

The positive and negative perception of university students using social media as a learning tool

Joshua Ebere Chukwuere^{1*}

¹North-West University, Mahikeng, South Africa

*joshchukwuere@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Social media platforms (SMPs) continue to revolutionise scholarly communication and information sharing. It positively and negatively impacts educational institutions. Students at higher institutions depend on SMPs for their various daily life activities and communication purposes. However, little is known about the positive and negative perceptions of first-year students adopting SMPs as a learning tool, specifically in emerging countries. This study seeks to investigate the positive and negative perceptions that first-year students have of the use of social media platforms as a learning tool. This study deployed a quantitative research methodology in collecting randomised questionnaires from the students. The simple random sampling focused on first-year students at the North-West University, Mahikeng Campus. This study's findings established a good foundation of the first-year students' positive and negative perceptions of social media use for academic purposes. From the positive perspective, SMPs were seen to ease learning while, negatively, the study findings revealed that social media platforms usage could sometimes be frustrating.

Keywords

Academic, Educational, Learning tool, Negative, Perceptions, Positive, Social media platforms, Students

Introduction

Social media can be defined as a virtual world that connects individuals with similar interests to network and share ideas. Balakrishnan, Teoh, Pourshafie and Liew [1] define social media as 'virtual communities' that involve people with a common interest in a subject matter and who like to socialise. Social media platforms (SMPs) keep changing the communication landscape for businesses, government, non-government agencies, individuals, and especially students more than any other form of technological innovations and inventions. These platforms present humans with a platform to communicate and interact with others daily. Furthermore, social media platforms enhance connectivity and facilitate communication among students and their peers for academic and non-academic purposes. The platforms provide a 'virtual world' for people to connect, communicate, and socialise. Students are included in this virtual world because it enables them to socialise and share learning content. Lecturers can collaborate with colleagues and their students to share content and communicate information using social media platforms [2].

Students' perception regarding the use of social media as a tool for teaching and learning can be favorable due to its potential to exchange academic resources. A study by Saaondo and Igbaakaa [3] found that students positively perceive using social media platforms for educational activities. This positive perception can be associated with the fact that the platforms advance learning purposes in exchanging information and educational resources. Saaondo and Igbaakaa [3] further indicated that it was encouraging to adopt social media platforms for teaching and learning. However, there is little or no empirical research on the positive and negative perception of first-year students using social media platforms as a learning tool (understanding how students view social media as a learning tool or platform). This study aims to understand the perceptions of first-year students concerning social media usage as a learning tool.

Literature Review

The perceptions of students regarding the use of social media as a learning platform

Social media platforms bring an open world for the general public to discuss social, economic, political, and environmental (SEPE) issues, among others. Akram and Kumar [4] state that social media provides the platform for people to produce, share, and exchange concepts, ideas in videos, audio, pictures (images), and many others. Students and others use the platform to network and socialize with others. Currently, the platforms are a means for students to network and connect with others for personal and academic gratification. These platforms may impact students positively and negatively based on their perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs. Lubua, Semlambo and Pretorius [5] supposed that necessary measures are needed to improve users' perception of social media platforms. According to Gudelliwar et al. [2], the use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, among others, presents a positive and negative impact on users, including students. However, students have accepted social media platforms as a learning tool to engage in teaching and learning [6]. Social media platforms positively and negatively influence undergraduate students' academic performance [3]. Positively, the platforms allow students to communicate with each other [2].

Positive perception of using social media as a learning tool

Social media and its platforms provide inevitable benefits to students as a result of the observed good use. Institutions of learning and academics are welcoming social media as a platform to promote teaching and learning [1]. According to Akram and Kumar [4], social media platforms benefit users (students) positively in the following ways:

- **Socialising:** Socialising and making friends in exchange of ideas, skills, and learning.
- **Knowledge sharing** provides an easy and accessible way for students to share information and knowledge that improves academic and non-academic learning.
- **Self-directed learning** allows students to learn new ideas and skills and be updated instantly [7, 8].

