positive aspects of social media in students' academic pursuits, Kolan and Dzandza (2018) underscore the importance of educators being cognizant of the prominent negative impacts observed within the context of Ghanaian education. Acknowledging these findings can assist educators in addressing potential challenges and promoting more effective learning strategies.

Academic Performance

Mankoe (2002) defines performance as how well an individual contributes to the goals of their institution. However, luck can also affect the outcomes of individuals who lack motivation. The Cambridge Dictionary of English (2018) describes academic performance as the measure of how a person, group, school, college, or institution does in academic tasks or tests. According to Mankoe (2002), academic performance depends on how well a student can manage their studies and finish assignments.

York et al. (2019) explains that academic achievement is the degree of success a student reaches based on their learned knowledge, and it has a strong connection to their intellectual ability. On the other hand, Senko (2019) identify

poor academic achievers as students who do not meet the expected standard performance in certain evaluation exercises, such as tests or exams, related to specific educational topics and activities.

Empirical Review

This section examines the existing empirical research that aligns with the study's objectives. A review of the literature is conducted on several key aspects, including the social media platforms utilized by students, the duration of social media use, the impact of social media engagement on academic performance, gender differences in social media usage, and variations in social media use across different educational levels. By analysing these aspects, valuable insights can be gathered to better understand the influence of social media on students' academic lives. This comprehensive literature review will inform the study and shape the analysis of the relationship between students' academic performance and social media use.

Social Media Types

Asemah et al. (2013) conducted thorough research to assess how social media exposure affects academic performance. Their research was based on the theories of social information processing and media equation. Students at Kogi State University in Anyigba, Nigeria was the data source for their research. They used a questionnaire to collect it. Their study revealed that many students spent a lot of time on Facebook and other social media sites. Sadly, this behaviour affected their academic performance negatively. These results highlight the possible trade-

off between social media engagement and academic success, a crucial factor for the education of university students.

Kolan and Dzandza (2018) conducted a related study to examine how social media affects the academic performance of college students in Ghana. They randomly selected 200 students from the University of Ghana, who filled out a questionnaire. Their study showed that the students used social media networks a lot, with Facebook and WhatsApp being their favourite platforms.

Okereke and Oghenetega (2014) conducted a study to investigate the impact of social media use on the academic performance of tertiary students in Nigeria. Employing a questionnaire method and a causal-comparative research design, they surveyed students from four universities. Their findings revealed that undergraduate students extensively use social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram. The study suggested a potential link between social media usage and academic performance, with a significant majority (66.33%) of students reporting that social media negatively affects their studies, while only 33.67% perceived a positive impact. Furthermore, 71.41% of students do not utilize social media for academic purposes, and 79.59% of students perform poorly academically due to social media addiction. The most popular platforms used are Facebook, WhatsApp, and 2go/Skype, primarily for social interactions rather than academic activities. The researchers concluded that while social media facilitates quick information exchange, it often distracts students from their studies, leading to lower academic performance. These results highlight the need to

understand the complex relationship between social media engagement and academic results among university students in different African settings.

The relationship between social media use and academic achievement has been explored by numerous studies in different educational settings and geographical regions. Maqableh et al. (2015) conducted a study at the University of Jordan, based on the social information processing theory and the media equation theory, to examine this relationship. Their results highlighted the dominance of Facebook as the most popular social networking site among students and revealed a negative correlation between social media involvement and academic performance, suggesting that excessive use of social media platforms may have a detrimental effect on students' academic grades.

Similarly, the study by Kolan and Dzandza (2018), which included college students in Ghana, confirmed the argument that social media networks, especially Facebook and WhatsApp, were widely adopted by the student population. These platforms played a significant role in their daily lives, thus posing implications for their academic achievements. Similarly, Okereke and Oghenetega (2014) focused on the domain of university students in Nigeria, showing that social media platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram, had a significant impact on their daily lives. Their results suggested a link between the level of social media use and academic performance, highlighting the relevance of this topic in various educational contexts and geographic areas. These combined studies improve our understanding of the complex relationship between social media and

academic outcomes, emphasizing the need for more research and detailed examination in this area.

Uses of social media by Students

Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) undertook a descriptive survey with the primary aim of investigating the multifarious purposes to which students applied social media platforms. Within the sample of 1,308 participants, the predominant utilization of social media was found to be for interpersonal communication, particularly in the form of chatting with friends. In contrast, a smaller segment of the student population employed social media for activities such as downloading music and videos, as well as for academic pursuits. The research further divulged that a substantial number of students possessed smartphones equipped with Internet connectivity and were acquainted with a variety of media-related websites. This demographic reported dedicating a noteworthy portion of their daily routines, ranging from thirty minutes to as much as three hours, to engaging with social networking sites via their mobile devices. Notably, however, it was observed by the researchers that only a marginal fraction of the survey participants leveraged social media for academic-related endeavours.

Kolan and Dzandza (2018) replicated a similar study to the one above, examining how students used social media for different purposes. Their research involved 165 students, most of whom used social media to communicate with others and download pictures and videos. However, some students also used social media for academic-related activities.

Mingle and Adams (2015) employed a methodologically diverse approach in their research initiative, aiming to explore the intricate landscape of social media usage patterns among students. Their study objectives encompassed a multifaceted comprehension of students' engagement and networking behaviours within these digital platforms. Additionally, they sought to ascertain the temporal extent of students' involvement with social media, scrutinize the potential ramifications of such engagement on their grammatical and orthographic proficiencies, and evaluate the influence of social learning facilitated by these digital networks on academic performance. To fulfil these objectives, data was collected from a targeted group of students enrolled in four Senior High Schools. This quantitative dataset was augmented by qualitative insights derived from interviews conducted with the respective Heads of these educational institutions.

The research found that out of the valid responses, 132 students (12.3%) used social networks for fun, while 170 students (15.8%) engaged in academic conversations with peers. Also, 329 respondents (30.5%) said they used social media networks for chat, and 446 respondents (41.4%) stated they used these platforms to make new friends. Therefore, the study's results concluded that the main reason for students' use of social media networks was the wish to connect with new friends.

The main goal of Mehmood and Taswir (2013) research project was to examine the effects of social networking sites on the education of undergraduate students at the College of Applied Sciences (CAS) in Nizwa, Oman. The study used a comprehensive approach, looking at various Web 2.0 applications like blogs,

wikis, tweets, RSS feeds, discussion forums, and podcasts, which were intricately linked to form a unified educational network. The research also investigated the changes caused by these social tools on the language and social behaviours of young learners, considering the variations based on their distinct demographic features. The survey results showed that students used social media for fun and relaxation. They liked to download and share music/videos, post photos, and chat with friends. Some students also used social media for learning purposes, such as writing articles, taking quizzes/polls, and contacting teachers, but most of them focused on non-academic goals.

Mao (2014) found that most students used social networks for pleasure, and 72% of them also integrated social media into their homework activities. On the other hand, about 28% of students avoided using any social network for academic tasks. The survey also revealed that 80% of the students accessed a social networking site on their mobile phones, because it was convenient and flexible. Moreover, they liked the smart features that social networks offered, such as reading RSS feeds, tagging locations, and updating statuses, which they often used as mobile phone apps for social media. The research compared how students from two private schools in various parts of Cyprus – one in the north and one in the south – used social media. Isik selected the participants through a survey and random sampling methods. The findings revealed that educators in both schools exhibited a preference for integrating social media into their instructional approaches, in conjunction with traditional face-to-face teaching. This inclination

stemmed primarily from the students' perceived lack of confidence in direct, in-person communication.

However, using social media for educational purposes has some drawbacks. Teachers often felt obliged to interact with students through social media to give visual examples, motivate them for exams and studies, which sometimes became stressful. The survey also showed that the southern school consistently posted updates on classes, tests, and homework on social media, raising privacy issues for teachers from both schools.

The study also showed that computer technology teachers were reluctant to support the use of social media platforms, mainly because they were not confident in these platforms. To address this, the researchers suggested that teachers should receive training in the secure and efficient use of social media. Such training would provide them with the essential skills and confidence to use these platforms more successfully.

Qutab et al. (2017) studied the internet usage habits of undergraduates, graduates, and postgraduate students at a Pakistani institution. They collected data from a sample of three hundred users and examined the link between internet usage and factors such as experience, frequency, and location. The study showed a significant relationship between students and internet usage, with 63% of all students saying that they only used the internet for academic purposes.

Helou and Rahim (2014) conducted additional research aimed at surveying the Malaysian university student population to ascertain the influence of social networking sites on their academic attainments. The study employed the utilization

of SPSS software for the purpose of scrutinizing the amassed data, with a particular focus on the modalities through which Malaysian students engaged with social networking sites and the resultant impact on their scholastic accomplishments. The findings, in this regard, delineated that 21% of the survey participants utilized social networking sites as a means of socializing and expanding their social connections, while 17% resorted to these platforms for messaging functions. Furthermore, the research unveiled that 8% of the respondents employed social networking sites for gaming activities, and 7% harnessed them for file transfer purposes.

Regarding academic purposes, a substantial portion of the respondents (26%) employed social networking platforms for communication with their supervisors and lecturers, while 8% utilized these platforms for discussions related to academic matters. Furthermore, 9% of the participants engaged in academic discussions with their peers through social networking sites.

