



SOCIAL NETWORKING USAGE AND GRADES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Study to Determine the Correlation
Of Social Media Usage and Grades

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The Study

This study was conducted by student-researchers at The Whittemore School of Business and Economics at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) to determine whether there is a correlation between heavy usage of social media and grades. The study also was undertaken to determine how much time students actively use social media and if there has been an increase or decrease in usage over time.

Background

Whittemore School of Business and Economics student researchers recently completed a study to determine if there was a relationship between online social media usage and grades of college students. The survey was administered by members of a market research class led by Adjunct Professor Chuck Martin. A total of 1,127 students from all colleges at the university (College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, College of Liberal Arts, College of Life Sciences and Agriculture, College of Health and Human Services, Thompson School of Applied Sciences, and the Whittemore School of Business and Economics) were surveyed.

Executive Summary

The research shows that there is no correlation between the amount of time students spend using social media and their grades. Grades followed similar distributions for all colleges, with the majority of students earning A's and B's. The study showed that more students use Facebook and YouTube than any other social media platform. Blogs, Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn had significantly lower amounts of student users. Students from the business school had the highest percentage of users of blogs, Twitter, and LinkedIn while liberal arts students were the highest percentage of MySpace users.

Major University Findings

Researchers defined light users of social media as usage fewer than 31 minutes per day. Heavy usage was defined as usage exceeding 61 minutes per day. Researchers defined high grades as A's, and A's and B's and lower grades as B's and lower. For the purpose of the study, social media (online networks) was defined as Facebook, YouTube, Blogs, Twitter, MySpace or LinkedIn.

Overall Usage

The study found that the most popular online network was Facebook, with 96 percent of all university students saying they use it on a typical day. The least used social media platform was LinkedIn, with 10 percent of students using it daily.

Percentage of students who use each platform

Facebook	96%
YouTube	84%
Blogs	20%
Twitter	14%
MySpace	12%
LinkedIn	10%

The study found no correlation between heavy social media usage and grades. There was no significant difference in grades between those considered to be heavy users of social media and those considered to be light users. For example, 63 percent of heavy users received high grades, compared to 65 percent of light users. Researchers found similar results with lower grades. While 37 percent of heavy users of social media received what were defined as lower grades, 35 percent of light users received fell into that same category. There also was no correlation between grades and the social media platform used. For example, almost the same number of heavy and light users of both Facebook and YouTube received the same category of high and low grades.

Heavy Users of Social media

Higher Grades	63%
Lower Grades	37%

Light Users of Social Media

Higher Grades	65%
Lower Grades	35%

Usage by Social Media Platform

Facebook and YouTube are the most commonly used social media platforms at the university, allowing the researchers to measure heavy and light usage to compare with grades. While not enough students consider themselves to be heavy users of the other platforms, the researchers did measure their light usage compared to grades and found similar patterns to the users of the two main platforms. For example, while 62 percent of light users of Facebook receive high grades, 68 percent of light users of Twitter also receive high grades.

Facebook

Of the heavy users of Facebook, 62 percent received high grades and 38 percent received low grades.

Heavy Facebook Users

Higher Grades	62%
Lower Grades	38%

Light Facebook Users

Higher Grades	62%
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Lower Grades 38%

YouTube

Of the heavy users of YouTube, 64 percent receive high grades and 36 percent receive low grades. The results for light users were similar, with 63 percent receiving high grades and 37 percent receiving low grades.

Heavy YouTube Users

Higher Grades 64%
Lower Grades 36%

Light YouTube Users

Higher Grades 63%
Lower Grades 37%

Blogs

The study found that of the light Blog users, 70 percent receive higher grades and 30 percent receive lower grades. The majority of students (80 percent) reported that they were not blog users. No conclusions could be drawn concerning heavy blog usage due to lack of data.

Light Blog Users

Higher Grades 70%
Lower Grades 30%

Twitter

Sixty-eight percent of light Twitter users receive higher grades while 32 percent of light twitter users receive lower grades. Eighty-six percent of students reported not using Twitter at all. No conclusions could be drawn concerning heavy Twitter usage due to lack of data.

Light Twitter Users

Higher Grades 68%
Lower Grades 32%

MySpace

After LinkedIn, MySpace is the next least used platform. Of students who are light users of MySpace, 65 percent receive higher grades while 35 percent receive lower grades. No conclusions could be drawn concerning heavy MySpace usage due to lack of data.

