

**TECHNOLOGICAL DISTRACTIONS: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING  
SITES USE ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO, TURFLOOP CAMPUS**

**by**

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**MASTER OF ARTS IN MEDIA STUDIES**

**JANUARY 2016**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that the **TECHNOLOGICAL DISTRACTIONS: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES USE ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO** dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Master of Arts in Media Studies has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.



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Koma T. S. 04 January 2016

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## **DEDICATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Students today are surrounded by vast amounts of technological gadgets that enable communication with friends very easy. Social networking sites, social media and internet have become part of the lives of the students today and the means to their social happiness. This is emphasised by the growing concern over the use of these social networking sites and a growing fear that these sites might actually be causing much damage to the fundamental learning abilities of these students. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of the use social networking sites among the students of the University of Limpopo. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in this study to explore the traits of the use of social networking sites from the perspective of the students and the lecturers. The data was collected using survey with structured questionnaires for the students and the face-to-face interview with the lecturers to explore their perception over the use of social networking sites. A total of three hundred and nineteen (319) questionnaires were distributed randomly among the students of University of Limpopo and the researcher received two hundred and ninety seven (297) filled questionnaires. Four face-to-face interviews were carried out at the offices of the lecturers that participated in the study.

The study revealed that the social networking site Facebook is used more among students and that cell-phones are their means of accessing the internet and social networking sites. The lecturers however pointed out that there is a need for concern with the constant availability of technology at the reach of these students. However, there is a gradual positive development as the students are becoming more and more self-aware that their use of these sites has portends a negative impact on their academic performance. While there are very remote incidents of text language in academic writing contrary to the students' perception, the lectures believe that student writing quality exists and that what is often perceived as social networking sites language turns out to be innocent spelling errors.

### **Key words**

Social networking sites, technology, procrastination, distraction, academic performance

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## CHAPTER 1

### PROBLEM IN PERSPECTIVE

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has brought more advancements in technologies and their applications which are mostly used by the young people in the society for the advancement of their lives. Among the applications brought in the twentieth century is the internet and it is only in the twenty-first century that the various applications of it for social growth and recreation were invented (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). The social networking sites are some of the applications that were born in the use of the internet and its popularity was made by the widely availability of access means into the mobile phones and the tablet computers (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). The use of social networking sites among the student and learners is growing at a fast pace. In Flad's (2010) view, the application of the social networking sites assumed the international stage of popularity in the past several years.

The interest of studying the social networking sites is drawn partly from Flad's (2010) observation that grounds for the popularity of the social networking sites is among the adolescent users. In Lewis' (2008) view, the daily activities of most students today are planned around the internet as well as information gathering for either personal knowledge or for academic advancement which is far remote as compared to the senior citizen or older generation who prefer acquiring knowledge using television or newspaper. The internet use among the students therefore became popular when it turned out that there are books and research articles uploaded which can be downloaded and used as reference (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008).

Many scholars such as Prensky (2010) and Gurung and Routledge (2014) point out that there is an increase in the use of social networking sites in youth particularly the students today and it is slowly becoming a problem in the academic lives of the students. The study probed the student's use of the social networking sites and how the students perceive their use of those social networking sites as well as the impact their use is bringing to their academic writing skills. The lecturers' perspectives about the student's use of the social networking sites and the impact on their academic lifestyles were observed in the study. The research study aimed to determine the

impact which social networking sites through the case study of the students at University of Limpopo have on the students' academic performance. The paradox of whether the social networking sites negatively or positively impact the students' academic performance was the basis of the research.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

In order to fully understand the study, it is very important to discuss the nature of the social networking sites and the status of the students' use in universities. This helps in understanding and exploring the current state of social networking use by students in South Africa.

This use of social networks has since become the interest of social and behavioural analysis over the years of the internet boom, (Carrington, Scott & Wasserman, 2005). There is an alarming growth rate in the use of social networks and a growing perception towards the phenomenon of social networks. Gurung and Routledge (2014) point out that the current tendency of the social media technology use is massive that the users risk it all by taking their digital habits inside the classroom such as texting and participating on social networking sites during actual class time. This attitude defines the current generation of the society in which the use of the social networking sites and the connectivity that comes with the habits define their lifestyles.

Gurung and Routledge (2014) introduce the definition of the behaviours of the student users of social media technologies as digital learners whose day to day lives are technologically linked to each other without the need for social contact. Tapscott (2009) also supports this in that the digital natives inherently perceive that their environment is defined by the advances of technology and their use in the social world. The availability of technology is becoming the social nature and how the students use the sites informs their current behaviour. With the current advances in the technological environments that the students belong, the social networking sites exist as means of contacting one another without the need for social contact and this has created the socially excluding yet sociable students connected on their cell-phones and other means to be connected to the internet.

The access to digital technology and internet has been defined as the right and priority in bridging the digital divide that parts of the world are suffering (Pew Project Internet



Project, 2012). Despite this, the digital natives who grew up in the mist of technological activities and access to internet as Prensky (2010) define it, are facing with the immediate challenge of separating their social leisure of technology use and their academic priorities as well as needs. This is because the use of social networking sites as documented by scholars such as Flad (2010) and Bennet and Muton (2010) is to interfere with the academic lives of the users time to time as the technology advances which enables the users to stay on social networking sites extended times.