Students are increasingly leveraging social media platforms for educational purposes. For instance, Yunus et al. (2012) presented compelling evidence demonstrating that the utilization of social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, led to demonstrable enhancements in students' vocabulary and writing proficiencies. Likewise, Seguya Asad and Clement observed that students adeptly employed social media channels for the sharing of assignments and educational resources, active participation in academic discussions, and the solicitation of peer assistance. Furthermore, Salvation and Adzharuddin (2014) highlighted the way students adeptly employed social media to establish group chats, thereby facilitating collaborative efforts on assignments and fostering effective

communication with their academic mentors. In concert, these findings collectively underscore the evolving and constructive role played by social media in facilitating educational engagement and progression among students.

Furthermore, teachers recognized the significant potential of social media in the realm of education. They harnessed these platforms to disseminate course materials, create student groups, and forge connections with colleagues from other academic institutions. This integration of social media within the educational context proved to enhance the teaching and learning processes, resulting in improved academic performance.

The research by Garcia et al. (2015) showed that students in a business education program used Facebook to provide emotional support to their classmates. This practice created a sense of group solidarity through positive feedback and encouragement, which helped their overall well-being.

Khan (2012) examined how students' academic performance was influenced by social media websites. The research used surveys, questionnaires, and correlation analysis to collect and analyse data from students who actively engaged with social media sites. The results showed that peer pressure and influence motivated a considerable proportion of students (67.3%) to use social media. Additionally, the study found that students with a GPA between 3.0 and 3.5 tended to use person-to-person communication platforms for entertainment purposes. However, the research suggested that social media usage did not affect students' academic achievement.

The study sought to provide a comprehensive analysis of how students at the University of Cape Coast used social media, with a particular focus on academic-related uses. The research aimed to explore the balance between academic and non-academic uses of social media and how this balance related to students' academic performance.

Impacts of Social Media Use on Academic Performance

Maqableh et al. (2015) conducted a comprehensive and meticulous study, centring on the discernible influence of social networking site utilization on the academic performance of a carefully selected sample comprising 366 undergraduate students enrolled at the esteemed University of Jordan. The research design incorporated a battery of statistical techniques, encompassing descriptive statistics, T-tests, and ANOVA, all adeptly applied to gauge the multifaceted effects of social networking platforms on the students' scholastic accomplishments.

The inference of their research revealed that the engagement with social networking sites significantly impacted academic performance, with a particular emphasis on the frequency of use per week. It is noteworthy that this impact did not display pronounced disparities contingent on factors such as age, academic achievement, or the daily consumption habits on the most prominent and widely used online platforms. These results shed light on the nuanced interplay between social media utilization and academic outcomes, underscoring the importance of considering the frequency of engagement in this context.

The researchers identified a robust positive correlation, denoted by a multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.839$), between social networking website use

and academic achievement. Additionally, an R^2 value of 0.703 was determined, indicating that approximately 70.3% of the variance in academic achievement could be explained by the usage of social networking websites. This observation underscores the considerable influence of social media platforms use on students' academic results, with academic achievement demonstrating an increase alongside greater engagement with these platforms.

To assess the generalizability of their findings, the researchers calculated the adjusted R^2 value, which was 70.2%, signifying the applicability of their model to a broader population. The data F-ratio stood at 862.852, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$ ($\text{sig} = 0.000$), signifying that the usage of social networking websites had a statistically significant effect on academic achievement. Considering these results, the researchers proposed prospective avenues for enhancing students' skills in effective time management and multitasking, aiming to improve their study habits and, subsequently, their academic outcomes.

Another study by Al-Rahmi et al. (2015) aimed to evaluate the effect of social media use on the academic achievement of a group of 323 research students from the University Teknologi Malaysia. Using structural equation modelling as their analytical tool, they conducted a thorough investigation into the positive role of social media in enhancing students' academic achievements. The results of their study supported the idea that social media could have a significant and beneficial effect on academic outcomes, especially when combined with effective collaborative learning methods.

Alwagait et al. (2015) embarked on a research inquiry that delved into the ramifications of excessive social media utilization on the academic achievements of university students in Saudi Arabia. Employing a methodological approach grounded in descriptive statistics, the study scrutinized data derived from a sample of 108 participants. The findings of this investigation unveiled a nuanced picture, as it revealed the absence of a statistically significant connection between the weekly time allocation to social media usage and the students' Grade Point Average (GPA). Nevertheless, a salient observation highlighted time management as a pivotal factor that bore the potential to adversely affect academic performance when intertwined with the unfettered use of social media.

On a related note, Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) engaged in a scholarly exploration to unravel the intricate relationship between social media engagement and academic performance within the context of tertiary education, focusing on students at Koforidua Polytechnic in Ghana. In this extensive study, encompassing 1,058 respondents, it was discerned that a substantial 74.2% (1120) of the participants reported a perceptible impact of social media on their academic achievements. Conversely, 19.9% (301) of respondents expressed a more sanguine perspective, suggesting a positive influence, while the remaining 87.7% appeared uncertain about the precise impact of social media engagement on their academic progress. These results highlight the complex and diverse aspects of the relationship between social media use and academic achievement among college students.

To conclude, the existing literature reveals the complex relationship between social media use and academic achievement. Although social networking

sites have a considerable effect on academic outcomes, this effect depends on various moderating factors, such as effective time management and collaborative learning methods. Therefore, it is essential for educational institutions and students to be aware of these complexities. The challenge is to find a balance between using social media for educational purposes and avoiding potential distractions. Such a balanced approach will enable educators and students to maximize the educational benefits of these digital platforms, while maintaining a high standard of academic excellence.

The present study specifically studied the impact of social media usage on students' academic performance while employing a significance level of 0.01. Mehmood and Taswir (2013) argued that technology, including the internet, could help or hinder students' performance depending on how they used it. These studies agreed with Ketari and Khanum (2013) that social media use could impair students' academic success.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that some studies present a counter-narrative. Akubugwo and Burke (2013) employed a combination of interviews and questionnaires to scrutinize the consequences of social media usage on academic performance. Their findings suggested that engagement with social media platforms could indeed yield adverse effects, impacting students' academic progress, social behaviour, and potentially leading to addiction. However, in contrast, Negussie and Ketema (2014) did not ascertain a statistically significant association between the time students allocated to Facebook and other social networks and their grade point averages (GPA). Similarly, Ahmed and Qazi (2011)

research revealed that social media use had only a marginal impact on students' academic accomplishments across six Pakistani universities.

Furthermore, Junco et al. (2011) conducted an additional study focused on evaluating how Twitter influenced the academic engagement and GPA of university students. They randomly assigned first-year pre-health seminar students to either a control group or an experimental group that integrated Twitter into various academic endeavours. The results of their investigation demonstrated that the experimental group exhibited heightened levels of engagement and achieved superior GPAs in comparison to the control group. Furthermore, they observed active participation from both students and professors via tweets. The consensus emerging from this study was that social media utilization need not be detrimental to academic achievements if students exhibited effective time management practices. This research aimed to contribute to the ongoing debate by providing a detailed analysis of the relationship between social media use and academic performance in the specific context of the University of Cape Coast. The study sought to identify both positive and negative impacts and explored the factors that mediated these impacts.

Social Media Usage with respect to Gender

In a comprehensive survey-based research endeavour, Mhiri embarked on a study concerning the intriguing and contemporary issue of social media dependency among the youth population in Türkiye. The primary objectives of their study encompassed the quantification of addiction levels, the formulation of preventive measures, and an in-depth review of pertinent literature within the

Turkish context. This inquiry was conducted through the collection and analysis of data from 271 students, all of whom were between the ages of 13 and 19 years. The research instrument used for the assessment of social media dependency was the "Social Networking Status Scale," specifically focusing on its addiction component.

The outcome of this rigorous investigation revealed that the phenomenon of social media addiction or usage displayed no significant predilection towards either gender. In other words, the propensity for social media addiction did not exhibit any notable variance between male and female respondents. Furthermore, the researchers sought to discern potential gender distinctions in the way young individuals perceived the impact of social media on their academic engagement. However, their meticulous analysis yielded no compelling gender-based disparities in the viewpoints concerning the influence of social media on academic attainment.

Gloor et al. (2018) conducted an inquiry aimed at scrutinizing disparities rooted in gender within the realm of engagement with the Last.FM social media platform. Their research endeavours encompassed the study of a cohort composed of 3,748 Last.FM users drawn from diverse geographic origins, including Australia, Finland, Germany, and the United States. The empirical findings of their investigation illuminated a discernible inclination among male users towards heightened engagement with music consumption through social media platforms when compared to their female counterparts. Conversely, the female demographic exhibited a notable proclivity for amassing a more extensive array of online connections within the Last.FM platform, thereby indicating a pronounced

inclination towards fostering broader social networks therein. Moreover, it was observed that, in the context of their utilization of social networking sites, women demonstrated a preference for musical content that conformed to prevailing mainstream interests, thereby underscoring their alignment with more widely accepted musical trends and preferences.

Ly and Hu (2015) conducted a study in China to explore gender differences in social media usage. Their research involved gathering data from students in Shanghai using questionnaires to investigate social media habits, preferences, and motivations. The study showed that Chinese females were more likely to follow celebrities or influencers on social media than males. All genders used WeChat and Weibo as popular social media platforms, which offered features like instant messaging, microblogging, and online payment. The study indicated that social media usage in China was influenced by cultural factors such as collectivism and face-saving.

