

# **The Effects of Facebook Habits on Academic Success**

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Facebook is a social networking site that has become so popular among college students that it is not too farfetched to believe that social networking of this magnitude might have some negative effects on college life. There have been many studies about using Facebook as a learning tool. One study showed that "most students joined Facebook because Facebook was associated with university-level education" (Madge et. al., 2009). This same study also found that Facebook is mainly used to keep up with social aspects of college life and it is a part of most students' daily routine (Madge, et. al., 2009). However, students also did not seem to agree that Facebook helped their academic life (Madge et. al., 2009). Other studies have found that when students are asked why they did not put more effort into schoolwork that Facebook distraction was a regular explanation (Yazedijan et al., 2008).

Facebook offers many different options for social networking and entertainment. As far as communication goes, Facebook offers a chat option in which people can send messages instantly to one another. You can also talk to several people at the same time. Another way of communication is using a private message option to write messages to another person. Facebook also offers the option to write on another person's profile where other people may view the message. However, these are not the only things Facebook does. Many applications and games can also be found on this site. There are ways to post items in other people's profiles. A person can play interactive games that involve playing with other people on the site. The things that this website provide continue to grow and in turn it continues to keep people intrigued and keeps them coming back.

Therefore, it is obvious that Facebook has become a very important feature of college life. However, what are the effects of so much Facebook use on academic success? Academic success is usually measured by grade point average (GPA). The following study examines whether or not a student's Facebook habits are at all related to the student's GPA and if so how exactly they are related. Opinions on the different uses of Facebook might also be related to just exactly how a person uses Facebook. It might even be possible that certain uses of Facebook cause more distraction than others. This study examines all of these questions.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants in this sample were LaGrange College

undergraduate day students that volunteered. The total sample was 199 students. 110 of these participants were female and 89 were male. Of the participants 68 were freshman, 48 were seniors, 42 were juniors and 41 were seniors. All participants were treated ethically according to the APA Ethical Code (American Psychological Association, 2002).

### Materials

Each of the participants was given a copy of a questionnaire that was written specifically for this study. To see the questionnaire in full, see Appendix A.

### Procedure

The participants were recruited based on their location on campus. The students were recruited if they were present in the cafeteria at lunchtime or if they were in the library from the hours of 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. They were asked to fill out the questionnaire honestly and return it to the researcher when finished.

### Results

The measurement for this study was based on a Likert scale. All possible responses were assigned a numerical value. The opinion items were ranked with “strongly agree” being the lowest value and “strongly disagree” being the highest value. The coded items can be found in Appendix A. The items were then compared with each other using correlation coefficients. All results that were found significant at the .01 level are reported and found in Table 1. The items in Table 1 that are bold faced are the correlates that are of particular interest and pertain directly to the hypothesis of this study. By far, the most interesting statistical analysis is the correlation between time spent on Facebook and GPA. This shows that the more time people spend on Facebook the lower their GPA seems to be. Another interesting find is that the correlation for both application use and chat use show a high correlation of .5 with the time spent on Facebook. This means that the way a person uses Facebook could be the factor that causes the distractions and not necessarily Facebook as a whole.

Another factor that shows up in this data is the relationship between the four following variables: importance of a social life, importance of Facebook on a social life, social interaction from Facebook, and the feeling of being left out when not logged into Facebook. From the correlates presented in Table 1 it would seem that if a person believes that a social life is important to the college experience then the more important Facebook is to that social life. Since students tend to believe that Facebook is a part of their social life, they are more likely to believe that a good amount of social interaction can come from Facebook. This leads to the person feeling left out when not logged in to Facebook. The overall trend of the data show that the more a student feels that Facebook is related to the social aspect of college

then the more time that student will spend on Facebook and utilizes all of the most distracting ways to use Facebook and this in turn leads to students spending more time on Facebook. Since more time on Facebook is correlated negatively with GPA it is likely that this student will have a lower than average GPA.