The access to digital technological advances and internet has been defined as an essential need and a right for global citizen in order to close the digital divide between countries in the world. The digital natives Tapscott (2009) observed that there are children who grew up in the technology defined environment which has this access to computers and internet which enable them to reach extreme information depth and access social communication platforms. In the mist of the technological advancement of their environment, among the social communication platforms that the users get exposed to are the social networking sites which in turn have defined their social lives and thus interfering with the academic activates of the users.

Lloyd, Dean and Cooper (2007) points out that technological behaviour of students hold a possibility of directly impacting on the students' academic success. The use of the technologies and thus social networking sites has a direct impact in the academic performance and behaviour of the students. Gurung and Routledge (2014) found that the common activities of the students are to text among each other and listen to music as well as occasionally visiting the online social networking sites such as Facebook. The study explores the use of the social networking sites among the students and what impact is the use having on the academic performance while centralized on easy access technological impact as the probable cause of use and levels of procrastination that develop in the use of these sites.

Primarily, the study's purpose is to identify whether this use of social networks in the academic theatre has any benefit to the students, or it brings tyranny to the idea of value in as far as academic performance is concerned. There are many underlying factors that could be explored as elements of the main problem of the study. Such factors include the existence of influence by the use of social networks, the possibility of a change in behaviour based on social networks use as well as the way in finding

solutions to the problem. There is a fear that the idea of social networking may or might result in consuming the valuable time of which the students' needs to utilize for their academic benefits.

The study also developed an understanding of the dynamics to which an author of a social network page who is a student become subjected to perpetual destruction from fulfilment of other purposes such as studying. The interest into this subject of social networking among students at tertiary level is by far become socially relevant given the prospects of increased use of social networks among students. Moreover, the study addresses the effects social networking sites have on students' academic performance. The lecturers' perspective of the use of social networking sites by the students was explored in detail as the lecturers are closely linked to the academic lifestyle of the students. The other underlying factor derived from the problem is the element which evaluate to what extend the impact of this idea of social networking sites use does to the broad language dynamics and their use in an academic platform.

### **1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The current access and the level of availability as well as use of new media technology among the youth and the students are growing at a drastically unbalanced speed. The youth of today are virtually connected in their activities and are clued to their cell-phone with the applications on those high tech cell-phones defining virtues of knowledge and social interactions. Today, being able to navigate certain to all of the settings and applications on these high tech cell-phones or laptops is considered something totally acceptable and understandable and also an interest for every other student. This use of those technologies is drawn on the particular high level of use of cell-phones among the students. Interestingly enough, cell-phones were designed to be mobile connectors for established distance and continuous communication, however, it has evolved with the current trend of the new media to bring access to social networking sites with just few touches.

The study look into the underestimated culture which is born in the students' daily routine which is characterized by the cell-phone that is always in their hands, touching it in the students' social gatherings and even at academic areas. The technology use has consumed the students' social worlds in that conversation no longer take place face to face, rather, have been relegated to the virtual world. Additionally, the interest

of the students in the use of social networking sites was admirable at first for its exploration of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the socioeconomic benefits attached. However, an issue becomes when the students fail to distinguish the timing of use of those social networking sites. Most students get caught up in the use of these social networking sites that their social time elapses into their studying time.

The researcher is concerned with the reasons behind the use of these social networking sites and the time spend on the social networking sites while using it which means that the potential harm that could be done to the academic performance of the students looking at the University of Limpopo students as a case study. These technologies, with their potential uses were to enhance the lives of the users and at various stages, enable social conversations and gatherings with distance people, even those geographically distance or even close by.

This study also raises awareness that the use of social networking sites has many damages to the academic lifestyle of students than it can benefit the social lifestyle of the same students. This appears to be the cause of the use because the students have been totally oblivious of the problem they are causing for themselves when they are using those social networking sites. The challenge the students are currently faced with is an inevitability of poor writing skills which lead to dropping out due to declining academic performance. The researcher observed the students going up and down the university assembly points, various academic centres and some rushing from one class to the other with their cell-phones clued to their hands while some are pressing those cell-phones.

The US and UK researches have done much on this issue, however, in South Africa, the subject hasn't grasped the necessary attention to realize its potential in as far as the use is concerned. Scholars such as Rambe (2011) explored the communication opportunities the social networking sites brings forward as well as means in which the social networking sites can be used as a communication platform in the academic area. The basis for this study is on the premise that studies confronting the dangers that the social networking sites could have on the users are not widely localised in South Africa.

#### **1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Social networking culture have liberated communication hardship and adjusted the morality of the society in their understanding of their social realities. Because of this fact, social networking phenomenon has been a subject of investigation for a decade since the wide spread of social networking concept. Existing studies have focused on the beneficiary level of social networking and the strengths social networking have displayed in terms of communication and connectivity. This study, however, focus on online social networking sites use, exploring technology students' use, foundation of procrastination, academic writing as fundamental contributors to academic distractions.

