The Effects Social Media has on College Students

James Malone

Indiana University
Topic Choice: Effects Social Media has on College Students

Social Media and College Students

In the fall of 2013, Reimherr gave a survey to 260 college students of those 95% of the students used at least one or more social media websites which begs the question how are these sites effecting the students who use them? In the past decade controversy has arisen over how social websites affect a student’s everyday life from their academic abilities to their mental health. Some would say that social media can hinder one academically and sociably. Yet in light of these accusations recently research on the pros and cons of these sites and how they affect the student have given us a better understanding on the benefits and downfalls the sites have. In 2015, DeGroot, VanSlette, and Young questioned if the social website Twitter could even be used as a teaching mechanism to inform students of assignments, due date, etc. Also in 2014, Gaskin, Jackson, Wang, and Wang discussed how sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Tumbler have a positive effect on one’s social activity, as well as the mental health of the student. So studies like these are broadening our knowledge on impact social media has on a college student’s life and have found most people can benefit from the use of social media. While many view social media as a negative aspect of a college students life the pros social media has to offer out way the cons making these sites helpful tool for the average college student.

Social Medias Impact on Academics

As more and more students log onto social media sites one question many may ask is can educators use the sites in their favor. In a survey given to professor’s across the nation DeGroot et al. (2015) confirmed that “55% [of them] use Twitter for professional purposes (outside of class), and 41% use social media in class”. The findings from this survey show that each day
more and more professors utilize the realm of social media in a way to help teach their students. Furth more DeGroot et al. (2015) went on to find that the students who’s professors used social media in the classroom setting reported a better understanding of the information presented to them. Also the students felt it was easier to communicate with their professor and classmates. The way in which most professor’s use their twitter is they create an account where students can ask questions and also as a means to post due-dates and remind students of upcoming assignments. If a student would rather not have their professor on twitter they are asked to just block the account so neither user can see the activity of the other.

Furthermore studies done in 2015 by Neier and Zayer, go further into the use of social networking sites for academic purposes by looking at other sites such as Facebook, You Tube, and Pinterest. The study went over and determined how useful each site would be to not only students but professors in academics. Neier and Zayer found that each website could be used in some way or form as a way to either help the professors teach the class or the students communicate with their peers to help each other with difficult assignments. Although websites like Facebook and Twitter were preferred by most students in the study to be separate from their education they still yield a usefulness to young minds. Both Facebook and Twitter offer an endless amount of networking where if used properly can immerse any of its users in diversity that could not be understood unless one had the time and money to travel the world. This opportunity can be used by students to broaden their knowledge on the world’s cultures learning different values and beliefs held by others just by befriending another on Facebook. Also the immense diversity at their fingertips will challenge many students ideas and give them a new perspective when problem solving. You Tube on the other hand was thought of by most students as a great way for teachers to explain their lessons and material. This website that is mainly used
for streaming and posting videos can be a great asset for any University professor. While the most common use for You Tube has is that it gives students a visual representation of certain material or it can used as another way to explain a concept being learned. Others might use the website to post videotaped lectures over difficult material so their students can look back on the lecture to better understand the material. In conclusion classroom use of social media can not only help students learn diversity and the customs of other cultures but can also be a way to communicate with their professor and peers.

