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# GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES USAGE AMONG STUDENTS: EVIDENCE FROM KOFORIDUA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY, GHANA.

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## Abstract

The study sought to find out gender differences in the usage of social networking sites (SNSs) among students with a focus on Koforidua Technical University (KTU) Campus.

The questionnaire was used for data gathering. A total of 258 copies of questionnaire were distributed, 246 were retrieved representing 95.3% response rate, which was very much representative of the sample. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 16.0 version) was used in data analysis. The study revealed that majority of the respondents visit SNS daily and spend 1-2 hours a day. Also, the study disclosed that the use of SNSs had negatively affected their academic performance. The study recommends, among others that students should be encouraged to use SNSs for academic purposes rather than non-academic activities and also to reduce the number of hours spent on SNSs per day. They should be encouraged to visit the library regularly to improve their reading habits and academic performances as well.

**Keywords:** *Academic Performance; Gender; Ghana; Social Networking; Tertiary Institution; Technical; University*

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## 1. Introduction

The revolution and the rapid advancement of the internet are changing every sphere of human activity, be it economic, political, educational, or social. The patronage of social network sites (SNSs) among the majority of students in the higher institutions these days is becoming more popular and stylish. The utilisation of social networking sites among college students has gone up because students adopt this new technology quickly (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith &

Zickuhr, 2010). According to Dhiraj (2013), social media refers to “the many relatively inexpensive and widely accessible electronic tools that enable anyone to publish and access information, collaborate on a common effort, or build relationships.”

Kuss and Griffiths (2011), defined social networking sites as virtual communities where users can generate public profiles, establish new friends and interact with real-life friends and meet other people based on shared interests. Arshin (2010) describes social networking sites as virtual places where people find themselves and share information with friends. The popularity of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, for instance, are growing very fast, particularly among the younger generation. A study on the gender use of social networking sites appears to have some impact on online information behaviour. Globally, male students tend to use internet sources more frequently than female students (Li and Kirkup, 2007). Madden and Zickuhr (2011; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012) reported in their studies that social networking sites emerge to be used by female students more than their male counterparts.

A lot of studies stated various reasons for using social network sites, among them are: to update their knowledge on current issues, to analyse and exchange increasing information, to sustain social contacts and relationships as well as facilitate the delivery of academic activities.

These, therefore, are some of the reasons why social network sites are gaining popularity quickly although the initial idea was sharing photos, personal information, videos, profiles and related contents (Mejias, 2005; Ajjan & Hartshorne, 2008). Majority of the social network users are young individuals, most of whom are university students. Therefore, social network sites are considered to be the most popular player in the lives of the younger generation (Lenhart, 2009; Koca, 2009).

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The introduction of internet in tertiary institutions and the advancement of social networking sites (SNSs) nowadays have attracted students to create an account in the various SNSs.

Kuppuwamy and Shankar, Narayan (2010) opined that the usage of social networking sites had become part of the students daily life activities. The degree of utilisation of SNSs among students in tertiary institutions in Ghana today is very alarming and cannot be overemphasized.

The abusive usage of SNSs among students has drawn the attention of management in some tertiary institutions and opinion leaders on whether grades of students will not be affected by how much time is spent on these sites. The majority of parents and guardians from different quarters are also worried about the number of hours students spend on these sites without attending to their books.

It is against this background that this paper examines gender differences in social networking sites used most by students.

## 1.3 Objectives of the study

- i. To find out the purpose of using SNS by gender
- ii. To determine the frequency of visiting SNS by gender
- iii. To establish the most used social networking sites in terms of gender
- iv. To ascertain the time spent on SNS by gender

### 1.3.1 Research Questions

- i. What is the purpose of using SNS regarding gender?
- ii. What is the difference in gender frequency of visiting SNS?
- iii. Which SNS is most used in terms of gender?

iv. How much time is spent on SNS in terms of gender?

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Purpose of Using SNS by Gender**

A study carried out by Bonds-Raacke and Raacke (2008) indicated that both females and males have SNSs accounts, their purposes for creating the accounts may vary based on gender.

For females, social networking sites are primarily to reinforce pre-existing friendships; for males, the networks also offer a way for sexual activities and making new friends.