#### **1.4.1 STUDENTS, TECHNOLOGY USE AND DISTRACTIONS**

The Internet revolution in academia has deserted the interest of the students to spend enormous amounts of time going through periodicals and books at the library when studying about a certain subject. Today, students can enjoy the new freedoms of click studying and get distracted into the wired world. Students now use the Internet for the majority of their daily activities and information gathering, as opposed to older generations who used resources like the television or newspaper (Lewis, 2008).

A study has shown that approximately half of all teenagers who have Internet access are also members of social networking sites, and use the Internet to make plans and socialize with friends (Kist, 2008). This is emphasised by the current economic landscape around the globe which enables technological revolutions of new innovation with endless opportunities which led many youth to take advantage of those technologies. Cell-phones have since simplified the communication function of technology, allowing fast internet on the phone and access to social networking sites. The constant use of social networking sites result to one being distracted into a technological social life which leads to other priorities falling out of the window.

The early stages of social networking included web technology such as AIM, which helped many adolescents "chat" with others on the computer instead of in person (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). This new wide area was open to manipulation which could easily venture into distractions from academic activities, i.e. when one chat on the computer or as of recently by text on Facebook or WhatsApp or BBM (BlackBerry Messaging), one tend to lose track of time. Furthermore, male and female students appear to have different reasons for their accounts on social networking sites because

female students use SNS account to reinforce existing friendships while males look for opportunities of flirting and making new friends (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2008).

#### **1.4.2 THE FOUNDATION OF PROCRASTINATION**

When Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Mxit surfaced, teenagers consumed them as means to relax and communicate as well as interact with other individuals (Birchmeier, Dietz-Uhler, & Stasser, 2011). Online social networking distinctions are getting blurred as the technology advances. In America, teens adopted these and other online social networking sites to justify their identity and socialization potentials, primarily to reinforce existing relationships, both friendships and romantic relationships (Subrahmanyam, & Greenfield, 2008).

The use of technology for social tendencies enhances social interactions (Birchmeier et. al., 2011) and contributes greatly to procrastination. Procrastination is defined as the avoidance of implementation of an intention (Van Eerde, 2000) and a detailed purposeful act to elude work or responsibility. In the purpose of students procrastination is an act of avoiding to study and to satisfy other academic purposes.

“Procrastination is wide spread in academic contexts, where students are required to meet deadlines for assignment completion in an environment full of events and activities which compete for the students’ time and attention” (Gafni & Geri, 2010: 116). Today, the setting of online social networking use has changed to mobile pockets which allow participation by a wide range of people and in their comfortable circumstances. Procrastination is the disease eating away at student productivity and an American study estimates that over 70% of students demonstrate this behaviour (Knezevic, 2012). This student practice has become widely used among the youth and is greatly used on cellular phones.

#### **1.4.3 TECHNOLOGY LANGUAGE AND ACADEMIC WRITING**

The goal of academic writing is clarity and lack of ambiguity (Meyers, 1996). Many scholars such as (Spears et al., 2002, Floyd 2008, Birchmeier et. al., 2011, Lovink, 2011) have been focusing on studying the network growth of the social networks and the various characteristics of online social networking on both global and local platform. The Use of these online social networking sites poses threats to proper English to become foreign. Eventually, the use of social networking writing will

influence the literature of the future (Fagorusi, 2013). This means that next generation children would not have skills of good writing and would not be able to enjoy reading the books of this time or speak with panache outside of the social networks.

Academic writing experience means knowledge of writing in the academic context which is shared and clarified to understand needs significantly to improve learning (Maharsi, 2011). The 140 character writing of social networks quickly decompose grammar, syntax and other aspects of language and this happen globally. There's a chance that Queen's English words with longer spellings that have shorter synonyms may become extinct from non-use.

The beauty of social media language lies in its brevity. When text messages came and cost was a consideration, it was appropriate to try cramping an idea into 160 characters, which was the limit. Then came twitter, with 140 characters; and the silliest of abbreviations and other truncated spellings have found space (Fagorusi, 2013).

The rising number of blogs and the use of abbreviations and popular words (Fagorusi, 2013) present a moving rejection of English quality writing in academic writing. It's not only time which is lost in the process of social networking use but also the integrity of language use and writing skills (Stollak, Vandenberg, Burklund, & Weiss, 2011). While the social media is not a downright harm to the English language, it is also not an outright plus to it; the use, however, provides possibilities to it. In social deterministic accounts, individual users of online social networking sites construct their own meaning (Birchmeier et. al., 2011), collective obsession with identity management (Lovink, 2011), and new language typo which become socially relevant to the users (Fagorusi, 2013). This means that there is a high possibility whether it negative or positive which the social network setting of social networks can influence on the offline communications and language use.

## **1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact social networking sites' use have on the academic performance of the students.

## **1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To examine the impact which the constant availability of technology has among students' academic performance.
- To investigate how continuous use of online social networking sites contribute to procrastination among students.
- To assess the impact of online social network communicative language on standard of academic language among students.

