

The Influence of High Academic Achievers' Social Media Usage and Types of Social Media Content on Students' Learning: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract Social media has been blamed for distracting and reducing students' engagement in learning. However, there are limited studies that recommend the appropriate strategy of using social media for students. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to propose a conceptual framework that linked the influence of high academic achievers' social media usage with types of social media content on students' learning. A qualitative methodology will be employed to gain in-depth understanding of the high academic achievers' purpose of using social media, time spent on social media and types of social media contents that interest them. Based on purposive sampling technique, a sample of high academic achievers pursuing their study in a public university will be selected and interviewed until the data reach saturation. The interview data will be analyzed by using thematic analysis to develop codes and themes in explaining the phenomenon. The findings of this study are believed to be useful in developing a recommendation and effective strategy to help students manage their social media usage and more importantly benefit from it for their learning.

Keywords Social Media Usage, High Academic Achiever, Social Media Content, Learning Experience

1. Introduction

In the era of Education 4.0, incorporating technology in the classroom is essential to help the Millennial cope with the social and academic challenges of students' lives. Social media, for example, Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Telegram and Twitter, are readily available platforms typically used by course instructors to

communicate with the students. By using social media, students can receive 24 hours online tutoring, access academic materials anytime and anywhere, receive feedback on their performance continuously and enhance students' collaboration. Nevertheless, evidence showed that despite the awareness of social media usefulness towards academic-related purposes, the actual use of social media for learning was at a minimal level (Sobaih, Moustafa, Ghandfroush, & Khan, 2016).

Examining the reasons behind this, it was found that excessive use of social media can affect students' academic performance negatively (W. W. F. Lau, 2017; Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015). Students usually used Facebook for communication, entertainment, and sharing news, pictures and songs (Kaya & Bicen, 2016). In research conducted in Ghana, most respondents used social media namely Whatsapp and Facebook to make friends or chat (Mingle & Adams, 2015). Meanwhile, in Spain, students frequently send messages, participate in social networks and listen to music (Carbonell, Chamorro, Oberst, Rodrigo, & Prades, 2018). As a result, the majority of respondents experienced negative effects such as poor grammar and spelling, late submission of assignments, less study time and poor academic performance due to the heavy participation in social media networks (Mingle & Adams, 2015). It also lowered their task performance and level of happiness, as well as increased the level of technostress (Brooks, 2015).

In recent times, the majority of students in higher education institutions have smartphones that get them connected to social media. Easy access to social media and the availability of the internet ensure that students have unlimited opportunities to get engaged in social media. However, high academic achievers also have the same exposure towards social media as other students but

interestingly, they were not distracted and did not decrease their academic performance. Assuming the medical students as high academic achievers, a study on medical students showed that pressure from academic studies motivated them to use social media and support each other (Hartnup, Dong, & Eisingerich, 2018). Moreover, high academic achievers were underrepresented in the existing literature which mainly focuses on undergraduate students, for example, the works by Whelan, Islam and Brooks (2020), Lau (2017) and Khan, Kend and Robertson (2016). Based on this argument, this research will be conducted to propose a conceptual framework that linked the influence of high academic achievers' social media usage with types of social media content on students' learning.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Media

Social media have been defined as the internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Based on this definition, social media allow students to make use of them for a variety of purposes not just limited to academic matter. In the real world, students have to present their true personality and appearance, but in social media, they can autonomously create their own identity and become anyone that they dream of. This flexibility can be advantageous and dangerous at the same time. On the one hand, students can seek help from online teachers anonymously according to his/her learning style preferences. Some students prefer to study at night in his comfort room compared to attend lectures while others may prefer to have traditional lectures with a course instructor but revise lessons after class hours. On the other hand, having broad audiences provides students with opportunities to get to know many kinds of people online. The overuse of social media for such leisure activities can distract students from their original roles.

2.2. Social Media Usage

Research on Chinese students pursuing their studies abroad revealed that students used social media to increase adaptation (Forbush & Foucault-Welles, 2016). Having a life-changing venture, social media were used by these students to understand more about foreign cultures even before they step into classrooms. In contrast, students rated sharing documents, information, and opinion, as well as entertainment as the top reasons for using social media in the educational context (Tezci & İcen, 2017). A qualitative study further exposed that students were

motivated to use social media in education mainly for social interaction and feelings of integration (Neier & Zayer, 2015). Shy students were more inclined to share their opinions through social media compared to face-to-face interaction (Neier & Zayer, 2015). Certain social media offer students to develop a professional network, however, they are least likely to do so (Knight-McCord et al., 2016).

In terms of time spent on social media, research among students in Saudi Arabia revealed that students generally over the week do not use social media excessively (Alwagait, Shahzad, & Alim, 2015). Students in Istanbul use social media for 1 to 3 hours daily (Tezci & İcen, 2017). 40.2% of Jordanian students spent 1 to 3 hours on social media and 38.5% spent more than 3 hours on social media (Maqableh et al., 2015). Whereas in Malaysia, students logged into Facebook between 2 to 5 times a day and spent over 60 minutes online daily (Balakrishnan & Shamim, 2013). Another research found that 41.5% of Malaysian students used social media 4 to 5 hours per day and 13.9% used more than 5 hours per day (Ali, Raja, Nuri Al Amin, & Iftikhar, 2017). Students used 1 to 10 hours on social networking sites each day (Knight-McCord, et al., 2016).