**Discussion**

This study does support the hypothesis that Facebook habits can be detrimental to GPA. However, it may not be the website in its entirety that causes this trend. The data also provides evidence that Facebook, used as a means of communication, will increase the amount of time spent on Facebook. This relationship is different from people who use Facebook as a way just to keep up with friends. So maybe students should be more aware of how they are using the site and that might decrease how distracting the site can be. It must be noted that all of the data is correlational and therefore there is no proof that one of these factors causes another. It may be a combination of Facebook, the belief that social life is an important aspect to college, and all of the other factors examined. However, the data does show that a relationship does exist between time spent on Facebook and GPA even if the cause is unknown. Facebook has become so integrated with the college experience that it is important that students know how to manage the time spent on Facebook and how to use the time they do spend on Facebook on less distracting aspects of the site. Further studies are needed to determine just how students can use this site effectively but it is clear that this site in some way is distracting college students and it is harming the academic success of students that have the potential to achieve a higher grade point average.

Table 1 Significant correlation coefficients of Facebook survey items

Test Question	Correlation Coefficient
Having a Facebook account and Age of student	.209**
How many different uses of Facebook the student actually uses and Gender	.203**
Time spent studying and Class related internet use	.353**
Time spent on projects and Class related internet use	.314**
Time Spent on Facebook and GPA	-.208**
Time Spent on Facebook and Class related internet use	.244**
Application use and Age	.209**
Time Spent on Facebook and Chat Use	.554**
Time spent on Facebook and Application Use	.551**
Feeling left out when not logged in and Gender	-.200**
Feeling left out when not logged in and Time spent on Facebook	-.221**
Feeling left out when not logged in and How many different uses of Facebook the student actually uses	-.248**

Having a Facebook account and Importance of Facebook on social life  
.208\*\*

How many different uses of Facebook the student actually uses and  
Importance on social life                   -.320\*\*

How many different uses of Facebook the student actually uses and Social  
interaction from Facebook               -.195\*\*

How many different uses of Facebook the student actually uses and Opinion  
on how much time of internet use is devoted to Facebook           -.208\*\*

Feeling left out when not logged in and Importance of a social life  
.210\*\*

Feeling left out when not logged in and Importance of Facebook on Social  
Life           .548\*\*

Importance of Facebook on Social Life and Importance of a social life  
.351\*\*

Social Interaction from Facebook and Feeling left out when not logged in  
.377\*\*

Social Interaction from Facebook and Distraction from studying   .210\*\*

Social Interaction from Facebook and Importance of a social life .189\*\*

Opinion on how much time of internet use is devoted to Facebook and  
Feeling left out when not logged in           .200\*\*

Opinion on how much time of internet use is devoted to Facebook and  
Distraction from Studying               .345\*\*

Importance of Facebook on Social life and Social interaction from Facebook  
.472\*\*

Importance of Facebook on Social life and Opinion on how much time of  
internet use is devoted to Facebook       .236\*\*

Social Interaction from Facebook and Opinion on how much time of internet  
use is devoted to Facebook           .365\*\*

\*Footnote: the \*\* indicates that  $p < .001$

## Appendix A

The following appendix shows the survey items along with the coding for each item. The coding for each item can be found in parenthesis following the possible answer.

### Effects of Facebook on Study Habits Survey

I am conducting a survey on how the use of Facebook affects a college student's studying habits. I am requesting your help to make this effort a success because you are a valued member of the LaGrange College community. Your completion of this survey implies your consent to use your data submitted for the purposes of research. This survey will take about ten minutes to complete. I would like to thank you for helping me to better

understand this topic.