## **1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives, the following questions were answered.

- 1.7.1 How important is the constant availability and use of technology on the social lives of the students?
- 1.7.2 To what extent the social networking sites use among students can yield good academic results?
- 1.7.3 To what extent is the use of social networking sites by the students contributing to academic procrastination?
- 1.7.4 What is the impact of the social networking sites language on the standards of academic writing?

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study seeks to explore the negative aspects of the social networking use among the students on their academic performances. The researcher chose to use both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection given the topic which needs quantity interpretation of data to validate the topic. The qualitative method is best in explaining exploratory and interpretive research question. Furthermore, the quantitative study serve to provide a basis for numerical analysis of data collected

through questionnaires. The topic of identifying the level of influence which the use of social network sites affect the academic performance was best elaborated in both qualitative and quantitative methods because of the ability of the method to allow for exploration of the phenomenon to the deeper level. These methods are helpful in enabling the researcher to be flexible to explore this phenomenon.

“Qualitative researchers typically work without specific rules and procedures; their work is exploratory in many respects” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010: 107). The interpretive character is intensively at high level when dealing with both quantitative and qualitative research methods. In this study, the interest was in looking at the existence of a relationship between the use of social networking sites and the predictive declining level of academic performance among the students at the University of Limpopo. These methods can be used together to validate the topic on both levels in the exploratory analysis of it. The necessity of the qualitative method was to measure that collection of data and analysis of data is performed in the most manners without bias. Furthermore, quantitative method was used to measure numerical paradigms of the data collected.

The study basically involves understanding the effects of social networking sites use in concern of academic performance in the students. The focus is to investigate the influence which the social networks provide upon the academic performance of students. The social networking amongst the students has since become part of their social structure. Methods of data collecting for this study were questionnaires, interviews and observations within the student community.

Therefore, the methods of interpreting the data are both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This is because there is a vast amount of numerical values and exploratory analysis that needs to be done once the data has been collected. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are necessary to navigate the data into readable results. Thereby, forms the basis for that study which is to investigate the level of influence to which those social structures influence the academic performance of those students.



## **1.9 DATA COLLECTION**

For the purpose of this research, the questionnaire and interview were used as methods of data collection. This is because both methods are relatively user friendly and less costly in terms of funds and time.

### **1.9.1 QUESTIONNAIRES**

The questionnaire was in both electronic and paper versions. This was to ensure that all participants who willingly volunteered to be a part of the study were given every opportunity to do so.

The questionnaires for the study were administered randomly at the students outside of the lecture halls before and after classes, at the student cafes and at lunch breaks. The target was initially large undergraduate classes because they ordinarily encompass diverse student populations consisting of different majors; however the participants sharing the same level of study did not necessarily amount to a rationale for diversity. Therefore, in those large undergraduate classes, there is a likelihood of obtaining a sample that fall within the target audience age range of 17-28 years. The questionnaire was pre-tested among 10 students and adequate various adjustments were made to clarify every question. The online version of the questionnaire was made ready, however, the need for its distribution never arose as most of the student participants were easily accessed to face to face and thus the hard copy of the questionnaires were used. Participation for both versions of the questionnaire was strictly anonymous and voluntary for all students.

### **1.9.2 INTERVIEWS**

Each face to face interview session was given absolute anonymity status throughout the duration of the study. Each session of the interviews for this study were audio recorded on the participants' agreement.

A guide of the interview questions was drafted, however, still remaining unstructured in nature. Face to face interviews were conducted directly to gauge the professional

experience of the lecturers with regard to the topic. The unstructured (semi-structured) nature of the interviews means the questions are open to allow the participants to discuss their perceptions and observations freely with much detail they believe necessary. These questions were detailed to enable the participants to discuss the mood swings and behavioural changes the respondents have noticed amongst the primary population which is the students. The questions also enquired the respondents' opinion on the students' use of social networking sites and also enquired of any particular changes in academic performances that the participants have noticed recently.

### **1.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

The process of data collection follows after the data has been collected through the questionnaires and the interview; the data was coded according to the following categories: demographic data (e.g., age, gender, and level of study of participants); each questionnaire question individually, to find their frequencies in the collected data. The coding procedures were done using IBM SPSS data coding software to analyse the data and provide results to be interpreted by the researcher. The completed questionnaires were assigned numbers to mark as to how many were returned back and also to follow the chain of responses from the participants. The data collected in the study was collected through descriptive survey, with no interference to the orientation of the environment of study. Data from interviews was analysed using selective coding to review its intensity and relevance to the study. According to Babbie and Mouton (2007) points out the key of using selective coding is to find the main storyline out of the detailed interview procedures. The selective coding only points out the most important detail from the pile of the collected data of the interviews which actually stresses the point the participants was putting across when answering the question and then analyse what it actually mean.

