Facebook Use, Personality Characteristics and Academic Performance: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The present article examines the relationship between student personality, use of social media and their academic performance and engagement. Specifically, this article examines the relationship of students’ Facebook (FB) use and personality characteristics using the Big Five Personality Test. This is focused on (a) student engagement; (b) time spent preparing for class; (c) time spent in co-curricular activities; and (d) academic performance. 204 higher education students participated in the study. Results illustrate that FB time was significantly positively correlated to student engagement and time spent preparing for class. Sharing links activity was positively correlated with student engagement and playing FB games with time spent preparing for class. However, sending private messages and status updates were significantly negatively correlated with student engagement and time spent preparing for class. Also, viewing videos was negatively correlated with time spent in co-curricular activities. Chatting on FB and viewing photos found to be the most popular activities. Moreover, students’ extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience were positively correlated to student engagement. In addition, extraversion had a positive relationship with time spent in co-curricular activities, although agreeableness had a negative relationship. Implications of the study for the instructors and the students are also discussed.

KEYWORDS

Academic Performance, Big Five Personality Test, Facebook, Student Engagement, Tertiary Education

INTRODUCTION

The last few years, an important penetration of the Web 2.0 technologies in different aspects of the socio-economic activities has been observed (Straus et al., 2014, Orfanou, Tselios, & Katsanos, 2015, Katsanos, Tselios, & Xenos, 2012). Junco and Cole-Avent (2008) examined the technologies used by students. Some of these are already been used (e.g. FB) or present the potential to be used to enhance students’ learning experience. In specific, the technologies which can be used for educational purposes are the following: social media (such as FB, myspace), blogs, other services that permit the user to create context (i.e. YouTube, Picasaweb), instant messages using FB and myspace, cell phones and virtual worlds (Junco & Cole-Avent, 2008).

Nowadays, social networks such as Facebook, and Twitter constitute a part of the citizens’ daily life in the modern societies. According to Junco (2014a, p. 6), social networks are considered as implementations, services and systems that let the user create and share data with other users. Social
networks replaced to a great extent, message sending and phone calls. Digital devices are being used especially from youngsters for the use of the social networks which help them communicate with each other almost instantly and with low cost.

Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) investigated the relationship between FB use and the formation and preservation of the social capital. They found a strong relation between FB use and the three types of social capital (bridging, bonding, and maintained). Furthermore, they found that FB use interacts with measures of the phycology health, suggesting that is possible to offer bigger advantages for the users that present low self-confidence and satisfaction in life (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007).

Moreover, social networks are extensively used in educational settings (Altanopoulou, Tselios, Katsanos, Georgoutsou, & Panagiotaki, 2015, Lopes, Fidalgo-Neto, & Mota, 2017). However, their ever-increasing use has received some forms of criticism. The claim that the use of social networks in education involves many risks in students’ performance is widespread. However, this is mainly attributed to the way students use them and not to their inherent nature (Junco, 2014a). One peril is called “multitasking”, namely the execution of many actions at the same time, for instance sending a message to a friend while studying for an examination (Junco, 2014a). Other risks which can lead to lower student performance are using the laptop computer, sending instant messages and carrying out specific actions on FB during the lesson or while completing a learning task (Junco, 2014a). Moreover, Junco and Cotten (2011) found that extensive use of instant messaging had a negative effect on their academic tasks. The risks, which were referred above, may be some of the reasons that some teachers possess the perception that social networks, especially FB, have a detrimental effect on students’ academic performance.

To further explore the issue, Junco and Cotten (2012) examined the effect of multitasking on educational results. The aim was to investigate how students interact with the technologies of information and communication (ICT’s) and the effect of ICT use on students’ GPA (Junco & Cotten, 2012). It was demonstrated that students spend enough time using ICT’s, on which they don’t search for context related to the modules but use FB, email, instant messages, talk on their cell phones and text, while doing schoolwork (Junco & Cotten, 2012). By using hierarchical regression, it was found that using FB and texting while doing homework were negatively associated with overall college GPA.

In a study conducted by Junco (2014b), a tool was used to record and examine what students actually do when they are using the internet. He gathered data related to their actions by using a data logging tool in students’ computer (Junco, 2014b). The results show that students used FB frequently and that many of them regulated their computer use to enhance their academic performance (Junco, 2014b). Thus, negative attitude of some educators towards social networks sometimes originates from the fact that they don’t get accustomed to technology and it is not founded on concrete evidence (Junco, 2014a). On the other hand, there are organizations which use social networks to communicate with their students and provide help. Moreover, a lot of instructors use them to inform their students via twitter for opportunities such as available work positions (Junco, 2014a).

FACEBOOK USE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Engaging in Facebook use or texting while trying to complete schoolwork may impair students’ capacity for cognitive processing and preclude deeper learning (Junco & Cotten, 2012). However, emailing, talking on their cell phones and instant messaging is not correlated with GPA (Junco & Cotten, 2012). They concluded that multitasking isn’t an inherent burden on student results but it depends on the type and the aim of ICT’s usage, while doing schoolwork. (Junco & Cotten, 2012).

Junco (2012b) examined the relationship between multiple indicators of FB use and academic performance. In specific, by using a hierarchical regression analysis he showed that the relationship between FB time and college grade point average (GPA) is statistically significant, as the followings relationships: frequency of which entered FB and college grade point average, time spend on FB
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