Sincerely,

Britany Helton

1) What is your class standing? (Circle One)

- a. Freshman (1)
- b. Sophomore (2)
- c. Junior (3)
- d. Senior(4)

2) How old are you? (Circle One)

- a. Under 18 years (1)
- b. 19-21 years (2)
- c. 22-24 years (3)
- d. 25-27 years (4)
- e. 27-29 (5)
- f. 30 years or older (6)

3) Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic background?  
(Circle One)

- a. Asian (1)
- b. Black/ African American (2)
- c. White/ Caucasian (3)
- d. Hispanic/ Latino (4)
- e. Native American (5)
- f. Multiracial (6)
- g. Other (Please (specify)\_\_\_\_\_ (7)

h. Prefer not to answer (0)

4) What is your gender? (Circle One)

- a. Male (1)
- b. Female (2)

5) What is your grade point average? (Circle One)

- a. < 1.5 (1)
- b. 1.6-2.0 (2)
- c. 2.1-2.5 (3)
- d. 2.6-3.0 (4)
- e. 3.1-3.5 (5)
- f. 3.6-4.0 (6)

6) What is your major?

7) On average, how many hours do you spend studying (including reading and homework) for a single class per week? (Circle One)

- a. 0-2 hours (1)
- b. 3-5 hours (2)
- c. 6-8 hours (3)
- d. 9-11 hours (4)
- e. More than 12 hours (5)

8) On average, how many hours do you spend on outside projects (i.e. paintings, presentations.) for a single class per week? (Circle One)

- a. 0-2 hours (1)
- b. 3-5 hours (2)
- c. 6-8 hours (3)
- d. 9-11 hours (4)
- e. More than 12 hours (5)

9) How many hours do you spend on the Internet for class related reasons a week? (Circle One)

- a. 0-1 hours (1)
- b. 2-3 hours (2)
- c. 4-5 hours (3)
- d. 6-7 hours (4)
- e. 8 or more hours (5)

10) Do you have a Facebook account? (Circle One)

- a. Yes (1)
- b. No (2)

11) How often are you logged into Facebook per day on average? (Circle One)

- a. Less than an hour (1)
- b. 1-2 hours (2)
- c. 3-4 hours (3)
- d. 5-6 hours (4)
- e. 6-7 hours (5)
- f. 8 or more hours (6)
- g. Do not log on to Facebook (7)

12) What do you use Facebook for? (Circle all that apply)

- a. Keeping up with friends
- b. Posting pictures
- c. Chats
- d. Games
- e. Other: (Please Specify)\_\_\_\_\_
- f. Do not use Facebook

(Counted the number of answers checked)

13) How often do you use Facebook chat? (Circle One)

- a. Rarely (1)
- b. Sometimes (2)
- c. Often (3)
- d. Most of the time (4)
- e. Do not use Facebook (5)

14) How often do you use applications available on Facebook? (Circle One)

- a. Rarely (1)
- b. Sometimes (2)
- c. Often (3)
- d. Most of the time (4)
- e. Do not use Facebook (5)

15) Not logging onto Facebook can cause a student to feel left out of campus life (Circle One)

- a. Strongly agree (1)
- b. Agree (2)
- c. Disagree (3)
- d. Strongly disagree (4)

- 16) Facebook is a distraction from studying (Circle One)
- a. Strongly agree (1)
  - b. Agree (2)
  - c. Disagree (3)
  - d. Strongly disagree (4)
- 17) In comparison to college life in general, social aspects are just important to the college experience as academic aspects (Circle One)
- a. Strongly agree (1)
  - b. Agree (2)
  - c. Disagree (3)
  - d. Strongly Disagree (4)
- 18) Facebook is important to social life on campus (Circle One)
- a. Strongly agree (1)
  - b. Agree (2)
  - c. Disagree (3)
  - d. Strongly Disagree (4)
- 19) Facebook is a huge component of social interaction for college students (Circle One)
- a. Strongly Agree (1)
  - b. Agree (2)
  - c. Disagree (3)
  - d. Strongly Disagree (4)
- 20) Most of time spent on the internet by college students is taken up by Facebook (Circle One)
- a. Strongly Agree (1)
  - b. Agree (2)
  - c. Disagree (3)
  - d. Strongly Disagree (4)

#### References

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