Based on prior researches, it became evident that there were contradictory findings of the purpose and time a student could spend on social media. Avoiding the use of social media does not provide a practical solution for this problem because the benefits of social media are also irrefutable. For example, students' support had been found to increase students' academic achievement (Siti Syamimi Ismail & Zuraidah Zainol, 2017), and having social media as a student's support platform would magnify the benefits. Despite that, less study has been conducted to explore the use of social media among high academic achievers. For that reason, it seems too early to recommend the appropriate measure on how students should be involved in social media without gaining more information on how high academic achievers find the right balance between their social media usage and learning.

2.3. Types of Social Media Content

There are three categories related to 12 themes of Facebook postings (Klein, Niebuhr, & D'Alessandro, 2013) as shown in Table 1. The first category is peer learning which represents the use of social media to accomplish a set of learning. In the context of this research, it can occur when the research participants use their social media to find someone with the same assignment, and ignite a conversation about their ideas or gain others' opinions about a topic. The second category is building rapport, support, and community which refers to sharing advice on how to complete a task and comforting others emotionally by giving positive comments, asking how others' feelings and conditions as well as expressing gratitude to others who helped. The last category of Facebook post is technical

aspects which are related to technical issues in Facebook usage such as hitting a button too soon or privacy setting of a post.

Table 1. Types of Facebook posts

Category	Theme
Peer learning (learning capital)	Assignments
	Acknowledgement of common goals
	Steering group back to another post
	Questions
	Shared learning
Rapport, support, and community building (social capital)	Asking for help
	Offering advice and help
	Cheerleading and validation
	Compliments
	Gratitude
Technical aspects	Social conversations
	Technical difficulties

Source: (Klein, et al., 2013)

Another research listed two types of social media posts, namely community news and inspiring messages (Joo, Choi, & Baek, 2018). Emotionally inspiring messages, community news, and posts having an image had a higher engagement from users (Joo, et al., 2018). Besides, male users were found to engage more in posts containing reasoning and analysis, and quotes from famous people and sources while females had a higher engagement in posts containing quotes from people or other sources (Savage, Monroy-Hernandez, Singer, & Hollerer, 2013).

There is yet research conducted to explore how social media contents are related to learning experiences, particularly in an educational context. For millennial students, they are exposed to more social media content for a long period, thus certain types of social media content could influence how they learn without affecting their academic performance. Therefore, understanding the types of social media contents that interest these high academic achievers seems relevant to increase students' performance in general.

3. Methodology/Materials

This research will use a qualitative research design to explore high academic achievers' social media usage and learning. Previous studies *inter alia* Lau (2017), Brown,

Adams, Browne and Arrastia-Chisholm (2018), Boahene, Fang and Sampong (2019), and Amir, Hussain, Hussain and Hashmat (2016) embarked on the quantitative methodology which limits in-depth understanding of the phenomenon based on research participants' living experience. The study will be conducted at one of the public universities in Malaysia whereby the students will be selected based on a purposive sampling technique. The criteria for sample selection are as follows:

- Final year students in pure science and social science programs
- Obtaining minimum 3.7 in CGPA
- Possessing good communication skill
- Willingness to participate in the study

The number of participants will be determined by the saturation of the data (Ness, 2015). The interview protocol will be verified by two experts in the education field to ensure that the wording of the open-ended questions is suitable and correct. In the meantime, participants will be contacted to obtain their informed consent and arrange the interview sessions. The interview protocol contains four parts. Part A aims to build rapport and trust with the participants. Questions about their education and family background, as well as their learning preferences will be asked. In Part B, participants will be asked to elaborate on their social media usage. Particularly, data about participants' purpose of using social media and usage time will be gathered. In Part C, participants will be inquired to explain the types of social media contents which interest them. Finally in Part D, participants' learning experiences, particularly the influence of social media towards their learning, will be explored.

After data collection, framework analysis adopted from Srivastava and Thomson (2009) as shown in Figure 1 will be used. First, researchers will transcribe the interview recordings verbatim and familiarize with the data to identify major ideas. Next, the thematic analysis suggested by LeCompte (2000) will be performed where transcripts will be coded and then categorized into themes. The themes will be generated based on the frequency of response, omission or declaration of a statement by the participants. A new theme may also emerge at the later stage of the process, and researchers will reconstruct the themes again. In the final stage, a global theme will emerge along with sub-themes in a chart to describe the phenomenon under this study.