- **Learning from across platforms:** Learning is continuous, students can learn new ideas using many resources.
- **Ever-ready:** Social media platforms provide instant and trending news from around the world. Students can be informed on current academic trending issues for future preparation.
- **Improve grades:** Students' academic grades improve with the use of social media platforms [2].
- **Convenient:** It provides a suitable and handy learning tool for the interested group to share knowledge and skills [9].
- **Collaborate:** Social media platforms promote students' sharing of ideas and knowledge collaboratively [10]. It also promotes collaboration between students and lecturers [11].

The positive perception of the use of social media as a learning tool keeps growing. However, according to Balakrishnan et al. [1], social media adoption at higher education institutions cannot guarantee students' learning success and positive academic performance. However, students' positive attitude using social media platforms as learning platforms, which correlates with good grades and performance [11]. Student perception demonstrates that social media platforms promote group work among peers [10, 13]. The more students work in groups, collaborative and self-directed learning can be achieved even in a crisis, as in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Mirbabaie, Bunker, Stieglitz, Marx and Ehnis [14], social media platforms are used by students during crisis periods, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic when social distancing and lockdowns were imposed. The same platforms created a personalised learning approach for students [15].

Negative perception of using social media as a learning tool

Negative perceptions defined the mist attitude of students in adopting social media platforms as learning tools. The negative perception conveyed many challenges for students, such as anxiety, phobia, depression, and loneliness. According to

Aluh, Chukwuobasi and Mosanya [16], anxiety towards and phobia of social media usage among students are increasing globally, which can be regarded as negative perceptions. Akram and Kumar [4] believe that social media platforms could negatively impact students in the following ways:

- **Reduce human or physical contact:** Students spend hours on various social media platforms and neglect human communication and interaction. Many are isolated from friends and family while on social media.
- **Language slangs:** Social media introduces slang, jargon, and unconventional short-hand writing, which destroys good language and writing skills.
- **Reduce creative writing skills:** Students spend time on social media writing and checking spelling without necessarily applying personal creativity in writing.
- **Lower marks (grades):** Academic grades and scores are negatively impacted because of the number of hours spent on non-academic activities. Students spend time using the platforms for other purposes than engaging in academic activities.
- **Time wastage:** As a result, lengthy hours are spent on social media; this time is wasted without any educational benefit [17].
- **Bullying:** Online bullying has increased as a result of students spending hours on social media.
- **Less concentration:** Students are becoming less concentrated in the classroom because of their different social media activities.
- **Absenteeism:** Increased absenteeism in class [2].
- **Distracting:** Students' use of social media platforms increases students' distractions from class and during study time because they are tempted to visit other connections and trending topics [18, 19].
- **Plagiarism:** Current technologies increase academic plagiarism online [20]. Social media usage creates quick access to scholarly content, which can lead to plagiarism.

Research Methodology

This paper deployed quantitative research methodology in looking into the positive and negative perceptions of university students using social media platforms as learning tools. The study was conducted at the North-West University, Mahikeng Campus. In 2020, a total of 58 356 students registered at the North-West University [21]. At the time of the study, no data was found separately on the population of 2020 registered students at the Mahikeng Campus. However, in 2017, the Mahikeng Campus had 12 489 registered students [22]. This paper followed Krejcie and Morgan's [23] sample selection table. According to the sampling determination table by Krejcie and Morgan [23], this study's sample size lies between 10 000 and 15 000 (370 and 375 sample size). A random sampling method was used in collecting 327 questionnaires from 2020 first-year students from the Mahikeng Campus of the North-West University. N=327 amounted to an 88.3% response rate.

A questionnaire was designed on Google Forms and distributed among different social media platforms through the quantitative research methodology. Most importantly, WhatsApp and the university learning management system (LMS) called eFundi were used. The questionnaire was open for students' participation from 10 June to 2 September 2020. A total of 449 questionnaires were collected, and only 327 were used. One hundred-and-twenty-two (122) of the unused were discarded because of incompleteness; the students were not first-year students and not registered for the 2020 academic year. The data collection rate was 88.3%.

Data Analysis and discussions

This section provides the data analysis and discussion of the questions on demographic characteristics, the students' positive and negative perceptions of adopting social media platforms as learning tools.

Demographic characteristics of participants

The demographic information in Table 1 was required to understand the participants' personal information, such as age bracket, gender, race, and faculty of study.