According to Ularu (2014) report, social media accounts were owned by 70% of teenage girls and 54% of teenage boys in the United States. However, only 54 girls and 40 boys were regular users who frequently posted photos. Ularu's 2014 study on gender differences in selfie-sharing behaviour on social media was later supported by Zheng et al. (2016), which similarly explored this phenomenon and arrived at comparable conclusions. The study showed that girls tended to share more attractive selfies to gain social approval and attention from friends or followers and to express their emotions. On the other hand, boys preferred to share photos of their fun activities or hobbies, such as sports, gaming, or traveling.

Chan et al. (2015) examined how gender affects user satisfaction with social networking sites (SNSs) and what factors contribute to it. They used the Expectation Disconfirmation Model (EDM) as their research framework and investigated specific reasons for using SNSs, such as staying connected with friends and family, having fun, and seeking information. In their study involving a survey of 221 Facebook users, the researchers discerned that the Expectation-Disconfirmation Model (EDM) aptly expounded upon approximately 40.5% of the variance in user satisfaction. This finding underscores the model's efficacy in comprehending and elucidating the factors influencing user satisfaction within the context of Facebook usage. They also found that entertainment was more important for male users' satisfaction with SNSs, while maintaining relationships was more important for female users' satisfaction. Therefore, they recommended that social networking sites should provide distinctive features and functions to meet the unique needs and preferences of male and female users.

Mazman and Usluel (2011) delved into the impact of gender on social network utilization, with a particular focus on Facebook. In their survey encompassing 870 online Facebook users, the researchers classified Facebook usage into four primary objectives: preserving contact with established relationships, establishing new connections, pursuing academic interests, and tracking subjects or interests. Subsequent data analysis unveiled noteworthy gender disparities across all four of these delineated objectives. The study's findings indicate a gender-based divergence in the utilization of Facebook, with men demonstrating a proclivity for establishing new connections, while women

exhibited a preference for employing the platform to maintain existing relationships, support academic pursuits, and stay abreast of specific subjects of interest. To gauge the magnitude of these distinctions between gender groups, the researchers adopted Cohen's "d" effect size, a standardized metric capable of quantifying the extent of variance between means. Effect sizes in the range of 0.2 to 0.5 were deemed small, those between 0.5 and 0.8 were considered medium, and values exceeding 0.8 were classified as substantial.

Prior research conducted by Subrahmanyam and Lin (2007) discerned that male devoted more time to online activities in comparison to their female counterparts, with a pronounced inclination towards engagements such as video games and computer-based amusements. On the contrary, Giles and Price (2008) advanced the argument that females harnessed social media platforms for communication and music downloads, thereby indicating an elevated inclination toward engaging with online social communities and networks. This perspective underscores the distinct patterns of usage and preferences exhibited by female users in the realm of social media. Subsequently, more recent investigations by Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) indicated a convergence, where the number of teenage girls and boys utilizing social media networks exhibited a comparable parity.

According to previous studies, social media platforms attract both boys and girls, but for varied reasons (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). Girls tend to use social media to stay connected with existing friends, while boys often see it as a chance to flirt and make new contacts (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). Moreover, there are significant gender differences in what they share on these platforms. Girls

are more likely to post sexual content and talk openly about sexual activities, while boys may join social media because of their partners or to look for potential partners (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Rafferty, 2009).

Williams and Merten (2009) conducted a study with teenagers aged 13-17 who used platforms like Facebook, Myspace, and Xanga. The results revealed that all genders used these platforms for fun and positive purposes. Nonetheless, a noteworthy discrepancy emerged in the disclosure patterns between genders, with a larger proportion of girls (55%) choosing to divulge personal, intimate experiences concerning matters such as depression, anxiety, and relationship difficulties. In contrast, a mere 15% of boys extended their sharing beyond the scope of hobbies, interests, and friendships. Additionally, the study showed that teenagers used social media platforms, forums, and member profiles as coping strategies when dealing with the death of a classmate.

In another study, Valkenburg and Peter (2009) proposed that social media and communication technologies might be more helpful for males than females. This is because males often struggle to express their feelings and thoughts in face-to-face interactions. Social media gives them an alternative way to communicate and connect with others more easily. This study aimed to investigate whether and how gender differences manifested among students at the University of Cape Coast and how they related to academic performance. The study sought to provide insights into how educational strategies involving social media might have needed to be tailored to address gender-specific usage patterns and preferences.

Social Media Use in Relation to Academic Level

Benetoli et al. (2015) undertook an exhaustive and systematic review that centred on the utilization of social media within the domains of pharmacy practice and education research. Their scholarly inquiry aimed to provide valuable insights into the impact and applications of social media in the field of pharmacy, shedding light on its multifaceted roles in both professional practice and educational contexts. Their study encompassed an extensive search of prominent databases, including Medline, Embase, PubMed, IPA, and CINAHL, spanning the period from 2000 to June 2013. This quest for relevant scholarly papers was underpinned by a triad of pertinent keywords: "social media," "pharmacist or student," and "pharmacy". Their study revealed that social media platforms had personal, non-academic purposes. However, in the field of pharmacy education, platforms such as wikis, Facebook, and Twitter were useful and preferred by students. This interesting finding indicated a difference in the goals of social media use, depending on the users' educational background.

Perrin (2015) delved into the correlation between educational attainment and social media engagement. The research hinged on a national survey, which illuminated a consistent trend over time. Specifically, individuals possessing college education or higher exhibited a propensity for more frequent social media use compared to their counterparts with a high school education or lower. This proclivity has been sustained since 2005. For instance, in 2005, only 4%, 8%, and 12% of people with less than high school, college, and a college degree respectively were active on social media. This trend shows a clear educational difference in the

use of these online platforms then. The research also pointed out the gap in social media participation, with more active users among those with college or graduate degrees than those with college education, and much fewer active users among those with a high school diploma or lower. These results show how education and social media use have evolved over time.

Sadowski et al. (2017) explored how students in an Australian dual-sector institute used and managed social networking sites (SNSs) for vocational and higher education in 2017. They mixed quantitative and qualitative methods, using a survey of 355 students and focus groups of ten higher education students. They wanted to understand how SNSs affected students' learning experiences and views. They found four main themes. First, SNSs helped students build better peer relationships. Second, students kept their personal and educational use of SNSs separate. Third, students did not like using external SNSs for learning purposes. Fourth, the research showed the need for a balance between online and offline learning and interactions. The study demonstrated that social media provided both academic and personal advantages for the students, but their usage behaviours varied. The study showed the complex connection between students and social networking sites, and how it could influence their learning experiences and opinions. The study aimed to explore how social media usage patterns and their impact on academic performance differed across various academic levels at the University of Cape Coast. This investigation provided insights into how social media integration in education might have needed to be adapted for students at various stages of their academic journey.

Social Media Usage with respect to Age

The use of social media by adults in the US and how it is affected by factors related to society, demographics and health was the main topic of a comprehensive research by Chou et al. (2009). Their investigation made use of data derived from the Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS), a nationally representative survey that revolves around trends and behaviours in health communication. The research cohort comprised a total of 7,674 participants, of which 5,078 individuals had access to the internet and furnished self-reported data pertaining to their involvement with online support groups, blogs, and social networking platforms in the preceding year. The investigators employed a combination of bivariate and multivariate logistic regression analyses to discern the determinants underpinning various categories of social media usage.

Kırık et al. (2015) studied young people in Türkiye and assessed their social media addiction levels. They also suggested preventive measures and reviewed previous studies on this topic in Türkiye. The study found that age, daily internet time, and social media account usage frequency affected addiction levels and usage patterns. Addiction levels were low for 14-year-olds, rose until 17, but then fell at 18.

How social media affects children, teens, and families in the US was the subject of a study by Reid Chassiakos et al. (2016). They found that social media use had grown significantly among young people in five years. According to a new survey, 22% of teens checked their preferred social sites over ten times a day, and more than half of them did so every day.

Furthermore, the study highlighted that a substantial 75% of teenagers owned mobile phones, with 25% employing them for social networking, 54% for texting, and 24% for instant messaging. These findings underscored the escalating influence of social media and mobile technology on the lives of young individuals and their families in the United States.

Lewis and Kaufman (2018) supported that social media was more important for young people's daily lives and information than traditional media like TV and newspapers, unlike older generations. Nesi et al. (2018) also reported that almost 90% of US youths were online, and 75% of them used social media frequently. More than half of the young people who were good with technology used social sites to make friends and plan social events, showing how vital social media was for them.

Wood et al. (2016) argued that teens used social media to express their personality, interests, and peer connections. Markwei and Appiah (2016) discovered that many young people in Ghana visited social media sites frequently, sometimes up to 20 times a day.

Hill et al. (2016) discussed the controversy around this topic, with schools and the media warning parents about online dangers and harmful websites for children. Some parents used tools like Net Nanny to block certain websites or set internet rules, while others placed computers in visible places at home to watch their children's online activities.

Social media sites have sparked debate among parents, educators, and the media. Hill et al. (2016) claims that many parents worry about harm, such as

cyberbullying, sexual predators, and identity theft, that these platforms may cause to their children. They also want their kids to spend less time on screens and more time on other activities. Media reports often support these fears by emphasizing the risks and dangers of teenage internet use, advising parents to keep an eye on their teens' online activities (Hill et al., 2016). Another common concern, mentioned by Steinberg (2016), is the tendency of children to share false or too much personal information on social media sites. For example, a survey on Myspace usage showed that over 65% of teens revealed sensitive information on their profiles, such as home addresses, phone numbers, and more personal details, which can lead to potential risks.