**Affects Social Media has on Personal Health and Relationships**

Social networking sites are meant to bring people together and build new relationships with people from all sorts of backgrounds but do these sites hinder or further develop the relationships the user already has? Also what effect do these sites play on the user’s mental health? In 2014 Gaskin, Jackson, Wang and Wang answered these questions by researching students at two, four year colleges in south China. Their initial hypotheses were that social media would either have a positive effect or no effect at all on the user’s well-being or mental health. Also that the more time someone spent on social media sites the more distant they would be from the friends they have in reality. Gaskin et al. used a surveying method asking 337 people about their social media habits and to rate their well-being and their disclosure from public social interactions. From these surveys they found that not only did those who were more active with social media rate their well-being higher than those who were less active, but also that the more a person uses social media the less likely they are to show signs of depression. Furthermore their study found that the people who were more active on social media rated their quality of friendships higher than those who were less active. (2014). From the results of the study it is made clear that social media can be a positive aspect of anyone’s life. This is because with social
media it is much easier communicate with newly made friends so one does not have to rely on face to face conversation to further a friendship. Also with social media users can find people in their area that they may not have had the chance to meet in their day to day lives, this allows the users to broaden their circle of friends by breaking down the barrier of distance. Another aspect of social media that is usually overlooked by its critiques is that this everyday contact with friends and loved ones gives all users a constant reminder that they have people that care about their well-being causing them to be less likely to develop symptoms of depression. Therefore not only can social media help build and strengthen relationships it also has a positive effect on its user’s mental health.

**Social Media and Future Professions**

Many people today would say that using social media would not benefit the user’s professional life, but with the development of sites like LinkedIn and Entrepreneur Connect this is far from the truth. Neier and Zayer’s 2015 study on how students perceive social media asked student’s to rate how useful these sites were in developing professional connections with professors and potential employers. The results of which being that almost all the students agreed that the use of sites like LinkedIn were a good way to make connections with potential employers and their professors. By using sites like LinkedIn students have a means to spread their resume and display the experience they have accumulated to the professional world. This creates a very opportunistic environment for employers looking to hire and the students searching for jobs and internships. Also because everyone using LinkedIn has a profile, students are given the opportunity to scope out potential connections and to judge if someone is worth the effort of making contact. In addition LinkedIn can be used as a way to keep in contact with a student’s professors and with that connection they can easily ask their professor to be a reference.
on an application because they were able to stay in contact. To sum it up social media is extremely beneficial to a student professional life and can even be the source of their future career.

**Counter Argument**

But if this is the case, what about when user’s start to spend more time on social media than they do on other aspects of their life such as friends and academics? In 2011, Wang, Chen and Liang researched the how social media effected college students, and what they found was that the use of social media negatively affected the users. Wang et al. found that social sites had a negative impact on a student’s grades discovering that about two-third of students will use social media while doing academic work. (2011). When most students have smart phones it has become more common to constantly check the social sites the students have, and when this is done during time spent on homework or studying it makes finishing assignments more and more difficult. The distractions social media causes has a very bad effect on a student’s performance causing them to miss assignments and to be mentally absent during class. While being mentally absent in class may not dramatically hinder a student’s abilities if the class factors attendance into the grade this can cause a big impact on their grade because almost all teachers would consider that student absent. Also Griffin (2015) found that the more time a user spent on social media the less time they spent in person with their friends. As a student develops more friendships on these social sites they tend to spend more time on them constantly replying to messages and comments and this can lead them to forget their physical friends. The isolation from physical friends can develop into a social anxiety because the person has less experience with face to face interactions. However, these negative aspects of social media have only been
seen when a person spends an excessive amount of time in the site so with moderation the negatives can easily be avoided and present a positive experience for the users.

**Conclusion**

While many view social media as a negative aspect of a college student’s life the pros social media has to offer out way the cons making these sites helpful tools for the average college student. Social media not only has the potential to widen a person’s social circle but also is a means of professional networking. Students who use social media are given a great opportunity to make connections with people all over the world giving them crucial life lessons on diversity and understanding different cultures. This aspect can be transferred over to a real world setting giving the person prior knowledge to customs that may have been seen as strange compared to their societal norms but are easily recognizable to them. Furthermore social media is a great way to keep in touch with loved ones and friends that may have moved away, and this easy access to loved ones promotes a healthy mindset and lowers the risk and symptoms of depression by giving users a constant reminder they have people that care for them. In addition it is observed that professional social sites that create connections between students and employers or professors, can be extremely valuable for a student who searching for a job, looking for an internship or keeping in contact with a professor to have a ready reference on an application. In conclusion with moderation and the mindful use of social media college students have an array of opportunities, from connecting with future employers on LinkedIn to befriending diverse individuals on Facebook and learning their customs.
References


