

Study Finds Link Between Facebook Use, Lower Grades in College

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(PhysOrg.com) -- College students who use Facebook spend less time studying and have lower grade point averages than students who have not signed up for the social networking website, according to a pilot study at one university.

However, more than three-quarters of Facebook users claimed that their use of the social networking site didn't interfere with their studies.

"We can't say that use of Facebook leads to lower grades and less studying - but we did find a relationship there," said Aryn Karpinski, co-author of the study and a doctoral student in education at Ohio State University.

"There's a disconnect between students' claim that Facebook use doesn't

impact their studies, and our finding showing they had lower grades and spent less time studying."

While this was a relatively small, exploratory study, it is one of the first to find a relationship between college students' use of Facebook and their academic achievement.

Typically, Facebook users in the study had GPAs between 3.0 and 3.5, while non-users had GPAs between 3.5 and 4.0.

In addition, users said they averaged one to five hours a week studying, while non-users studied 11 to 15 hours per week.

Karpinski conducted the study with Adam Duberstein of Ohio Dominican University. They presented their research April 16 in San Diego at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association.

The researchers surveyed 219 students at Ohio State, including 102 undergraduate students and 117 graduate students. Of the participants, 148 said they had a Facebook account.

The study found that 85 percent of undergraduates were Facebook users, while only 52 percent of graduate students had accounts.

Students who spent more time working at paid jobs were less likely to use Facebook, while students who were more involved in extracurricular activities at school were more likely to use Facebook.

Science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) and business majors were more likely to use Facebook than were students majoring in the humanities and social sciences.

"Other research had indicated that STEM majors spend more time on the Internet than do other students, so that may be one reason why they are more likely to use Facebook," Karpinski said.

There were no differences in Facebook use between different members of racial and ethnic groups that were part of the study, or between men and women.

Younger and full-time students were more likely to be Facebook users.

Findings showed that 79 percent of Facebook users claimed it did not have an impact on their academic performance. In open-ended questions on the survey, users claimed they didn't use Facebook frequently enough to notice an impact, and emphasized that academics were a priority for them.

Karpinski emphasized that the results don't necessarily mean that Facebook use leads to lower grades.

"There may be other factors involved, such as personality traits, that link Facebook use and lower grades," she said.

"It may be that if it wasn't for Facebook, some students would still find other ways to avoid studying, and would still get lower grades. But perhaps the lower GPAs could actually be because students are spending too much time socializing online."

Karpinski said it was significant that the link between lower grades and Facebook use was found even in graduate students. She said that graduate students generally have GPAs above 3.5, so the fact that even they had lower grades when they used Facebook -- and spent less time studying - was an amazing finding.

The popularity of Facebook is evident in college lecture halls, Karpinski said. Faculty members who allow students to use laptops in class have told her they often see students on the Facebook site during class.

"It's not going away anytime soon, and we need to learn more about how Facebook use is affecting students," she said.

As for herself, Karpinski said she doesn't have a Facebook account, although her co-author does.

"For me, I think [Facebook](#) is a huge distraction," she said.

Source: The Ohio State University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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