However, some people do not object to the use of social media platforms like Facebook. Some adults and professionals, such as teachers and school staff, support these sites for the opportunities they offer young people to interact and engage in educational discussions (Greenhow & Lewin, 2019). These online communities allow students to work together on assignments, share ideas about course material, and stay updated on current academic trends, especially when a student cannot attend school (Greenhow & Lewin, 2019).

The perspective of parents on social media platforms, as elucidated by Lupton et al. (2016), exhibits a positive inclination. They manifest a genuine concern for their children's social lives and believe that such platforms offer a means to share feelings of sadness and loneliness, potentially serving as a supportive outlet (Lupton et al., 2016). An intriguing facet of this perspective, unveiled by a 2006 study, is that more than 35% of parents with teenagers endorse

any form of communication with others, deeming it preferable to no communication at all. As such, they extend their full support for their children's internet use (Lupton et al., 2016). These findings underscore the divergence in parental viewpoints concerning the potential advantages of their children's online and social media engagements.

Fotis et al. (2012) studied how social media affects vacation travel planning. They found that social media was important for all stages of the travel process, from before, during, and after the trip. The research delineates the diverse levels and types of social media utilization and delves into their impact and the degree of trust associated with these platforms. Notably, age emerges as a pivotal factor influencing social media engagement, as revealed through chi-squared testing (χ^2), which elucidated variances in usage levels among distinct age cohorts (Fotis et al., 2012). For instance, respondents under the age of 25 reported frequent utilization of social media websites, with 94% indicating they accessed them "many times a day" or "almost every day." In contrast, this usage rate declined to 72% among individuals aged 55 and over. This variance underscores the age-dependent nature of social media usage patterns. The utility of social media as a communication and engagement tool is undeniable. However, its excessive use, as indicated by Kolan and Dzandza (2018) study, can potentially exert adverse effects on the academic performance of university students. The intricate relationship between social media usage and academic achievement is not easily characterized and hinges on multifaceted factors, including the frequency and duration of engagement (Kolan & Dzandza, 2018).

Kolan and Dzandza (2018) study delved into the nexus between social media utilization and academic performance among university students. Nevertheless, it is imperative to note that the research did not explicitly consider the specific scope of social media use. How much and how students use social media could affect how they impact their academic progress. This is why this gap is important. Therefore, to comprehensively assess the ramifications of social media on academic outcomes, a more granular analysis of the range and nature of social media use may be warranted. The research aimed to investigate how age influenced social media usage patterns among students at the University of Cape Coast and how these age-related differences related to academic performance. This analysis provided insights into how educational strategies involving social media might have needed to be tailored for students of different age groups.

Chapter Summary

The objective of this research was to undertake an in-depth exploration of the intricate interplay between students' academic performance and their engagement with social media. The review of the pertinent literature was conducted with meticulous diligence, partitioned into three distinct and fundamental components: the theoretical review, conceptual review, and empirical review.

In the theoretical review segment, the study delved into three pivotal theories within this domain: the Technology Adoption Model, Social Learning Theory, and Pleasure Theory. Each of these theories was comprehensively expounded upon, and their relevance to the research was clearly delineated, thus

establishing a robust framework for comprehending the potential impact of students' interaction with social media on their academic accomplishments.

The conceptual review, on the other hand, entailed a thorough examination of various aspects, including the historical antecedents of social media, its influence on the educational landscape within the context of Ghana, and the fundamental construct of academic performance.

In the empirical review phase, the entirety of the relevant literature was meticulously analysed in alignment with the specific objectives of the research. This analysis unveiled the multifaceted purposes for which students employ social media platforms, with activities such as communication and media consumption emerging as the most prevalent. Additionally, students were observed to utilize social media for both social and academic purposes. The study looked at how social media affects academic performance. It found different research results. Some showed that social media helped students do well, while others showed that it harmed them.

This literature review, in sum, provided an illuminating depiction of the intricate relationship between students' participation in social media and their academic performance, thereby revealing the existence of differing viewpoints on this subject matter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

This research aimed to study how social media affects the academic performance of students at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana. The next section describes the research methods used in this study. It explains how the data was collected and evaluated to ensure its quality and reliability. This chapter covers important aspects, such as the research design, the location of the study, the target population, the sample selection, the data collection tools, the data collection process, the data analysis methods, and ends with a summary of the main results in this chapter.

The Study Area

According to official records from the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in the Central Region, the Department of Mathematics and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Education administers two distinct undergraduate programs. These programs are the B.Ed. Mathematics program, and the B.Ed. Computer Science program. Furthermore, the undergraduate student body is categorized into four academic years: the first year, second year, third year, and the final year.

Final-year students typically engage in off-campus teaching practice programs, which occasionally necessitate leaving the university campus due to distance constraints.

Research Approach

This study used a quantitative research method to collect and examine a lot of data about specific variables. This approach is characterized by its

emphasis on numerical data, structured surveys, and statistical analysis, enabling a rigorous and objective examination of the relationships between variables and the drawing of empirical conclusions. As a result, findings from quantitative research tend to be more generalizable. Hennink et al. (2020) defines the quantitative research approach as a scientific method that objectively observes and describes an object without affecting it. This objectivity improves the reliability of getting valid facts and enables a thorough understanding of the subject under study through statistical analysis.

Despite some inherent limitations of the quantitative research approach, researchers can overcome these challenges by using systems that improve the reliability and consistency of the findings. By adopting a quantitative research approach, researchers can effectively mitigate potential criticisms concerning the results of their study. This approach, rooted in its data-driven and statistically rigorous nature, lends increased credibility and validity to the conclusions drawn.

Research Design

Hennink et al. (2020) aptly contend that the foundation of any study lies in a well-constructed research design tailored to its unique requirements. The research design can be understood as the comprehensive blueprint that guides a researcher in addressing research queries or evaluating hypotheses, as emphasized by Amedahe and Asamoah-Gyimah (2015). It furnishes the fundamental structure for the investigation, and the selection of a particular research design hinges upon the precise research inquiries under consideration.

This study used the descriptive survey method to study how social media affects the academic performance of students at the University of Cape Coast in

Ghana. The Department of Mathematics and ICT Education at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) was deliberately chosen as the study site for the survey on the impact of social media on academic performance among tertiary students in Ghana. This selection is grounded in these factors. The department's specialization in mathematics education and information and communication technology (ICT) education aligns closely with the research focus. Also, UCC serves as a hub for teacher training, granting the researcher access to a diverse pool of education students who can provide valuable insights into social media usage. The study also used a cross-sectional approach, which means collecting data from people of different ages simultaneously. This method helps to combine their answers and give useful information for the research questions and hypotheses.

The fitting research design offered distinct advantages by enabling the evaluation of contemporary practices and the analysis of existing patterns in social media utilization among students. Additionally, this approach proved efficient, permitting the expeditious acquisition of data throughout the survey. The design was well-suited for the study's primary aim of extrapolating findings from a sample to the broader population, as well as for drawing inferences regarding the impact of social media on students' academic performance.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the descriptive design does not aim to find definitive facts by itself; rather, it serves as a basis for generating hypotheses or developing theories (Charmaz, 2015). Also, the descriptive design is time-bound, as data is collected at a specific time, and conclusions may change over time due to changes in situations and other influencing factors (Creswell, 2015).

Population

Casteel and Bridier (2021) define the research population as the group of people, things, or objects that the study aims to investigate or describe. In this research endeavour, the target population encompassed B.Ed. Computer Science students in their second, third, and fourth years of study at the University of Cape Coast. According to data provided by the University, these groups had respective population sizes of 129, 141, and 150 students during the research period. Consequently, the cumulative research population for this study comprised a total of 420 students.

Table 1: Population Distribution of Student

Year Groups (Level)	Population
200	129
300	141
400	150
Total	420

Source: Department of Mathematics and ICT Education

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Creswell (2021) defined a sample as a smaller group of people or objects from a bigger population that have similar features. The study included a sample size of 200 students enrolled in B.Ed. Computer Science at the Department of Mathematics and ICT Education. Morgan (1970) gave the criteria for this decision. Based on their table for sample size calculations, 200 was the minimum number needed for a population of 420 to ensure statistical accuracy and representation.

To obtain individual respondents, a multi-stage sampling approach was employed to select 201 students from the Department of Mathematics and ICT Education. Initially, a proportionate stratified sampling technique determined the number of students to be sampled from each year group (level), with the year groups serving as distinct strata. Specifically, three strata were considered: Levels 200, 300, and 400. Within each level, the selection of students was based on sex. Subsequently, a simple random technique was used to roll in respondents who were willing and ready to participate in the study. For instance, when determining the proportion of students to select from the Level 200-year group, the following formula was applied:

Sampling Techniques

The study employed a multi-stage sampling method to collect data from 200 students at the University of Cape Coast. Initially, students were grouped by their academic level (second, third, and fourth year), followed by stratification based on gender. In the final stage, participants were randomly selected from those who agreed and were willing to participate in the study.