Giles and Price (2008) revealed that females use social media for chatting and downloading music. Rafferty (2009) opined that the primary purposes of female use of social networks platform are to post personal pictures and also to discuss sex issues on these public fora.

Merten and Williams (2009 a) reported that females are more likely to share their personal information on SNSs which is an open platform than their male counterparts.

Merten and Williams (2009 b) highlighted again that about 55% of females share their private issues such as depression, anxiety, and relationship problems on SNSs, while 15% of males share personal information besides their hobbies, interests, and friendships. According to Boneva, Kraut, and Frohlich (2001) sending and receiving emails to and from friends as well as family were one of the dominant online activities for females, while males tended to spend more time on reading online news, engaging in task-oriented work, or visiting websites of governmental departments (Na, 2002).

### **2.2 Frequency of Visiting SNSs by Gender**

Khan (2010) carried out a study on the impact of social networking websites on students.

The study sampled 168 participants, and out of this number, 101 were males, while 67 were females. The findings reported that male students use social networking sites more than their female counterparts and their purpose was for searching knowledge. A study undertaken by

Lin and Subrahmanyam (2007) revealed that male students visited online platforms more than their female counterparts in the past decades because of their acquisition of knowledge in technology and its activities such as video or computer games. Thompson and Lougheed (2012) found out that more females are “heavy users” of Facebook and that they spend an hour per day on the site than their male colleagues. According to Lenhart et al. (2010), 72% of all college students have a social media profile with 45% of college students using a social media site at least once a day.

The study of Sheldon (2008), established that students visit social networking sites several times in a day. Shen and Khalifa (2010) carried out a study on Facebook usage among Arabic College students. The study found that more females spent fewer hours on Facebook than their male counterparts. According to the females, using Facebook makes them lose valuable time.

Budden, Anthony, Budden, and Jones (2007) carried out a survey study using 272 undergraduate and graduate students. The study revealed that female students spent more time on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace than males, although, these differences were not found to be statistically significant. A study conducted by Foregger (2008) disclosed that both female and fresh male students spent most of their time on Facebook, while male juniors and male seniors spent a lesser amount of time on the site

### **2.3 Effect of SNS on Students' Performance**

Banquil and Chua (2009) opined that social networking sites affect students' academic performance negatively due to too much time spent on SNSs instead of learning. According to Abdelraheem (2013), there are no significant differences in the means of GPA and social networking sites.

The study stressed further that students with high GPA use SNSs just as well as those with a lower GPA. In a similar study by Hargitai and Hsieh (2010) disclosed that there is no

relationship between social media usage and academic activity. According to the study, the majority of the users used it for socialization purposes. Paul, Baker and Cochran (2012), carried out a similar study on the effect of social networking sites on students' academic performance. They discovered that "there is a statistically significant negative relationship between time spent by students on social networks and their academic performance". Karpinski (2009) asserted that Facebook users frequently devoted lesser time to their studies as compared to non-users, and they eventually end up with poor GPAs. Bauerlen (2008), opined that SNSs lead students to poor writing and poor reading skills because students are now used to short - handwritings of words such as (i.e., lol, g2g and ttyl).

In a similar study by Sarpong (2014), he also added that social media has affected the way English is written and how some words are spelt.

The study stated further that SNSs are filled up with incorrect grammar and new lingo; therefore, students who are continually using Facebook during their academic activities may increase errors in their grammar when writing project works, because of too much addiction to Facebook usage.

On the contrary, Ellison (2010; Lipsett, 2008; Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007) indicated that the use of Facebook is a helpful instrument and resource for college students.