Light MySpace Users

Higher Grades 65%
Lower Grades 35%

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the least used social media platform among students at the University of New Hampshire. Of those students who are light users of LinkedIn, 73 percent receive higher grades and 27 percent receive lower grades. No conclusions could be drawn concerning heavy LinkedIn usage due to lack of data.

Light Linked Users

Higher Grades 73%
Lower Grades 27%

Change of usage on a typical WEEKEND day

Researchers found that on a typical weekend day, 41 percent of students increase their usage of the social media networks, five percent of those significantly increase. On weekends, 24 percent of all university students decrease usage. Of the 24 percent who decrease usage, 7 percent significantly decrease on a typical weekend day. Thirty-six percent of students do not change their use of social media networks on a typical weekend day.

Significantly Increases	5%
Somewhat Increases	36%
No Change	36%
Somewhat Decreases	17%
Significantly Decreases	7%

Change of usage from a year ago

Researchers also found that 43 percent of UNH students have increased their usage of social media from a year ago, eight percent of them significantly. Eighteen percent of students have decreased their usage from a year ago with three percent significantly decreasing usage. Thirty-nine percent say they have not changed their social media usage from a year ago.

Significantly Increased	8%
Somewhat Increased	35%
No Change	39%
Somewhat Decreased	15%
Significantly Decreased	3%

Reasons for using social media networks

The majority (89 percent) of students use these networks for social reasons and entertainment. About a quarter (26 percent) of students use social media for educational reasons, and 16 percent for professional reasons.

Social	89%
Entertainment	79%
Educational	26%
Professional	16%
Other	5%

Social Media Usage by College

Facebook

Facebook was the most used platform across the university. The College of Liberal Arts and the College of Health and Human Services had the highest percentage of heavy usage, with 37 percent and 33 percent using it heavily, respectively. The lighter users tended to be in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, with 56 percent of the population using Facebook lightly, followed by the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture with 46 percent light usage.

Heavy Facebook Users

Liberal Arts	37%
Health and Human Services	33%
Life Sciences	29%
Business	28%
Engineering	15%

Light Facebook Users

Engineering	56%
Life Sciences	46%
Health and Human Services	42%
Business	36%
Liberal Arts	24%

YouTube

YouTube was the second most-used platform, though there were significantly fewer heavy users than Facebook. The heaviest users were in the College of Liberal Arts, with 9 percent of the college using it more than 61 minutes on a typical day; the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture was close behind with 8 percent. The school with the most light users was the Whittemore School of Business and Economics, with 70 percent, followed by the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences with 69 percent.

Heavy YouTube Users

Liberal Arts	9%
Life Sciences	8%
Engineering	6%
Business	6%
Health and Human Services	3%

Light YouTube Users

Business	70%
Engineering	69%
Liberal Arts	67%
Health and Human Services	63%
Life Sciences	62%

Blogs

Our research showed that 20 percent of business students are light users of Blogs, followed by 19 percent of liberal arts students. The light users of Blogs are all within a nine percent range across the colleges. No conclusions could be drawn concerning heavy blog usage due to lack of data.

Light Blog Users

Business	20%
Liberal Arts	19%
Engineering	16%
Life Sciences	12%
Health and Human Services	11%

Twitter

The majority of light users of Twitter were business students, with 22 percent of the college reporting they use Twitter lightly on a typical day. Life sciences and health and human services students use it the least, with eight percent of the population using it on a typical day. Engineering and liberal arts students were in the middle, with 11 percent of each college using Twitter. No conclusions could be drawn concerning heavy Twitter usage due to lack of data.

Light Twitter Users

Business	22%
Engineering	11%
Liberal Arts	11%
Life Sciences	8%
Health and Human Services	8%

MySpace

The research showed the majority of light users of MySpace were in the College of Liberal Arts, with 15 percent of the college reporting that they use MySpace to some degree. Only 8 percent of engineering and life sciences students reported being light users of MySpace. No conclusions could be drawn concerning heavy MySpace usage due to lack of data.

Light MySpace Users

Liberal Arts	15%
Health and Human Services	11%
Business	10%
Engineering	8%
Life Sciences	8%

LinkedIn

LinkedIn was the least used platform by UNH students. Most students were light users, most of which were in the business school (23 percent). The lightest users were in the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture, and the College of Liberal Arts, with light usage of three percent and four percent, respectively. No conclusions could be drawn concerning heavy LinkedIn usage due to lack of data.

Light LinkedIn Users

Business	23%
Engineering	7%
Health and Human Services	7%
Liberal Arts	4%
Life Sciences	3%

Appendix

University of New Hampshire Research Team That Conducted Study of Social Networking and Grades

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