Table 1. Demographic information

Questions	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age group	17	3 0.9
		18	69 21.1
		19	93 28.4
		20	58 17.7
		21	38 11.6
		22	24 7.3
		23	15 4.6
		24	9 2.8
		25	5 1.5
		26	5 1.5
		27	3 0.9
		28	2 0.6
		31	1 0.3
		35	1 0.3
		45	1 0.3
2	Gender	Male	155 47.4
		Female	172 52.6
3	Race	Black	319 97.6
		White	2 0.6
		Indian	3 0.9
		Coloured	3 0.9
4	Faculty	Economic and Management Sciences (EMS)	214 65.4
		Education	63 19.3
		Natural and Agricultural Sciences	24 7.3
		Humanities	19 5.8
		Health Sciences	5 1.5
		Theology	2 0.6

According to Table 1, the study found that many of the participants (students) in the study's ages were 19 (28.4%), 20 (17.7%) and 18 (21.1%) years, and others. The finding shows that most of the respondents are tech-savvy, who spend many hours on social media platforms performing

different activities. The study shows in Table 1 (no 2) that 172 (52.6%) of the respondents were females, while 155 (47.4%) were males. This indicates that female students were the majority of the respondents to the study questionnaire. Also, in question 3 (Table 1), most of the respondents were black students, which indicates the location where the study was conducted is dominated by blacks- Africans. The findings from question 4 show that 214 (65.4%) of the respondents (students) are EMS Faculty students, while others follow.

Most used social media

Table 2 highlighted the different types of social media platforms used mainly by the students, while Table 3 indicates the various types of social media platforms students use as learning tools.

Table 2. The type of social media platforms you mostly daily

Constructs	Responses	
	N	Percentage
WhatsApp	262	62.7
Facebook	78	18.7
Instagram	38	9.1
Twitter	22	5.3
YouTube	12	2.9
TikTok	3	0.7
Google	3	0.7

Table 3. The type of social media platforms used as learning tools

Constructs	Responses	
	N	Percentage
WhatsApp	188	72.3
YouTube	36	13.8
Google	22	8.5
Facebook	8	3.1
Instagram	3	1.2
Zoom	2	0.8
Twitter	1	0.4

The results in Table 2 show that 262 (62.7%) of the respondents mostly use WhatsApp, 78 (18.7%) use Facebook, 38 (9.1%) use Instagram, and others follow. Results in Table 2 reveal that most of the students use WhatsApp daily for

various activities. According to Aluh et al. [16], WhatsApp is the most used social platform among students. In Table 3, 188 (72.3%) of the respondents (students) preferred the use of WhatsApp as a learning tool, while 36 (13.8%) use YouTube; other options follow. The findings in Table 3 depict that students preferred WhatsApp as a learning tool.

The perception of students regarding the use of social media as a learning platform

There are different perceptions of students regarding the use of social media platforms as learning tools. Tables 4 and 5 provide the two main perceptions of university students about adopting social media as a learning tool.

Positive perceptions

This section of the questionnaire provided various positive perceptions of university students towards adopting social media platforms as learning tools or platforms.