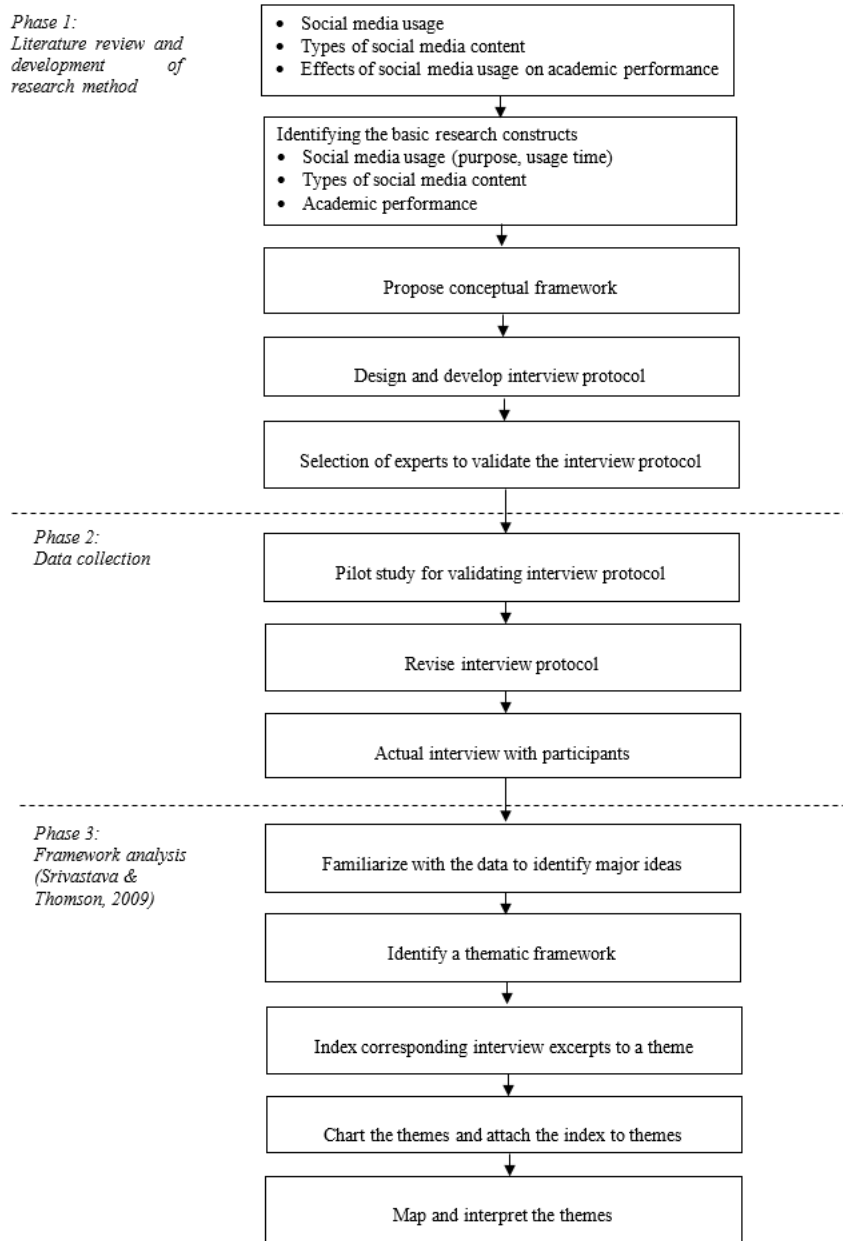


Figure 1. Overall structure of research method

4. Research Framework

Figure 2 displays the links between social media usage, types of social media content and learning experiences. Based on this framework, the researcher aims to explore the purpose of high academic achievers' social media usage and how often they use it either for study, recreation or any other purposes. The social media contents that these students view will also be explored to understand how social media are related to their learning experiences.

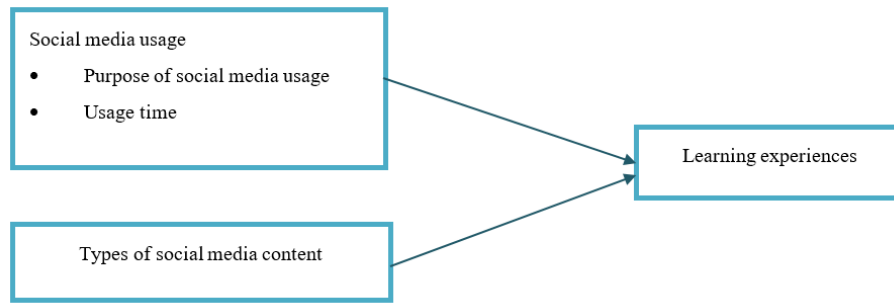


Figure 2. Research framework

5. Conclusions

This research aims to propose a framework of high academic achievers' social media usage, types of social media content and their experiences towards learning. A qualitative research design will be employed with a sample of purposely selected high academic achievers from a public university in Malaysia. The findings of this research will provide some preliminary understanding of social media and the learning experiences of high academic achievers in Malaysia. It is believed that students' learning experiences are influenced by the purpose of social media usage, time spent on social media and types of social media content. By exploring this situation, a recommendation can be proposed and effective strategies can be developed to help students manage their social media usage and more importantly benefit from it for their learning.

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