Table 2: Proportions of Students Sampled within Department, and Gender

Year Groups (Level)	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
200	30	31	61
300	33	34	67
400	35	37	72
Sub-Total	98	102	200

Data Collection Instrument

In this study, data collection was conducted using structured questionnaires. The chosen method involved administering them through Microsoft Forms, which was deemed practical and cost-effective for gathering quantitative data (Bihu, 2021). Using Microsoft Forms ensured comparability of results while offering a user-friendly interface for designing and administering the surveys, making data collection seamless. This method was also economical, making it a cost-efficient choice for this study, as noted by Bihu (2021). The study's objectives guided the structure of the questionnaire, which had three sections: A - C. Section A asked for demographic information, such as age, gender, academic level, programme of study and current cumulative grade point average (CGPA) at UCC. Sections B and C examined the factors related to social media usage and students' academic performance. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree and 4= Strongly Agree) to collect data. The Likert scale was selected

because it enables faster data collection, provides numerical data, and allows for future modifications. Moreover, it gives direct and trustworthy evaluations of respondents' behaviours, which can be easily measured through well-designed scales (Barua, 2013; Nemoto & Beglar, 2014).

Sources of Data

This research collected primary data from a survey of University of Cape Coast students. The survey used a questionnaire with open and closed ended questions to examine how social media influences academic performance. Primary data is vital for this research because it provides direct views from the participants who are related to the research problem. Surveys are an appropriate way to gather data, enabling researchers to obtain information from many people in a brief time.

The study used statistical methods to analyse the data quantitatively. These methods included frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The results were shown in tables and graphs, which made it easier to see the main patterns and differences in the data. This analysis helped to get useful information from the data, which improved the study's ability to make good conclusions.

In conclusion, primary data collection is an important part of research and surveys are an effective way to get data from a large sample. By using statistical techniques for data analysis, researchers can understand the research question better, and make precise conclusions about the topic being studied.

Data Collection Procedure

In this study, data was collected using an online survey administered through Microsoft Forms. The survey consisted of a series of questions,

including multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions, designed to collect demographic information, attitudes, opinions, and experiences. The Microsoft Form was created and shared with the target population via email, Microsoft Teams, and online platforms. The link to the questionnaires, created using Microsoft Forms, was shared with the General course representatives of each year group. Subsequently, these representatives disseminated the link within their WhatsApp groups. Prior to sharing the link with the representatives, the researcher conducted meetings with each year group at the conclusion of their lectures. During these meetings, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the students and assured the students of confidentiality, emphasizing that their responses would remain unlinked to their identities. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their rights, and the confidentiality of their responses. Responses were collected anonymously, and participants were assured that their identities would not be linked to their responses. The collected data was then exported from Microsoft Forms to an Excel spreadsheet for data analysis. Microsoft Forms and Excel have built-in security measures to protect data, including encryption and access controls, and only the researcher had access to the collected data. Additionally, Microsoft Forms allowed for real-time data collection and analysis, and its mobile-friendly feature enabled participants to respond on various devices.

Data Processing and Analysis

Data entry and coding procedures were conducted using SPSS software version 22.0. As part of the data preparation process, data accuracy was ensured. Since all fields were marked as "Required" in Microsoft Forms, the data was complete and free of missing values. The research results were reliable and valid

due to the quantitative analysis techniques employed. These techniques included frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations.

Specifically, mean, and standard deviation were used to describe the data and answer Research Question 1. The Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to examine relationships between variables and address Research Question 2. An independent samples t-test was applied to compare means between groups and answer Research Question 3. These techniques were chosen for their appropriateness to the research questions and data type and were used in conjunction with a confidence level of 95% to ensure statistically significant findings.

Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to established ethical principles, including informed consent, integrity, and confidentiality. Participation from students was facilitated through the school's administration, in accordance with ethical standards. Participants were duly informed of the research's academic purpose and the researcher's affiliation, as evidenced by their school identification card. Confidentiality was ensured, and participants were assured that personal information, such as names and contact details, would not be collected. Furthermore, participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time and decline to answer questions that they deemed invasive or violative of their rights. These measures were implemented to protect participants and fulfil ethical requirements in research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explains the research methods used in the University of Cape Coast study. The research employed a quantitative and descriptive survey

design, which encompassed the study area, research approach, and research design. It also involved identifying the target population, selecting a sample, and determining the sampling method. Data was collected using a specific instrument and sourced from various places. The data collection procedure was followed by data processing and analysis techniques. Furthermore, ethical considerations were considered throughout the research process. These components formed the basis for a comprehensive and rigorous study.

The primary objective of the study was to obtain data from 200 students, employing a multi-stage sampling technique and distributing questionnaires. Remarkably, out of the 200 questionnaires disseminated, a total of 200 were returned and completed, demonstrating an impressive response rate of 81%. It is important to note that the data analysis and the formulation of responses to the research questions were predicated upon this dataset consisting of 200 respondents.

The researcher used statistical methods to make the data analysis process easier. These methods included means and standard deviations, the Pearson correlation coefficient, and the one-sample t-test. These methods helped to get useful information from the data.

Furthermore, the study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical principles. These principles encompassed the assurance of voluntary participation, the preservation of individuals' privacy rights, and the maintenance of strict confidentiality regarding the collected information. This commitment to ethical conduct is fundamental in upholding the integrity and credibility of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

This study investigated the relationship between social media usage and academic performance among university students at the University of Cape Coast. This chapter presents and analyses the study's findings, followed by a detailed discussion of the main outcomes. The results are presented first, followed by the interpretation and analysis, providing a deeper understanding of the connection between social media use and academic achievement among students at the University of Cape Coast.

Demographic Characteristics

This section analysed the demographic information of the participants. It looked at the factors of gender, level of study, and age. The data was presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5 using frequency and percentage distributions.

Table 3: Gender

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Male	98	49.0	49.0	49.0
Female	102	51.0	51.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The Table 3 shows that females are in the majority, constituting 51% of the total participants with 102 female respondents. Males made up the remaining

49% with 98 male respondents. This distribution of gender among the participants is representative of the student population.

Table 4: Level of Study

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Level 200	61	30.5	30.5	30.5
Level 300	67	33.5	33.5	64.0
Level 400	72	36.0	36.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 4 shows the distribution of students across different academic levels. The largest group of students, 36% of the total, were in level 400, with 72 students. Level 300 had 33.5% of the students, with 67 individuals, while level 200 had 30.5% of the student population, with 61 students.

Table 5: Age

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Below 18	9	4.5	4.5	4.5
	19-24	14	7.0	7.0	11.5
	25-30	50	25.0	25.0	36.5
	31-35	64	32.0	32.0	68.5
	36-40	34	17.0	17.0	85.5
	Above 40	29	14.5	14.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2023)

As shown in Table 5, the sample had the fewest students below 18 years old. They made up only 4.5% of the sample, or 9 students. The largest age group was 31-35, making up 32% (64 students). The age group 19-24 made up 7.0% (14 students), 25-30 made up 25% (50 students), 36-40 made up 17% (34 students), and those above 40 made up 14.5% (29 students).

Results

This section entails the obtained findings from the respondent of the current study. It is guided by three questions. The findings were as below.

Research Question 1: What are the main reasons for students at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) to use social media?

This question aimed to ascertain the perspectives of students concerning the utilization and impact of social media on their academic achievements within the context of the University of Cape Coast. The questionnaire included a

segment where respondents could rate their responses on a scale, with values ranging from '1=Strongly Disagree,' '2=Disagree,' '3=Agree,' to '4=Strongly Agree.' The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis, employing measures such as mean and standard deviation. The findings of this analysis have been shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Main reasons for using Social media.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I do research work using social networking sites.	200	2.700	.86820
Social media enables me to comprehend what I have been taught in class.	200	2.8000	.85066
I use only social media information for my assignments and ignore other sources.	200	2.8500	.98097
I learn with others through social media platforms.	200	3.1850	.94618
Social media group discussions help me achieve satisfactory results in my academics.	200	3.2150	.87900
Participating in academic discussions on social media helps me learn more about the subjects covered in class.	200	2.8900	.99643
Social networking sites help me to socialize more.	200	3.2950	.92317
Social networking sites enable me to form my social identity.	200	2.9250	1.14276
I like using social media platforms more than going to social events.	200	3.2350	.85052
Social media platforms help me improve my connections with others.	200	3.1500	1.01124
Social media platforms enable me to stay connected with my family.	200	3.3250	.72249
Current social events are what I learn from social media platforms.	200	3.1100	.91217

Sharing pictures is one of the reasons I use social media platforms.	200	3.3650	.72415
I look for humorous stuff on social media platforms to share with others.	200	3.1400	.85678
I enjoy watching films on social networking sites.	200	3.1800	.89533
I use social media platforms to relax from academic stress.	200	3.4200	.63689
Reading news is one of my reasons for using social media platforms.	200	2.7850	1.02667
I use social media platforms to exchange new thoughts with others.	200	2.9600	.91245
I use social media platforms to find out about job opportunities.	200	3.2950	.74885

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The analysis of the data in Table 6 revealed varying levels of agreement among students regarding their use of social media platforms. The results indicated that students primarily used social media for relaxation, sharing content, and maintaining family connections, with moderate use for socializing and career opportunities. Academic-related uses of social media were secondary, with students showing weaker affirmation for these purposes.