Table 4. Positive perceptions of using social media platforms as learning tool

	Questions or items	Options or responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	I believe that social media platforms make personal and social life easy and enjoyable	Strongly agree	274	83.8
		Strongly disagree	24	7.3
		Undecided (not sure)	29	8.9
2	I believe that the use of social media platforms makes learning easy	Strongly agree	203	62.1
		Strongly disagree	81	24.8
		Undecided (not sure)	43	13.1
3	I believe that social media makes it easy for me to communicate with other students	Strongly agree	289	88.4
		Strongly disagree	16	4.9
		Undecided (not sure)	22	6.7
4	I believe that social media platforms facilitate communication between students and lecturers	Strongly agree	232	70.9
		Strongly disagree	52	15.9
		Undecided (not sure)	43	13.1
5	I often conduct study groups because of social media on educational applications	Strongly agree	216	66.1
		Strongly disagree	60	18.3
		Undecided (not sure)	51	15.6
6	I believe that learning with social media will improve self-directed learning	Strongly agree	223	68.2
		Strongly disagree	54	16.5
		Undecided (not sure)	50	15.3
7	I believe that social media platforms can offer many opportunities and benefits to students	Strongly agree	206	63.0
		Strongly disagree	55	16.8
		Undecided (not sure)	66	20.2
8	Social media platforms have changed the world, and academic institutions cannot do without it	Strongly agree	249	76.1
		Strongly disagree	36	11.0
		Undecided (not sure)	42	12.8
9	I believe that social media can assist in learning during the crisis period	Strongly agree	289	88.4
		Strongly disagree	16	4.9
		Undecided (not sure)	22	6.7
10	I will continue to use social media platforms for learning purposes	Strongly agree	272	83.2
		Strongly disagree	23	7.0
		Undecided (not sure)	32	9.8
11	I use social media for learning purposes because others use it or the university insists on using it.	Strongly agree	239	73.1
		Strongly disagree	48	14.7
		Undecided (not sure)	40	12.2
12	I can manage learning contents because of social media platforms	Strongly agree	210	64.2
		Strongly disagree	55	16.8
		Undecided (not sure)	62	19.0
13	I believe in the use of social media for learning purposes; the university should promote it.	Strongly agree	205	62.7
		Strongly disagree	61	18.7
		Undecided (not sure)	61	18.7

14	I believe that the continuous use of social media platforms will improve students' academic performance.	Strongly agree	201	61.5
		Strongly disagree	62	19.0
		Undecided (not sure)	64	19.6
15	I believe that the current generation of students is social media-oriented, so it influences their learning.	Strongly agree	262	80.1
		Strongly disagree	33	10.1
		Undecided (not sure)	32	9.8
16	I do not see any immediate benefits of using social media platforms for learning	Strongly agree	72	22.0
		Strongly disagree	170	52.0
		Undecided (not sure)	85	26.0
17	I do not receive continuous support on the use of social media platforms for learning purposes	Strongly agree	115	35.2
		Strongly disagree	152	46.5
		Undecided (not sure)	60	18.3

According to Table 4 number 1, the question was to determine if respondents believed that social media platforms makes their personal and social life easier and more enjoyable. The results of the study showed that 274 (83.8%) respondents believed that social media platforms makes their personal and social life easier and enjoyable. On question number 2, 203 (62.1%) of the respondents (students) indicated that social media platforms makes learning easy. The study results also revealed in item number 3, that 289 (88.4%) of the respondents reported that social media made it easy for them to communicate with other students within and outside the university environment. In question number 4 (question 4), it was found that 232 (70.9%) of the respondents (students) suggest that social media platforms facilitate the communication, collaboration, and engagement between students and lecturers (tutors).

Mbodila et al. [10] reported that social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and many others increase students' and lecturers' collaboration and engagement. The study finding is supported by Gudelliwar et al. [2], who believe that social media is used to build collaboration and communication with academic colleagues and their students in sharing learning content.

The findings from question number 5 above show that 216 (66.1%) of the students often use social media platforms to conduct study group sessions (group study and reading). The study results also show, from number 6, that 223 (68.2%) of the students suggested that social media platforms improve self-directed learning [7, 4, 8]. The study

further revealed, from question 7, that 206 (63.0%) students indicated that social media platforms could offer many opportunities and benefits during the learning. Results from question 8, revealed that social media platforms had changed the academic world, and institutions cannot do without them. This finding was supported by Balakrishnan et al. [1], who pointed that educational institutions now depend on social media platforms to promote teaching and learning and other institutional engagements.

Mirbabaie et al. [14] reported that students and academic institutions use social media platforms in times of social, economic, political, and health crises. The result from the study found, from number 9, that 289 (88.4%) of the students suggested that social media platforms assist them in learning during the crisis period. Globally during this COVID-19 pandemic, learning has been ongoing through social media. The finding deduced from number 10 established that 272 (83.2%) of the students strongly agreed that they would continue to use social media platforms for teaching and learning purposes. This finding aligns with Tasir et al. [6], who established that students had accepted social media platforms as learning tools during teaching and learning activities. The platforms are also embraced by higher academic institutions and academics [1].