## **1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The questionnaires for this particular study were not requiring any names of the participant and that means their identity remained private. The reason is because these questionnaires were randomly distributed among the selected population. As for the interviews however, the researcher alerted the participants prior the interview that their interview sessions were recorded. This means that those participating in the interview were having the knowledge that their interview is being recorded, either audio or video. The interview participants were informed that their opinions together with their names were used as reference in the study. Furthermore, in an event of interest, the participants were allowed to choose anonymity during the interviews.

## **1.12 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The research focused on the students' use of social networking while at universities and other institutions of higher learning alike. For the purpose of this study, social networking sites means the social media sites on the internet that are used to communicate either between two people at a time or to a large number of people at once and these sites are used by the students as means of communicating amongst one another. Many scholars identify the case study as the most effective mass communication studies research method as Yin (1989:241) insists that a case study is an "empirical inquiry that uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context". The term case study limit the number of participants to a certain community or a group of people with shared or partially shared qualities and in the case of this study, the participants are the students. The study also concentrated on the students' perceptions on their use of the social networking sites and the impact that the social networking sites have on their academic performance, particularly the students' writing skills, and the contribution of the easy access of technology to students using social networking sites. Additionally, the lecturers' perceptions about the students' use of social networking sites was also probed in the study.

### **1.13 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

There has been a wide scale criticism of case studies for narrowing the scope of focus and eventually neglecting other revelations and other important views that are not included. While this case study of the students of University of Limpopo was a typical case study; which can be used to generalize the use of social networking sites by the students in the South African landscape, it was also a divergent case study which can be used to explain the culture of South African students social networking sites use. Thus, the study did not cover all the students at various universities in South Africa and in this regards, the study falls behind to generalize the use of social networking sites among the students in South Africa. Yet the students' use and the lecturers' perception of students' use of social networking sites in university of Limpopo, made it an appropriate for this study.

Additionally, there was a potential negligence of the other age groups of people as majority if not all the student participants of the study were youth between the ages of 16 to 35 years and also the study failed to distinguish the students according to the ethnicity and the cultural groups. Thus, a comparison of perceptions between the students' age groups and cultural groups may have been neglected. However, many studies indicated that the youth are actually the age group that is knowledgeable and majority users of the social networking sites (World-Wide Worx, 2014). Thus, it is for this finding that appropriated the participation of the students' youth in answering the questionnaires in the study. Furthermore, the lecturers were reluctant and only four lecturers participated.

### **1.14 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The findings of this study were to help identify the effects of social networking sites use on students and provide solutions to counteract to the problem. The modern technology at the access of the students raises many questions in their use by the students and the potential benefits as well as harm that the students are exposed to and this study explores the prospects of these concerns. Many scholars in the West have raised concerns that the youth today is too much connected in their social networking sites that they leave no room for face to face interactions and this study localized the South African students against this concern. Furthermore, this study adds on the little available literature in South Africa about the use of social networking sites

among the students looking at the impact of the use and potential harm that these social networking sites bring. Additionally, this makes the study significant to the body of knowledge because there is a high level of academic distractions resulting from social networking use among students.

Scholars such as Wise (2009) and Williams (2008) have studied the shifts in the literacy of students and the concerns of academic professionals over the use of online social networks among students. In spite of this fact, this study provided a shed light to this new generation problem and the extension of effects as well as possible solutions. The results of the study may bring to the assumption that beyond the benefit of the social networking sites, there are indeed damages which use of social networking sites are doing to the student users' time and priority line. The challenge for schools is to eliminate the negative uses of the Internet and cell phones in educational settings while preserving their significant contributions to education and social connection (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). The use of social networking sites among students has broadened from benefiting them to posing a threat to the students' academic performance.

## **1.15 CONCLUSION**

The widespread of cell-phones which provides access to the internet and social networking sites has moved the access to the sites to the convenience of the users from the traditional desktop computers to mobile smart computers and cell-phones with the cutting edge twice that of a desktop computer. Many researchers have unearthed that the majority users of the social networking sites are actually the young adults of which most of them happen to be the students. Despite the developments and the quality of the developing brave new world of technology use in enhancement of the social lives of users, elements of distractions goes hand in hand with the use of these sites on the academic performance of students.

The chapter one discussed the introduction of the study, its background, the problem statement of the study, aim and objectives of the study, theoretical framework and outlined the significance of the study. The following chapter, chapter two (2); literature review, explores and illustrates the existing literature and theories on social networking use and discussing in detail on the following topics students, technology use and distractions, the foundation of procrastination and technology language and academic writing.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Social networking culture has liberated communication hardship and adjusted the morality of the society pertaining to understanding social realities. Because of this fact, social networking phenomenon has been a subject of investigation for a decade since the social networking concept became widespread. Existing studies has focused on the benefits of social networking and the strengths social networking have displayed in terms of communication and connectivity. Researchers such as Flad (2010) and Gurung and Roudledge (2014) working in the field of online social networking have attempted to shift focus away from specific technologies, rather on the categorical activities those technologies support, such as communication, access to information and content manufacturing, often including both academic and everyday activities (Bennett & Maton, 2010).