Students showed strong affirmation for using social media platforms to relax from academic stress ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.63$) and for sharing pictures ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.72$). There was also strong agreement on using social networking sites to stay connected with family members ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.72$). These high mean values (> 3.3) indicate that these are primary reasons for social media use among UCC students.

Moderate affirmation was observed for several social and entertainment-related uses of social media. Students moderately agreed on using social media for socializing ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.92$), finding job opportunities ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.74$), preferring social media over social events ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.85$), and participating in group discussions for academic improvement ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.88$). The mean values for these items (between 3.0 and 3.3) suggest that while these are important reasons, they are not as strongly affirmed as the top reasons.

Weak to moderate affirmation was found for academic-related uses of social media. Students showed low agreement on using social media for academic research work ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.86$) and accessing news ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.02$). The mean values

below 3.0 indicate that these are not primary reasons for social media use among UCC students.

Interestingly, there was weak agreement on using only social media information for assignments while ignoring other sources ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.98$), suggesting that students recognize the importance of diverse information sources for academic work.

This supports the hypothesis that students at the University of Cape Coast primarily use social media for socialization and entertainment, rather than academic purposes.

Research Question 2: How much time do students spend on social media daily relate to their academic performance at UCC?

This question aimed to find out the relationship between student's time spent on using social media and their academic performance. The component of the questionnaire to answer this study question was on a scale of '1=Strongly Disagree, '2=Disagree', '3=Agree' and '4=Strongly Agree'. The data were evaluated using mean and standard deviation. The findings are provided in Tables 7.

Table 7: Correlation between Time Spent on Social Media and Academic Performance

		Time spent on	
		social media	CGPA
Time spent on social media	Pearson Correlation	1	-.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.539
	N	200	200
CGPA	Pearson Correlation	-.044	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.539	
	N	200	200

*Significant at .05 level (2-tailed); Source: Field Survey (2023)

The data in Table 7 revealed the relationship between time spent on social media and students' academic performance as measured by CGPA at the University of Cape Coast. An analysis of these results provided insights into the nature of this relationship.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between time spent on social media and CGPA was found to be -0.044. This value suggested a very weak negative correlation. The negative sign indicated that as time spent on social media increased, there was a slight tendency for CGPA to decrease, but this relationship was extremely weak.

The significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) was 0.539, which was well above the conventional threshold of 0.05 for statistical significance. This meant that the null hypothesis of no correlation between the variables could not be rejected. In other

words, the observed weak negative correlation could easily have occurred by chance, and a meaningful relationship between time spent on social media and academic performance could not be concluded.

Addressing the research question "How does the amount of time students devote to social media relate to their academic results at UCC?", the study found no statistically significant evidence of a relationship between these variables. The data suggested that the time students spent on social media had little to no measurable impact on their academic performance as reflected by their CGPA. Regarding the strength of the relationship, it was classified as very weak. The correlation coefficient of -0.044 was close to zero, indicating almost no linear relationship between the variables. In social science research, correlations below 0.1 are typically considered negligible or very weak. It was noted that this lack of a significant relationship did not necessarily mean that social media use had no impact on academic performance. Other factors not captured in this analysis could have been influencing the results, or the relationship might have been more complex than a simple linear correlation. Additionally, the study's design and measurement methods could have affected the findings. Further research, using different methodologies or considering additional variables, might provide more insights into the complex relationship between social media use and academic performance.

The study found no statistically significant evidence of a relationship between the amount of time students devote to social media and their academic results at UCC. This fails to support the hypothesis that there is a significant

negative correlation between the amount of time students spend on social media daily and their academic performance at UCC.

Research Question 3: Do students of different genders at the University of Cape Coast have unusual ways of using social media?

This question aimed to find out the gender difference to which students use social media in the University of Cape Coast. The component of the questionnaire to answer this study question was on a scale of '1=Strongly Disagree, '2=Disagree', '3=Agree' and '4=Strongly Agree'. The data were evaluated using mean and standard deviation. The findings are provided in Tables 8 and table 9.

Table 8: Group Statistics

			Std.	Std. Error	
	Gender	N	Mean	Deviation	Mean
Use	Male	98	59.3980	8.82009	.89164
	Female	102	58.2745	9.52241	.94286

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The data analysis revealed that male students (N=98) reported a slightly higher mean usage score (M=59.3980, SD=8.82009) compared to female students (N=102, M=58.2745, SD=9.52241). This suggested a small difference in social media usage patterns between genders.

The study's 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), showed that both genders' mean scores fell between "Agree" (4) and "Strongly Agree" (5). This indicated a high level of social media usage among both male and female students. However, the difference in mean scores between

genders was small (approximately 1.12 points), suggesting only a weak affirmation of gender-based differences in social media usage patterns.

The standard deviations for both groups (8.82009 for males and 9.52241 for females) indicated a moderate spread of responses around the mean, implying some variability in social media usage within each gender group. The slightly higher standard deviation for females suggested a marginally greater diversity of usage patterns among female students compared to their male counterparts.

The standard error of the mean for both groups (0.89164 for males and 0.94286 for females) suggested that these estimates had a reasonable level of precision.

However, further statistical tests, such as t-tests or ANOVA, would have been necessary to determine if the observed difference were statistically significant. The data provided a weak affirmation of gender differences in social media usage among University of Cape Coast students. While male students showed a slightly higher average usage score, the difference was not substantial enough to strongly support the notion of markedly different usage patterns between genders. The findings from Research Question 3 suggested that gender may have played a role in shaping social media usage patterns among University of Cape Coast students, but the difference was not substantial. This aligned with previous research suggesting that gender differences in social media usage are complex and may depend on numerous factors. The results also highlighted the need for further investigation into the nuances of gender and social media usage.

Future studies could have explored specific aspects of social media usage, such as online interactions, content creation, and privacy concerns, to better

understand how gender influences these behaviours. Overall, the study's findings contributed to our understanding of social media usage among university students in Ghana, highlighting both the similarities and differences in usage patterns between genders.

The study found a weak affirmation of gender differences in social media usage among University of Cape Coast students, with male students showing a slightly higher average usage score than female students. However, the difference was not substantial enough to strongly support the notion of markedly different usage patterns between genders. This supports the hypothesis that female students at the University of Cape Coast are more likely to use social media for social support and relationships, while male students are more likely to use social media for entertainment and information-seeking, but only to a limited extent, as the difference was not substantial.

Table 9: Independent t-test

Use	Levene's Test for		t-test for Equality of Means		
	Equality of Variances				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	.037	.847	.864	198	.388
Equal variances not assumed			.866	197.749	.388

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 9 provides the results of a statistical test, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, which is used to determine if the variances of two or more sets of data are equal. In this case, the sig-value, which is the p-value or the level of significance of the test, was found to be .847. A sig-value of .05 or less is typically considered to indicate a significant difference in variances between the sets of data. However, since the sig-value in this case is greater than .05, it suggests that there is no significant difference in variances between the data sets and equal variances can be assumed.

Table 9 shows the data used to analyse whether there were differences in the frequency and duration of social media use among university students based on their gender identity. The test statistic used for this analysis was the sig-value, which shows the probability of getting a result by chance. The sig-value for this test was .388, a value that exceeds the conventional threshold of .05. Therefore, this suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in the quantity and quality of social media use between male and female students.

Table 8 supports this conclusion, as it shows the means and standard deviations for the time male ($M=59.39$, $S. D=8.82$) and female ($M=58.27$, $S. D=9.52$) university students spend on social media. The findings show that both male and female university students spend about the same time on social media.

Discussion

Social Media Usage Among University of Cape Coast Students

Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) study explored the purposes and platforms of social media use among students. They surveyed 1,308 students and discovered that many of them (86.8%) used social media primarily to chat with friends, while only a minority downloaded music and videos (6.8%) or did academic activities (6.4%) on these platforms. The study also indicated that few students (3.4%) used social media for academic purposes.

The research also showed that many students had mobile phones with internet access and could visit different media websites. They spent between 30 minutes and three hours daily browsing social media sites on their phones. However, the academic usage of social media by students remained low.

The results are consistent with Kolan and Dzandza (2018) study, which also found that a significant percentage of students (82.5%) used social media for chatting and downloading pictures/videos, while a smaller percentage (17.5%) participated in academic activities. However, these results differ from the research by Mingle and Adams (2015). In their study, Mingle and Adams used a mixed method approach to examine various aspects of social media use among students, such as the platforms they used, their networking and engagement habits, time spent on social networks, the impact of social media on grammar and spelling skills, and the effect of social network participation on academic performance. Their research showed that a higher percentage of students (15.8%) used social networks to discuss school-related matters with friends than those using it for leisure purposes (12.3%).

These different results show the complexity of social media use patterns among students and the need for more research into the numerous factors affecting their behaviours on these platforms.

The findings of the current study demonstrated both similarities and differences when compared to previous research on social media usage among students. In terms of primary uses, the results aligned more closely with those of Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) and Kolan and Dzandza (2018), as non-academic uses such as relaxation, content sharing, and maintaining family connections were predominant. However, the current study provided a more nuanced view of these uses through specific mean values, offering a more detailed understanding of student preferences.

Regarding academic use of social media, the current study's findings fell between those of earlier studies. While showing higher levels of academic-related use compared to Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) and Kolan and Dzandza (2018), the results did not reach the levels reported by Mingle and Adams (2015). The moderate affirmation for group discussions ($M = 3.21$) suggested more academic engagement than the earlier studies, but not as high as Mingle and Adams found.