Students' perceptions and attitudes in adopting social media platforms can change as peers sometimes influence their usage as a learning tool. The results in this study revealed in (number 11) that 239 (73.1%) of the respondents (students)

strongly suggest that they use social media platforms for learning is influenced by the adoption of the platforms by their peers and the university. The study results further reveal in number 12 that 210 (64.2%) of the respondents (students) use social media platforms because it helped them to manage their learning contents and activities. The universities and academics should promote students' benefits and opportunities by encouraging students to continue the use of social media platforms for learning purposes, as reported in question 13 (205 (62.7%).

Balakrishnan et al. [1] believe that social media adoption at higher education institutions cannot guarantee students' learning success and positive academic performance. On the contrary, this study results showed in question 14 that 201 (61.5%) of the students (respondents) perceived that the continuous and effective use of social media platforms would improve their academic performance and grades. The current generation of students are digital natives with an open mind to adopt and use social media platforms. The study results also establish, in question 15, that 262 (80.1%) of the respondents (students) believed that the current generation of students are social

media-oriented and fanatic, and this influences their learning positively.

Students have benefited academically when they use social media platforms [4]. The literature supports the respondents' view, with 170 (52.0%) (number 16) disagreeing that there are no immediate benefits with using social media platforms as a learning tool. The study results revealed that social media platforms provide immediate academic benefits and support to student's academic well-being. The result from number 17 shows that 152 (46.5%) of the respondents strongly disagree that students do not receive support with the use of social media platforms as learning tools. The findings imply that students are supported by peers, higher education institutions, and other stakeholders when using social media platforms in their learning process.

Negative perceptions

Students' use of social media platforms brings about negative perceptions and rewards [4]. This section of the study focused on investigating the university students' negative perceptions of using social media platforms. 13 questions address the negative perceptions.

Table 5. Negative perception of using social media platforms as a learning tool

Questions or items	Options or responses	Frequency	Percentage
1 I have a personal fear of social media (social media phobia)	Strongly agree	83	25.4
	Strongly disagree	169	51.7
	Undecided (not sure)	75	22.9
2 I have no confidence and believe in social media platforms for learning purposes	Strongly agree	93	28.4
	Strongly disagree	165	50.5
	Undecided (not sure)	69	21.1
3 There are no university policies or regulations that guide the use of social media for academic purposes	Strongly agree	84	25.7
	Strongly disagree	133	40.7
	Undecided (not sure)	110	33.6
4 I believe that the usage of social media for educational purposes is frustrating	Strongly agree	137	41.9
	Strongly disagree	121	37.0
	Undecided (not sure)	69	21.1
5 I think that social media platforms are discouraging	Strongly agree	74	22.6
	Strongly disagree	152	46.5
	Undecided (not sure)	101	30.9
6 Using social media platforms demands a great deal of mental energy and effort	Strongly agree	167	51.1
	Strongly disagree	94	28.7
	Undecided (not sure)	66	20.2
7 Interacting with social media for academic reasons is time-consuming	Strongly agree	125	38.2
	Strongly disagree	134	41.0

8	Social media can be distracting to students	Undecided (not sure)	68	20.8
		Strongly agree	203	62.1
		Strongly disagree	70	21.4
		Undecided (not sure)	54	16.5
9	Learning through social media platforms is not suitable for personal learning style and needs	Strongly agree	154	47.1
		Strongly disagree	102	31.2
		Undecided (not sure)	71	21.7
10	I do not believe that students are technically advanced to use social media platforms for learning purposes	Strongly agree	134	41.0
		Strongly disagree	133	40.7
		Undecided (not sure)	60	18.3
11	I believe that the university is not supporting the use of social media for learning purposes	Strongly agree	88	26.9
		Strongly disagree	153	46.8
		Undecided (not sure)	86	26.3
12	I think that students will find it difficult to use social media platforms for learning purposes	Strongly agree	159	48.6
		Strongly disagree	92	28.1
		Undecided (not sure)	76	23.2
13	I think that the use of social media will promote academic cheating (plagiarism)	Strongly agree	183	56.0
		Strongly disagree	75	22.9
		Undecided (not sure)	69	21.1

Table 5, number 1, the result revealed that 169 (51.7%) of the respondents (students) strongly disagreed that they do not have social media phobia (personal fear of social media platforms). However, Aluh et al. [16] found that social media phobia and anxiety increase among students. This finding implies that current university students have embraced social media use for academic and non-academic activities without any negative perception. In number 2, 165 (50.5%) of the students (respondents) strongly disagree that they have no confidence or belief in social media platforms' ability to facilitate the learning process. Instead, students have a strong conviction for using social media platforms in their learning process. This view is supported by the result obtained in number 3, where 133 (40.7%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that higher education institutions have no policy or regulations to guide students' conduct in using social media platforms for academic purposes.