This study, however, focuses on the negative aspect of online social networking use, specifically its impact on procrastination and academic writing as fundamental contributors to academic distractions. Subsequent section of this chapter examines existing academic work and research studies on technological and distractions and technology use and academic writing among the student community. Furthermore, a discussion of technological determinism as well as uses and gratifications theory is provided as theoretical framework for this study.

##### 2.1.1 Students, technology use and distractions

The sudden increase in use of social networking sites has become an international marvel in the past several years (Flad, 2010) as new technologies on applications of social networking sites emerge daily. The internet revolution in academia has caused students to lose interest in spending enormous amounts of time going through periodicals and books at the library when studying certain subject. Flad (2010) insists that the ground of social networking investigation is on popularity of these social networking sites among the adolescent users. Digital social networking use among adolescent is influenced by the changing trends as well as the teachers who perceive these social networking sites as means of forming simplified discussions among

students. Today, students can enjoy the new freedoms of click studying and get distracted into the wired world. Furthermore, as the amount of teenage social networking sites members is increasing, it can be seen as a sole cause of social problems affecting the youth today and their technology use (Flad, 2010). In Flad's (2010) study, students were used as primary source of information and there was a participation of 41 students out of a population of 1500 students in the study. Sixty one percent of the student participants did admit having two or more social networking site membership and reportedly use cell-phones to access those social networking sites, and this confirm the claim that research is based at popularity use of social networking sites (Flad, 2010).

A study by Kist (2008) shows that roughly half of all American teens who have Internet access are also members of one or more social networking sites and their use of the Internet, particularly those social networking sites is based on an interest to socialize with strangers and make new friends (Kist, 2008). The idea behind most of these social networking sites is to help, establish and allow those who are socially uninvolved as they are sitting in-front of their monitor screens or staring at the small mobile screens while walking to class, to feel socially connected and part of a community (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). This is emphasised by the current economic landscape around the globe which enables technological revolutions of new innovation with endless opportunities which cause many youth to take advantage of those technologies. Cellular phones have since simplified the communication function of technology, allowing fast internet on the phone and access to social networking sites. The constant use of social networking sites result in one being distracted by a technological social life which ramifies into other priorities falling by the way side. For example, AIM became the new advancement in web technologies in the early stages of social networking, which allowed many adolescents "chat" with others on the internet connected computer instead of face to face encounters (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009).

Students have revolutionised their information search and gathering by using at most of their times, internet as opposed to older generations who still uses old information resources like the television or newspaper (Lewis, 2008). The dynamics of technology use among the teenagers and university students begin with the use of a cellular phone and an internet connected computer/laptop which is presumed to be used for desktop research on school assessments. A Pew Internet Research (2013) points out



that 93% of American teens have a computer or have access to one at home, while 78% of teens have a cell phones and 95% of teens consistently use the internet. Many of those using the cell-phones and computers, have experienced technology use at an early age while at home under parents supervision however, since enrolling to universities, that has changed because of their new social freedoms.

In Rainie (2012), the ownership of the new technologically advanced cell-phones known commonly as smart-phones are in the hands of young adults within the age region of 18-29 years old. These cell-phones are becoming very popular and a common gadget that a young adult is expected to possess to fit in. McCoy (2013) notes that these devices are capable of providing limitless and perhaps seamless access information and people. These cell-phones have come closely to replacing the need to have a fully functional desktop computer because many of these smart-phones provide the same capabilities or even more than a desktop computer. Furthermore, McCoy (2013) points out that the application of these digital devices as educational tools have received a sharp positive growth in the past five (5) years. The mobility of the cell-phones makes it possible and vast more capable for an individual use and thus the high range technological tools in the device allow effortless tap in the vast world of information and possibilities. The majority of the population in Rainie's (2012) study are students and thus build basis that students might actually be majority users of cell-phones for most of contemporary social needs.

According to Prensky (2010), the digital natives naturally immerse themselves in digital technologies such as computer, cell phones, mp3 music players, etc. Prensky (2010) refer the advanced students of today as the digital natives who grew up into these technologies. Technology users risk it all by taking their digital habits inside the classroom such as texting and participating on social networking sites during class time (Gurung & Routledge, 2014). The value of the time and energy spent on the social networking sites has made it difficult for the users to differentiate places for cell-phone use particularly in the lecture hall. At times, very remote, these technologies do somehow bring value to their proactive extra mutual time in the mist of using the technology advancement on social networking sites and doing school assignments (Gurung & Routledge, 2014). There is also an overlap between personal and digital engagement and educational digital engagement which is linked by the users' digital habits and interests.

Digital activities and assorted technology gadgets define the spending time of students today during their free times while at the university halls or chambers, some even during lecture hours. Although their personal use of technology is wide spread, “digital learners are now equipped with the types of academic skills that are essential for learning” (Gurung & Routledge, 2014: 332). A study by Gurung and Routledge (2014) explored the pattern of technology use among a sample of 183 students from the grades of 9 and 12 in the US, with race being, Caucasian, black, Native American, Asian and Hispanic. The aim of Gurung & Routledge’s (2014) study is to scrutinise how digital learners/students at high schools engage with technology both at home and at school. Gurung and Routledge (2014) used open ended and semi structured questionnaires to explore the use of technology by the students for both personal and educational needs. In analysing the results of the participants, Gurung and Routledge (2014) found that listening to music and participation in online social networking sites such as Facebook and texting is one of the most common activities done by the digital native scholars. The participation in those technologically influenced activities gradually grew in time as the technology savvy and reputation of the students grew. However, this could amount to a habit of activities with unimaginable harm of students’ academic standards.