The current study's results on socializing diverged from previous findings. While Owusu-Acheaw's study identified chatting as the primary use, the current study showed socializing as a moderate use ($M = 3.29$), indicating a potential shift in priorities or a different categorization of activities. In terms of content sharing,

the current study aligned with Kolan and Dzandza (2018), highlighting the importance of sharing pictures ($M = 3.36$).

Uniquely, the current study emphasized the use of social media for job opportunities ($M = 3.29$), an aspect not prominently mentioned in the other studies. This finding suggested an evolution in how students perceived and utilized social media platforms. Furthermore, the current study provided a more comprehensive view of social media use, covering aspects such as relaxation from academic stress and family connections, which were not explicitly mentioned in the previous studies. While the current study showed weak affirmation for academic research ($M = 2.70$), this result was still higher than the percentages reported by Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) and Kolan and Dzandza (2018). This suggested a trend towards increased academic use of social media, albeit not as pronounced as in Mingle and Adams (2015).

The current study's results aligned with the trend of non-academic uses dominating social media usage among students. However, it provided a more detailed and nuanced picture of these uses, showing varying levels of engagement across different activities. The moderate affirmation for some academic-related uses suggested a shift towards more academic engagement on social media compared to earlier studies, though not as pronounced as in Mingle and Adams (2015). These findings underscored the complex and evolving nature of social media use among students, highlighting the need for continued research in this area.

Mehmood and Taswir (2013) investigated how social networking sites affect the education of undergraduates at the College of Applied Sciences (CAS) in

Nizwa, Oman. They used various online tools, such as blogs, wikis, tweets, RSS feeds, discussion forums, and podcasts, to enrich educational experiences. The study examined the impact of different Web 2.0 applications on the language and social skills of young learners. They analysed the popularity and effectiveness of different social tools and e-learning technologies among CAS students based on demographic factors. This study revealed the possible advantages and consequences of using social media and Web 2.0 tools in education, providing useful insights into their role in enhancing language development and social interaction among undergraduates.

The study conducted by Mehmood and Taswir (2013) and the current research shared a common interest in social media use among undergraduate students but exhibited notable differences in their approach and findings. Mehmood and Taswir's study placed a strong emphasis on the educational applications of social networking sites and Web 2.0 tools, exploring how various online platforms could enrich educational experiences. In contrast, the current study adopted a broader approach, examining a range of social media uses including relaxation, content sharing, and maintaining family connections, with academic use as one among several factors.

Mehmood and Taswir's research specifically investigated the impact of Web 2.0 applications on language and social skills of young learners. While the current study did not directly address these aspects, its findings on socializing ($M = 3.29$) and participating in group discussions for academic improvement ($M =$

3.21) might have indirectly related to social skills development, though this was not a primary focus of the study.

Both studies examined the popularity of different social media tools among students. However, Mehmood and Taswir's study went further by analysing the effectiveness of these tools based on demographic factors. The current study, while providing mean values for various uses, did not delve into the effectiveness of specific tools or demographic differences.

The current study found weak to moderate affirmation for academic-related uses of social media, with mean values of 2.70 for academic research work and 3.21 for group discussions. These findings aligned with Mehmood and Taswir's exploration of social media's educational potential, but the current study showed less emphasis on this aspect compared to Mehmood and Taswir's focus.

Mehmood and Taswir's study aimed to reveal both the advantages and consequences of using social media and Web 2.0 tools in education. The current study, while not explicitly framing findings in terms of advantages and consequences, did provide insights into how students used social media. The strong affirmation for relaxation from academic stress ($M = 3.42$) could have been seen as an advantage, while the weak agreement on using only social media information for assignments ($M = 2.85$) might have related to students' awareness of potential consequences.

While Mehmood and Taswir's study provided direct insights into the role of social media in enhancing language development and social interaction among undergraduates, the current study's findings were less directly applicable to

educational strategies. However, the moderate affirmation for group discussions ($M = 3.21$) suggested potential for academic applications of social media, aligning with Mehmood and Taswir's exploration of educational uses.

While both studies examined social media use among undergraduate students, Mehmood and Taswir's research had a more specific focus on educational applications and outcomes. The current study provided a broader view of social media usage patterns, with academic use as one aspect among many. Despite these differences in focus, both studies contributed to the understanding of how students engaged with social media, offering complementary perspectives on this complex topic.

The survey results showed that students used social media for communication purposes. Furthermore, the data indicated that most students used social media for recreational activities, such as downloading music/videos, uploading pictures, and chatting. Only a few students reported using social media for learning purposes, such as writing articles, taking quizzes/polls, and contacting teachers. Specifically, a low percentage of students participated in activities like uploading videos (6%), creating quizzes/polls (8%), blogging (8%), writing articles (14%), or interacting with professors (14%) on social networking sites. These findings imply that the primary usage of social media by students was for entertainment rather than educational pursuits.

The findings of this study support the hypothesis that students at the University of Cape Coast primarily use social media for socialization and entertainment, rather than academic purposes." The main reasons for students at

UCC to use social media are relaxation, content sharing, maintaining family connections, socializing, and job opportunities, which aligns with the hypothesis. The moderate affirmation for group discussions for academic improvement ($M = 3.21$) suggests that students also use social media for some academic-related activities, but this is not the primary purpose. The weak affirmation for academic research work ($M = 2.70$) and accessing news ($M = 2.78$) further supports the hypothesis.

Link Between Time Spent on Social Media and Academic Performance

The findings of this study align with previous research on social media addiction and its impact on academic performance. Chiu (2014) found a high rate of addiction to casual online communication among modern students, which can negatively affect their social and academic lives if not effectively managed. This observation is supported by Choi and Lim (2016), who recognized addiction as a global issue among youth.

Excessive social media use can lead to a range of negative consequences, including decreased academic achievement. Many students find it hard to resist the urge to constantly check and browse their social network accounts for extended periods, often lasting 2 to 3 hours, leading them to ignore other important activities like their career and education. Aslan (2020) defined social media addiction as excessive and uncontrollable use of internet-related activities, causing significant harm to an individual's life.

Furthermore, Ketari and Khanum (2013) found that Facebook users had a lower GPA than non-users, suggesting a negative correlation between social media

use and academic performance. Many students also admitted that social media distracted them from their studies. The findings of this study support the hypothesis that there is a significant negative correlation between the amount of time students spend on social media daily and their academic performance.

However, a study by Kırık et al. (2015) on social media addiction among young people in Türkiye reported different findings. They found a lower level of addiction compared to this study. Nevertheless, they also mentioned that frequent daily visits to social media platforms were associated with increased levels of addiction.

The results of this study showed a high rate of addiction to social media among students, which aligns with the hypothesis. The constant checking and browsing of social media accounts for extended periods, often lasting 2 to 3 hours, leading to ignoring other important activities like career and education, further supports the hypothesis. The negative correlation between social media usage and academic performance is a concerning trend that highlights the need for students to manage their social media use effectively.

In conclusion, both studies underscore the potential negative effects of excessive social media usage on young individuals, stressing the importance of addressing and implementing preventive measures to curb social media addiction among students and youth in general. By understanding the risks associated with social media addiction, individuals can take steps to manage their usage effectively and promote healthier online behaviours.

Gender Inequalities in Social Media Use Among University of Cape Coast Students.

The research findings demonstrated consistency with several previous studies on gender differences in social media usage. Mazman and Usluel (2011) study revealed significant variations in how people used social networking platforms, with men focusing more on creating new connections. The current study's results were consistent with this, showing a slightly higher mean usage score for males (59.3980) compared to females (58.2745), although the difference was not statistically significant ($t = .864$, $p = .388$). The observation that men tended to spend more time online than women, often due to greater interest in earlier forms of technology such as video games (Su et al., 2020), provided context for understanding the findings. However, the small difference in mean usage scores between genders indicated a potentially decreasing gap.

Rafferty (2009) findings highlighted specific usage patterns, with women more likely to post photos and engage in discussions about sexual activity in public forums. Similarly, Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) found that women primarily used social media to maintain existing friendships, while men also used them for flirting and making new contacts. These patterns were not directly examined in the current study, but they may be relevant to understanding the observed variance.

Williams and Merten (2009) study noted that women were more inclined to reveal personal details about their daily experiences than men. Additionally, Merten's (2009) research indicated that a significant percentage of teenagers aged 13-17 used social media for positive and recreational purposes, with 55% of girls

sharing confidential information, worries, and relationship issues. Although the current study did not investigate content sharing or age-specific usage, these findings offered relevant context for understanding social media use across genders.

The independent t-test results ($t = .864$, $df = 198$, $p = .388$) indicated no statistically significant difference in social media use between males and females. This finding suggested that while previous research had identified various gender-specific usage patterns, overall usage levels were similar between genders in the current sample. The Levene's test for equality of variances ($F = .037$, $p = .847$) also indicated that the assumption of equal variances was met, further supporting the validity of the t-test results.

However, the findings of this study contradict the hypothesis that female students at the University of Cape Coast are more likely to use social media for social support and relationships, while male students are more likely to use social media for entertainment and information-seeking. The results did not show significant gender differences in social media use for social support, relationships, entertainment, or information-seeking.