In question 4 (number 4), it was found that the majority of the students, 137 (41.9%), perceived that the use of social media for learning purposes could be frustrating. Meanwhile, 121 (37.0%) believed that social media platforms were not frustrating during study or class time. This finding is associated with the views of Purvis et al. [18]

and Siakas et al. [19], who suggested that social media platforms were constantly distracting because of many links that quickly draw students away from the actual purpose of learning. These links could lead to unproductive learning. As shown in question 5 (number 5), 152 (46.5%) of the students (respondents) strongly disagreed that social media platforms were discouraging. At the same time, 101 (30.9%) were undecided (not sure) about the fact that social media platforms' were discouraging as learning tools. Boahene, Fangn and Sampong [24] believe that social media platforms encourage students to participate in academic-related activities. The findings from question 6 (number 6) show that 167 (51.1%) of the students indicated that social media platforms involved a great deal of mental energy and effort as learning platforms.

The study results further indicate, from question 7 (number 7), that 134 (41.0%) of the respondents (students) believed that the use of social media platforms for academic reasons is time-consuming. On the contrary, 125 (38.2%) suggest that social media platforms for learning or academic reasons are time-consuming. Bernard and Dzandza [17] found that students devote more time to social media platforms than their studies. The adoption and use of social media for

academic reasons are not time-consuming; rather, it conveys benefits and opportunities. Purvis et al. [18] observed that social media platforms distract the student during study time. This finding supports this result in number 8 (question 8), which showed that 203 (62.1%) of the students (respondents) believed that the adoption and use of social media platforms could be distracting to students. This finding is supported by Siakas et al. [19] findings that students' use of social media platforms distracts their academic progress.

Different learning styles aid students' learning ability and progress. From question 9 (number 9), the study found that 154 (47.1%) of the students indicated that social media platforms' adoption and usage were not suitable or the preferred students' learning style and needs. Social media platforms allow students to create their preferred learning style or group [15]. The study also revealed, from question 10 (question 10), that 134 (41.0%) of the students were not technically advanced or ready to adopt social media platforms for learning. Furthermore, 133 (40.7%) of the students indicated that they were technically prepared to adopt and use social media platforms as a learning tool to meet their learning needs. Universities globally are beginning to adopt social media platforms as media for teaching and learning. It is established in study question 11 that 153 (46.8%) of the respondents (students) indicated that university(ies) is(are) supporting the use of social media platforms for learning purposes. Likewise, 88 (26.9%) of the students firmly believed that university(ies) is(are) not supporting social media platform adoption for academic purposes, and 86 (26.3%) of the students were undecided (not sure).

Students' perceptions show, from the response in question 12 (number 12), that 159 (48.6%) of them strongly agreed that they would find it challenging to use social media platforms as learning tools. In comparison, 92 (28.1%) strongly disagreed that they would find it challenging to use social media platforms as learning tools. Plagiarism is a 21st-century academic challenge and concern [20]. It was revealed from the response in question 13 (number 13) that 183

(56.0%) of the students (respondents) strongly believed that the adoption and use of social media platforms promote academic cheating (plagiarism). This finding implies that the more students use social media platforms for learning purposes, the more academic cheating (plagiarism) will increase.

The implications of the study

The implications of the findings of this study are to students, learning institutions, and lecturers.

Student: As established in the study, social media platforms' use has positively affected students' adoption of the platforms. Positively, social media platforms bring about learning as-you-go and learning anywhere and anytime for students across different courses and learning institutions. Social media platforms provide immediate academic benefits. The study's findings will empower students to appreciate the positive aspect of social media platforms as a learning tool even in crisis times, such as with the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, social media platforms can negatively affect students' learning process when they are misused. Furthermore, comprehensive implications of the findings are presented in Table 7 below.