#### **2.4 SNSs Used Most by Gender**

In the view of Ahsan and Chand (2012), the most favourite social networking sites are; Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and WhatsApp. According to the study, about 87.5% of both genders have Facebook accounts and use equal time on the internet. The study observed further that male students have a lot of Facebook companions, whereas female students use much of their time on Facebook. Kanagarathiam (2014) took a study on the impact of social networking sites on the academic performance of adolescents in Coimbatore City, India. The findings disclosed that more students use Facebook, Skype, WhatsApp, and YouTube than

any other site. In the study, Google+ and LinkedIn were reported as the least used sites among the respondents. Mazman and Usluel (2010) indicated that Facebook is the popular social networking site due to its educational usefulness, information sharing, its structure, and multiple uses. In the view of Lenhart et al. (2010), females are more likely than males to have a personal profile on Facebook, but males are more likely than females to sustain a profile on LinkedIn. According to Moran, Seaman, and Tinti-Kane (2012), YouTube is the most frequently used social media tool in the classroom, because students can watch videos, answer questions, discuss content and additionally, create videos to share with others.

### **2.5 Time Spent on SNS by Gender**

Yeboah and Ewur (2014) carried out a study to find out the impact of social network (WhatsApp Messenger) on the performance of tertiary students in Ghana. The findings disclosed that 48% of the respondents indicated that they spent over 8 hours every day using Whatsapp on their mobile phones, followed by 4 % who spent 1-2 hours, 17% spent 3-5 hours per day, while 31% spent 6-7 hours. Burke et al. (2010) conducted a study on social network activity and social well-being and revealed that females spend more time on social network sites and use them more actively than their male counterparts. Similarly, Tufekci (2008) confirmed that the majority of females were four to five times more likely than males to use social networking sites.

Aghazamani (2010) carried out a study to find out how university students spend their time on Facebook. According to the findings, a significant number of Facebook male users spend more time on Facebook than female students during weekends. Previous studies carried out by Giles and Price (2008; Junco, Merson, & Salter, 2010; Subrahmanyam & Lin, 2007; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009; Wei & Lo, 2006) disclosed that the majority of male students spent more time than female students on computer games whereas females spent more time than male on chatting while using social networking sites.



### **3.0 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The study adopted survey design. The population consisted of all full-time undergraduate students of Koforidua Technical University. The total population of full-time students at the time of the study was two thousand five hundred and seventy-seven (2577).

#### **3.2 Sample and Sampling Technique.**

The simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents for the study.

A total of two hundred and fifty-eight (258) students were randomly selected. The sample size comprised 116 females and 142 males. According to Nwana (1981), if a population is in many hundreds, one needs a sample size of 20%. But if a population is in few thousands, one needs a sample size of 10%. Therefore, a sampling fraction of 10% was used to select a sample size for the students, based on the Nwana's recommendations.

#### **3.3 Data Collection Instrument**

The questionnaire was used as a data gathering instrument. The questionnaire was distributed during the lecture hours of the first semester 2016/2017 academic year. The questionnaire was in five sections. Section A contained the demographic data of respondents, while Section B found out the purpose of using social networking sites (SNSs) by gender, Section C gathered information on the frequency of visiting SNSs by gender, Section D elicited information on which SNSs were mostly used, and Section F sought information on the time spent on SNSs by gender. A total of 258 copies of questionnaire were distributed, 246 copies were retrieved representing 95.3% response rate, which was very much representative of the sample. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 16.0 version) was used in data analysis.

#### 4.0 Findings and Discussions

**Table 1: Gender of Respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	133	54%
Female	113	46%
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data, 2016.

Table 1 shows the demographic data of the respondents. In Table 1, out of 246 respondents, 133 (54%) were males while 113 (45%) were females. This implies that the total number of male respondents were more than female respondents.

The respondents were asked to indicate their ages and these are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Age Category of Student Respondents**

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
16-20	74	30
21-25	119	48
26 years and above	53	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data, 2016

Table 2 shows that out of a total of 246 respondents, 74 (30%) fell between 16-20 years, followed by 119(48%) who were between 21-25 years, whereas 53 (22%) were between 26 years and above.

**Table 3: Purpose of Using SNSs by Gender**

The respondents were asked to indicate their purpose of using SNSs. Table 3 below displayed their responses.

Responses	Frequency			
	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
For academic activities	39	29	14	12
To update myself	15	11	12	11
Chatting with course mates	22	17	15	13
Submitting an Assignment to a supervisor	18	14	13	12
To send pictures to a friend(s)	26	20	23	20
To download pictures/videos/music	13	9	36	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources: Field data, 2016

Table 3 revealed that out of 133 male respondents, 39 (29%) indicated that they used SNSs for academic work, 36(32%) female respondents admitted that they used SNSs to download pictures, videos and music. This study corroborates the study of Giles and Price (2008), which revealed that females used social media for chatting and downloading pictures, videos and music.