Digital learners lack many essential technology related academic skills and their learning engagement with the digital tools and resources is therefore limited, separate and unspectacular (Livingstone, 2008; Selwyn, 2009). Most of the things students do while at their virtual world with their social networks are far distanced from the academic standards. However, because so called digital learners are best technology users having fictional skills of social networking, texting and surfing information on the web, their learning engagement is limited lacking technology mediated productivities (Gurung & Rutledge, 2014). In contrast, Lloyd, Dean, and Cooper (2007: 490) found that “students utilizing technology for academic related work, tend to have higher levels of academic involvement”.

Digital natives, Tapscott (2009) explains, naturally assimilate technology as just another part of their environment, soaking it up along with everything else. This means that the technology savvy students of nowadays perceive technology use and social networking sites access as part of their day to day lives. In addition, Lloyd, Dean and Cooper (2007) insist that technological behaviours of students hold a possibility of

directly impacting on the students' academic success. Prensky (2010) and Tapscott (2009) concur that digital learners are those children who grew up in the mist company of the technological activities such as personal computers and internet and they have a wide access to internet and, by extension, the social networking sites.

The increased use of Social Networking sites has since become an international phenomenon in the past several years (Mehmood & Taswir, 2013). Mehmood and Taswir (2013:113) reaffirms that "researchers have found that the more these technologies become available, there more challenges the students are going to encounter in their higher education studies". A study by Mehmood and Taswir (2013) examined Analytical Research and collecting data with a use of questionnaires. The population of the study was the students at a college of applied sciences in Oman with a sample of 100 participants in the age region of 18 to 25 years with the majority of the sample being females. The findings were that Facebook is more used by the students than any other social networking site and that the access to those social networking sites is being done by cell-phones (Mehmood & Taswir, 2013). The findings further states that more people spends more time of about 2 hours on social networking sites, however, the contradiction is that about 72% of students use social networking sites for discussing assignments (Mehmood & Taswir, 2013). This disagrees with the earlier established factor that social networking sites are bad or have a bad impact on the academic activities and practices of the students. Nevertheless, Mehmood and Taswir (2013) concludes that even though students are in the midst of technological developments, the students still value face to face interactions of a classroom and that the social networking sites need to be used in improving academic excellence.

There are statistics detailing the use of online social networking sites by students and how they affect them. Rambe (2011) concludes in his study that social networking communications has since facilitated online contact that grants varied opportunities and difficulties that have different influences as well as pressure possibilities for wide opened academic relations. Basically, the use in itself has both the power and pressure to provide beneficial and dooming results in academic relations among student community. Neo and Skoric (2009) suggest that there is at least one personality variable (oral communication apprehension) that is related to increased and problematic social networking sites use. The students tend to be more comfortable

with social networking sites and its merits because it gives them an alternative from face to face conversations while maintaining social relationships without phone or face-to-face contact. The downsides of Social Networking Sites consumption includes risks and scrutiny related to the online selves of students being exposed through revealing undue private information (Cain, 2008).

It has been generally established that adolescents in particular have become notable users of the digital social media on daily basis. Although concerns about the influence of media and technology on youth worldwide are many and varied, prominent are fears that they impair cognitive development and academic achievement (Schmidt & Vandewate, 2008). Many scholars, such as Flad (2010) and Gurung and Routledge (2014), insist that there is a breakthrough in the use of social networks by the students in that their technology use gives the students an active position of defining academic goals and decision making. Yearly, the academic field keep on bringing technologically advanced means of lecturing and learning, thus, students are expected to develop positive attitudes towards this technology uses. This however, is not always the case that students adapt and use technology progressively. Simultaneously the students are instant texting about school events with friends mostly about who likes whom, who “dissed” whom, or what a pain the homework assignment is while other media such as radio or television are on in the background, or they may be listening to music playlists on their iPod (Schmidt & Vandewate, 2008). More often than not, the students' use of technology does not result in fruitful progress.

Technological determinism argues that technology is the principal driving force of society determining its mode of operation, development, course of history, structure and values in a decisive manner (Pinter & Dessewffy, 2008). Technology developments such as mobile phones gained social momentum when the new generation of citizen absorbed the interest in being mobile and accessible, making the telephone lines irrelevant means of communicating. The late of 2008 saw a rapid increase in the daily text messaging of teens to friends in United States of America and United Kingdom with a reported increase of 54% in the number of teens sending texts from 38% of daily texters in February 2008 (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell & Purcell, 2010). The easy access to mobile operations of technology as per calculations of development of the society seems to be the culprit to the new generations of teens and scholars who are technologically distracted.