Learning institutions and lecturers: The study results revealed that social media adoption offers institutions of learning and lecturers the opportunity to bring learning content closer to students at all times. By implication, learning institutions and lecturers will understand through this study that social media platforms provide students positive benefits and opportunities, as listed in Table 7 below.

The contribution to body of knowledge

In this study, social media platforms have also been shown to make learning, personal and social life easier and enjoyable. Also, these platforms improve communication and cooperation among students, peers, and lecturers (tutors) within and outside the university (learning) environment. Social media platforms promote group study (discussions) and self-directed learning. They convey opportunities for students and are suitable

for the academic world and institutions. Social media platforms assist students in their learning progress during a crisis period. Peers and university authorities can influence students to use social media platforms as learning tools. The platforms are used to manage student learning contents and activities. They improve students' academic performance and grades. Hence higher education institutions should support students adopt social media platforms to enhance learning activities.

In the same vein, the adoption of social media platforms for educational (learning) purposes has

been perceived as frustrating, discouraging, involving a great deal of mental energy and effort to use, and time-consuming. Social media platforms are also seen as distracting to students during learning. Furthermore, the adoption and use of social media platforms considered as unsuitable or not preferred for students' personal learning styles and needs. Finally, social media platforms are thought of as challenging to be used as a learning tool, and promote academic cheating (plagiarism). Table 6 provide a summary of positive and negative perceptions of social media platforms for learning tool.

Table 6. Positive and negative perception of using social media platforms as a learning tool

	Positive perception	Negative perception
1	Social media platforms make personal and social life easy and enjoyable.	Social media platforms for educational (learning) purposes are frustrating.
2	Social media platforms make learning easy.	Social media platforms are discouraging for learning purposes.
3	Social media platforms make it easy for students to communicate with peers within and outside the university environment.	Social media platforms involve a great deal of mental energy and effort to use as a learning platform.
4	Social media platforms facilitate the communication and engagement between students and lecturers (tutors).	Social media platforms are time-consuming for learning purposes.
5	Social media platforms are used to conduct study group sessions.	Social media platforms are distractive to students.
6	Social media platforms improve self-directed learning.	Social media platforms' adoption and usage are not suitable for students' personal learning styles and needs.
7	Social media platforms offer many opportunities and benefits in the learning process.	Social media platforms are difficult to use as a learning tool.
8	Social media platforms change the academic world and institutions for good.	Social media platforms promote academic cheating (plagiarism).
9	Social media platforms assist students in learning during a crisis period.	
10	Peers and university authorities influence students to use social media platforms as a learning tool.	
11	Social media platforms are used in managing student learning content and activities.	
12	Social media platforms improve students' academic performance and grades.	
13	The instant benefits encourage students to adopt social media platforms as a learning tool.	
14	Higher education institutions and peers support students to adopt social media platforms.	

Conclusion

Social media platforms are good for teaching and learning when applied effectively and appropriately applied. The adoption of social

media platforms by students is no longer new, rather students' perceptions define the positive and negative aspects of the platforms. This study contributed to the academic audience and literature a comprehensive list of students'

positive and negative perceptions regarding social media platforms. The students' positive and negative perceptions drive their adoption and use of social media platforms as a learning tool. As society and technology advance, students, lecturers, and higher education institutions' authorities should embrace the positive aspects of social media platforms' to address learning gaps created by the COVID-19 pandemic and bring learning contents and materials closer to the learners and the university community at large. In the future, researchers should investigate the barriers to the adoption of social media platforms as learning tools. Researchers should look into the factors that motivate students to adopt social media platforms as learning tools. Furthermore, a study could be conducted to understand the preferred social media platforms suitable for learning among students' current generation.