**Table 4: Frequency of Visiting SNSs by Gender**

Responses	Frequency			
	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	49	37	54	48
Weekly	27	20	22	19
Twice a Week	24	18	15	13
Monthly	18	14	10	9
Once a Month	15	11	12	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>

**Sources:** Field data, 2016.

Table 4 indicates that out of 133 male respondents, 49(37%) used social networking sites daily, while, 54 (48%) of female respondents used it daily. Another 27(20%) of the male respondents used social networking sites weekly, whereas 22(19%) of the female respondents used it weekly.

The current study disagrees with the work of Khan (2010), whose findings reported that more male students used social networking sites than their female counterparts.

**Table 5: Effect of SNS on Students' Performance**

Responses	Frequency			
	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Negative	59	44	47	42
Positive	45	34	31	27
Uncertain	29	22	35	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources: Field data, 2016

The findings from Table 5 revealed that 59 male respondents (44%) indicated that the usage of SNSs had affected their academic performance negatively, while 29(22%) remained uncertain.

On the part of female respondents, out of 113, 47(42%) hinted that SNSs had affected them negatively. However, 35(31%) remained uncertain. The result is in line with the study of Banquil and Chua (2009), who asserted that spending too much time on social networking sites affect students' academic performance negatively. The finding is also in line with that of Sarpong (2014) which affirmed that social media had affected the way English is written and how some words are spelt.

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**Table 6: Social SNS Used Most by Gender**

Popular Sites	Frequency			
	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Google	20	15	8	7
Facebook	15	11	25	22
Whatsapp	30	23	32	28
Linkedin	12	9	11	10
Twitter	21	16	13	12
Instagram	19	14	5	4
Yahoo messenger	7	5	3	3
YouTube	9	7	16	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources: Field data, 2016.

The findings from Table 6 disclosed that out of 133 male respondents, 30 (23%) used WhatsApp most, followed by 20 (15%) who used google. On the side of female respondents, out of 113, 32(28%) indicated that they used WhatsApp most, followed by 25(22%) who used Facebook.

The present study is not in line with the findings of Mazman and Usluel (2010) whose study indicated that Facebook is the popular social networking site used mostly due to its educational usefulness, information sharing, its structure, and multiple uses.

**Table 7: Time Spent on SNS by Gender**

Hours	Frequency			
	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
30 minutes	58	44	12	10
1-2 hours	42	31	62	55
3-4 hours	15	11	21	19
5 hours and above	18	14	18	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources: Field data, 2016.

Results from Table 7 indicated that out of 133 male respondents, 58 (44%) admitted that they spent 30 minutes on SNSs, followed by 42(31.5%) who conceded that they spent 1-2 hours in a day on SNS. Similarly, when the researchers sought the views of the female respondents, out of 113, 62(55%) indicated that they spent 1-2 hours on SNSs, while 21(19%) stated 3-4 hours.

The present study supports the study of Burke et al. (2010) that female students spend more time on social network sites than their male counterparts.

## 5. Conclusion

The study was conducted to find out gender differences in social networking sites usage among students of Koforidua Technical University. The study found out that the majority of the respondents know about SNSs. They also spent 1-2 hours daily on these sites.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that SNSs had negatively affected students' academic performance. The outcome of the study showed that Whatsapp was the most used SNSs by both genders. The findings disclosed that female students spent more time on SNSs than their male counterparts.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

Management of tertiary institutions and parents should advise and encourage students to use SNSs to search for information that will help them in their academic activities. Since parents and lecturers cannot stop students from visiting SNSs on campuses and residential halls, they should be advised to reduce the number of hours spent on SNSs per day. Students should be urged to use those hours in reading story books as well as revising their lecture notes to improve their academic performance. They should also be advised about the dangers ahead of them if they become too much addicted to SNSs. Lastly, they should be encouraged to visit the library regularly to inculcate the habit of reading.





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