In conclusion, the current study's findings on gender differences in social media use were not statistically significant, but they provided a valuable addition to the existing body of research. The findings indicated that gender differences in social media usage might be less pronounced than previously reported, potentially reflecting evolving patterns of technology adoption and use across genders. Further research is necessary to explore specific ways in which males and females might

differ in their social media behaviours and motivations within this context of similar overall usage levels.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study, deduces reasonable implications, and suggests actions based on the evidence. The data analysis and its implications were elaborated in detail in the preceding chapter.

Overview of the Study

This study evaluated the impact of social media on the academic performance of students at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana. It explored the various social media platforms used by students and investigated how their usage habits and overall exposure to social media affected their academic results. The research also attempted to reveal any gender differences in the time spent on social media.

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, using a questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. A sample of 200 students completed the questionnaire. The research adhered to ethical principles, ensuring the protection of participants' rights and privacy.

Statistical analysis of the data was conducted using descriptive measures such as mean and standard deviation to elucidate the characteristics of variables and assess their variability. Correlation analysis was employed to explore potential associations between variables, while an independent t-test was utilized to compare diverse groups, thereby addressing the research questions underlying this study.

Key Findings

The study uncovered the following major findings:

1. Students at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) used social media primarily for relaxation, content sharing, and maintaining family connections, with secondary use for socializing, career opportunities, and academic-related purposes.
2. The study indicated that excessive social media use negatively impacted students' academic performance. Addiction to casual online communication led to the neglect of important activities such as education. Moreover, frequent daily visits to social media platforms were associated with increased addiction levels, affecting academic outcomes.
3. The study found no statistically significant difference in social media use between male and female students at the University of Cape Coast, suggesting similar overall usage levels despite some variations in usage patterns.

Conclusions

The study revealed that students at the University of Cape Coast used social media primarily for relaxation, content sharing, and maintaining family connections. Excessive social media use was found to have negatively impacted academic performance. Additionally, no statistically significant difference was found in social media use between male and female students. These findings suggest that

social media use was a prevalent aspect of students' lives, with both positive and negative consequences.

Recommendations

This study suggests the following recommendations:

1. The university administration should conduct further research to investigate the specific academic impact of social media usage on students' academic performance, particularly in relation to assignment quality, exam performance, and class participation.
2. Educational stakeholders should explore ways to address the gender differences in social media use, such as developing gender-sensitive social media literacy programs, to enhance digital literacy skills among students.
3. The university administration should assess the effectiveness of social media as an educational tool, evaluating its potential to enhance student engagement, learning outcomes, and digital literacy skills. This could involve developing guidelines for integrating social media into curriculum design and teaching methodologies.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Longitudinal studies tracking the long-term effects of social media usage on academic performance over a student's entire academic career would provide more comprehensive insights.
2. In-depth qualitative analysis, through methods such as interviews or focus groups, could complement the quantitative data presented in this study,

offering a more nuanced understanding of how and why students use social media, particularly in academic contexts.

3. Future research might focus on platform-specific impacts on academic performance and social interactions to identify which platforms are more conducive to academic use and which may be more distracting.
4. Intervention studies could evaluate the effectiveness of programs aimed at promoting healthy social media use among students, such as digital literacy education or time management strategies tailored for social media use.
5. Cross-cultural comparisons of social media use among university students could expand on this study's findings, potentially identifying cultural factors that influence social media habits and their academic impact.
6. Future research might explore innovative ways to leverage social media for positive academic outcomes, including methods for integrating social media into course curricula or using it as a tool for collaborative learning.
7. Further investigation into potential qualitative differences in how different genders use social media could yield interesting insights, even if the current study found no significant gender differences in social media use.
8. Examining the impact of social media use on specific academic skills such as critical thinking, information literacy, or academic writing could provide more nuanced insights into the relationship between social media and academic performance.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Dear respondents,

I extend my gratitude for your willingness to participate in this research study focusing on 'The Influence of Social Media Usage on the Academic Performance of Tertiary-Level Students in Ghana,' specifically examining the case of the University of Cape Coast. As a Master of Education in Information Technology student, I am undertaking this study to gain deeper insights into the subject matter and its potential implications on student academic achievements. Your involvement is pivotal to the accomplishment of this research, and I genuinely appreciate the dedication and time you invest in completing the questionnaire. It is imperative to note that the data you provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will solely be employed for the research's intended purposes. I express my gratitude in advance for your invaluable contribution.

SECTION A

Please select the appropriate response by ticking [✓] in the blanks given.

1. Gender:

Male [] Female []

2. Level of Education:

Year 2 []

Year 3 []

Year 4 []

3. Age-range:

Please indicate your age group by marking [ü] in the appropriate box:

18 years or younger []

19 to 24 years []

25 to 30 years []

31 to 34 years []

35 to 40 years []

41 years or older []

4. Programme of study:**5. Current CGPA:**

(Your current CGPA and your identity are confidential and will not be connected to your response. I thank you for your response, as it will help me advance my research and offer better recommendations. Thank you for your participation.)

SECTION B

Please read the following statements carefully and mark [✓] in the appropriate box

to show your opinion on the given scale:

SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

S/N	Statement	Options			
		SD	D	A	SA
1.	I do research work using social networking sites.				
2.	Social media enables me to comprehend what I have been taught in class.				
3.	I use only social media information for my assignments and ignore other sources.				
4.	I learn with others through social media platforms.				
5.	Social media group discussions help me achieve satisfactory results in my academics.				
6.	Participating in academic discussions on social media helps me learn more about the subjects covered in class.				
7.	Social media platforms help me to socialize more.				
8.	Social networking sites enable me to form my social identity.				
9.	I like using social media platforms more than going to social events.				
10.	I enhance my interpersonal connections using social media platform.				
11.	I maintain contact with my family members through the utilization of social networking sites.				
12.	I employ social networking sites to acquire knowledge about current societal developments.				
13.	Sharing pictures is one of the reasons I use social networking sites.				

14	I use social networking sites to find funny things to share with others.				
15.	I enjoy watching films on social networking sites.				
S/N	Statement	Options			
		SD	D	A	SA
16.	I utilize social networking sites as a means of relaxation to alleviate academic stress.				
17.	Reading news is one of my reasons for using social networking sites.				
18	I engage with social networking sites for the purpose of sharing novel ideas with others.				
19.	I employ social networking sites to discover employment prospects.				

SECTION C

Please mark [✓] in the suitable column to indicate how much time each statement relates to you.

S/N	Question item	1- 2hrs	3- 4hrs	5- 6hrs	7- 8hrs	Never
1	How many hours do you spend on your Facebook profile every day on average?					
2	What is the daily duration of time you dedicate to your WhatsApp account?					
3	How much time do you typically dedicate to your WhatsApp profile weekly on average?					
4	What is the total number of hours you allocate to your Facebook profile over the span of one week?					
5	What is the daily duration of time you invest in your Instagram?					
6	What is the total number of hours you dedicate to your Instagram profile over the course of one week?					
7	How much time do you spend on your Snapchat daily?					
8	What is the total number of hours you dedicate to your Snapchat profile over the course of one week?					
9	How many hours per week do you spend on your YouTube profile?					
10	How much time do you spend on your Twitter weekly on average?					
11	How many hours per day do you spend on your Twitter?					

12	What is the total number of hours you dedicate to your TikTok over the course of one week?					
13	How many hours per day do you spend on your TikTok?					

Please mark [$\sqrt{\quad}$] in the suitable column to indicate how frequently each statement relates to you.

S/N	Question item	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Occasionally	Rarely
1	How many times do you open your WhatsApp account daily?					
2	How many times do you access your Facebook profile daily?					
3	What is the rate of your visits to your Facebook page within a week?					
4	What is the frequency of your visits to your WhatsApp account within a week?					
5	What is the frequency of your visits to your Instagram in a single day?					


6	How frequently do you visit your Instagram weekly?					
7	What is the frequency of your visits to your Snapchat profile within a day?					
8	What is the frequency of your visits to your Snapchat profile within a week?					
9	What is the frequency of your visits to your YouTube within a week?					
10	How many times do you check YouTube daily?					
11	How often do you use your YouTube in a day?					
12	What is the frequency of your visits to your Twitter within a week?					
13	How frequently do you visit Twitter page within a day?					
14	What is the frequency of your visits to your TikTok within a week?					
15	How frequently do you visit your TikTok within a day?					

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS AND I.C.T EDUCATION**

Telephone: 0332096951
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University Post Office
Cape Coast, Ghana

Your Ref:

Our Ref: DMICTE/P.3/V.3/150

Date: 13th June, 2023

The Chairman
Institutional Review Board
University of Cape Coast
Cape Coast

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

The bearer of this letter, **Mr. Eric Mawuli Yao Dzontoh** with registration number I.D/MIE/20/0003 is an M.Ed (Information Technology) Student of the Department of Mathematics and ICT Education, College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast.

In fulfilling the requirements for submission for ethical clearance, I would like to indicate that the Department is aware and has approved **Mr. Eric Mawuli Yao Dzontoh'S** research topic **"USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS AT THE TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN GHANA"**.

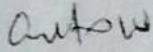
The Department is in full support of the submission of his proposal to your outfit for further action.

I would be grateful if you could give him the necessary assistance he may need.

Counting on your usual co-operation.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Forster D. Ntow
HEAD