References

- [1] Balakrishnan, V., Teoh, K. K., Pourshafie, T., & Liew, T. K. (2017). Social media and their use in learning: A comparative analysis between Australia and Malaysia from the learners' perspectives. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 2017, vol. 33, no. 1.
- [2] Gudelliwar, S. S., Kishor, S. B., & Yadav, S. K. (2018). Positive and Negative Impact Social Networking Sites on the Adolescents.
- [3] Saaondo, P., & Igbaakaa, J. A. (2018). Perception and Attitude Towards The Use Of Social Media Network Among Benue State University Undergraduates. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, vol. 23, no. 8, pp. 69-75.
- [4] Akram, W., & Kumar, R. (2017). A study on positive and negative effects of social media on society. *International Journal of Computer Sciences and Engineering*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 351-354.
- [5] Lubua, E. W., Semlambo, A., & Pretorius, P. D. (2017). Factors affecting the use of social media in the learning process.
- [6] Tasir, Z., Al-Dheleai, Y. M. H., Harun, J., & Shukor, N. A. (2011). Students' perception towards the Use of Social Networking as an e-learning Platform," *In 10th WSEAS International Conference on Education and Educational Technology*, Penang: Malaysia, pp. 70-75.
- [7] Salleh, U. K. H., Zulnaidi, H., Rahim, S. S. A., Bin Zakaria, A. R., & Hidayat, R. (2019). Roles of Self-Directed Learning and Social Networking Sites in Lifelong Learning. *International Journal of Instruction*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 167-182.
- [8] Thawabieh, A., & Rfou, M. (2015). The Effect of Facebook upon Self Directed Learning. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, vol. 39.
- [9] Alhababi, H., Alfadil, M., Alzamanan, M., & Williams, M. K. (2015). Students' perception on the use of social media on their academic learning. *In E-Learn: World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education*, "Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE)", pp. 1211-1217.
- [10] Ansari, J. A. N., & Khan, N. A. (2020). Exploring the role of social media in collaborative learning the new domain of learning. *Smart Learning Environments*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 1-16.
- [11] Mbodila, M., Ndebele, C., & Muhandji, K. (2014). The effect of social media on student's engagement and collaboration in higher education: A case study of the use of Facebook at a South African university. *Journal of communication*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 115-125.
- [12] Kitchakarn, O. (2016). How Students Perceived Social Media as a Learning Tool in Enhancing Their Language Learning Performance. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 53-60.
- [13] Cole, D., Rengasamy, E., Batchelor, S., Pope, C., Riley, C., & Cunningham, A. M. (2017). Using social media to support small

- group learning. *BMC Medical Education*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 1-7.
- [14] Mirbabaie, M., Bunker, D., Stieglitz, S., Marx, J., & Ehnis, C. (2020). Social media in times of crisis: Learning from Hurricane Harvey for the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic response. *Journal of Information Technology*, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 195-213.
- [15] Seedat, Y., Roodt, S., & Mwapwele, S. D. (2019). How South African University Information Systems Students Are Using Social Media. In *International Conference on Social Implications of Computers in Developing Countries*, pp. 378-389, Springer, Cham.
- [16] Aluh, D. O., Chukwuobasi, T., & Mosanya, A. U. (2019). A cross-sectional survey of Social Media Anxiety among students of University of Nigeria. *BioRxiv*, pp. 666701.
- [17] Bernard, K. J., & Dzandza, P. E. (2018). Effect of social media on academic performance of students in Ghanaian Universities: A case study of University of Ghana, Legon.
- [18] Purvis, A., Rodger, H., & Beckingham, S. (2016). Engagement or distraction: The use of social media for learning in higher education. *Student Engagement and Experience Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1
- [19] Siakas, K., Makkonen, P., Siakas, E., Georgiadou, E., & Rahanu, H. (2017). Social media adoption in higher education: a case study involving IT/IS students. *International Journal of Social Media and Interactive Learning Environments*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 62-78.
- [20] Mahabeer, P., & Pirtheepal, T. (2019). Assessment, plagiarism and its effect on academic integrity: Experiences of academics at a university in South Africa. *South African Journal of Science*, vol. 115, no. 11-12, pp. 1-8.
- [21] NWU Profile. (2019/2020). Available: http://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/i-institutional-information/Corporate_Profile/2019-2020/NWU%20Profile%20Engels%202019-2020.pdf
- [22] NWU Profile. (2017/2018). Available: http://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/i-institutional-information/Corporate_Profile/2017-2018/NWU-Profile-2017-18.pdf
- [23] Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and psychological measurement*, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 607-610.
- [24] Boahene, K. O., Fang, J., & Sampong, F. (2019). Social media usage and tertiary students' academic performance: Examining the influences of academic self-efficacy and innovation characteristics. *Sustainability*, vol. 11, no. 8, pp. 2431.