According to Pew Project Internet Project (2012) 40% of cell phone owners in the USA have social networking sites accounts and access on their phone, and most of them are the highly educated and those with a higher annual household income. This means that the internet access as well as social networking sites access remains the primary use on cell phones by users. Shah et al (2001) suggests that the type of internet usage affect the student users of internet on a wide scale. This use of internet has a high risk of creating a breach of student security and privacy on SNS and further potentially taints academic profiles depending to their use of such social networking sites. A total of 80% of American teens own cell phones and text occasionally as well as instant messaging occasionally on their cell phones (Pew Research Internet Project 2012).

The growing interest in academic investigation and understanding of Social Networking Sites is perpetuated by the strength of these networking sites to create friendships as well as form virtual social engagement platforms within the student clusters (Rambe, 2011). The aim of Rambe's (2011) study is to explore the effect social networking sites use have between the student-lecturer relationships and the student-peer relationship. A study by Rambe (2011) explored a case study of three classes of first year students which permitted the use of Facebook as means of communication and engagement between student and lecturer for consultation purposes and between student and peers for networking and group discussions. A total number of 165 students participated in the study out of 450 undergraduate students. The study found that "student considers Facebook as a network of personal and entertainment nature rather than academic engagement space" (Rambe, 2011: 283-284). Additionally, Rambe (2011) found that despite the anonymity status granted to students in engagement spaces, students still fear loss of control and administrative surveillance over their accounts (Rambe, 2011). Lloyd, Dean & Cooper (2007) did reveal several links between academic and personal growth of students as well as the students' use of technology for academic purposes.

According to Goundar (2014), a number of academic staff recorded a high number of use of personal laptops and this amounted to a high margins in complaints about laptops causing disruptions for learning focus of other students. The students' electronic applications such as laptops, cellular phones and touch pads (ipads, smart computers and Tab1) were the major causes of distraction and disturbance to other students during the class process (Goundar, 2014). Fox, Rosen and Grawford (2009)

point that many college students spend their time studying while using instant messaging (IM) applications at the same time and that the average daily use of IM is negative on student's academic performance. In Goundar's (2014) view, the new phenomenon common in the use of cell-phones among students today is checking, in which students check their text messages, e-mails, checking websites and checking Facebook updates and Twitter updates. Online resources such as Facebook game sites, chat, Twitter and YouTube amount to be the primary interests of the students as compared to be expected interest drawn in classroom lecturers and textbook chapters about their subjects of learning. This is drawn on the huge interest and thus high usage of social networking sites and the common use of technology among the students. Fox et al (2009) made an early realisation that performance of students on academic activities turn out to be less distracted when the students know before-hand that their use of IM will interrupt their focus.

ICT devices are filling the lives of the students between their social lives and their academic responsibilities. "These devices are changing the status of education and the understanding of learning from the traditional learner plus learning material to learner plus learning material plus technology in which technology has taken the forefront of students' learning capacity" (Goundar, 2014: 212-213). However, with the benefit of these technology, turn with the fact that there is a high number of distractions which can hinder with the performance of the students in academic activities. In Fox et al (2009) view, the students have been afforded with an opportunity of free will to be or not be consumed by the distraction values of the IM and technology alike when using it.

Some students are undoubtedly cognizant that technology is having a negative or harmful effect on their academic studies and maybe more open to providing methods that will assist in time management and their intellectual workload (Juncoa & Cotton, 2011). By contrast, the many scholars such as Bennett and Maton (2010) and Gurung and Routledge (2014) investigating social networking sites discovered that many students have a tendency to be less involved in their academic studies as they replace social contact with technology use through social networking sites communications. The universities took an advantage of the new technology by implementing them and using these cutting edge technology in an attempt to bring the knowledge to the students of the benefits and harmful of technology in students' academic studies

(Lloyd, Dean & Cooper, 2007). This, however, is open to manipulation which could easily venture into distractions from academic activities, given the addictive and attention seeking nature of these new technology applications.

The nature of the technology available to the students, in this case, laptops and cell-phones spark the use of them during academic time when left unattended. In a natural setting, students will use Facebook and other social networking sites in ways that are both positive to their gratifications and in turn, the end results tend to be negatively influencing the students' academic performances (Junco, 2012). Direct use is unswervingly correlated to constant availability of cell-phones and access to internet and by extension, social networking sites by the students. Furthermore, Boyd (2008) adds that many student users of social networking sites believe that technology has reshaped social conditions and interactions into virtual circles in which they live in collectively.

At the core of the digital natives discourse is that their personal use, innate-digital skills, and inclination for using technology can be early utilized to forge meaningful learning engagement inside the various classroom settings (Palfrey & Fasser, 2008; Prensky, 2010). Researchers have found that the social networking sites use among the youth has been perpetuated by a need to escape the guard-ship of the parents on social relationships and interactions. For many adolescents, social networking sites and their other applications gave the adolescents a place where they can be free from their parents' concern and craft their own future in their of social interactions with their peers in those virtual social worlds (Cachia, 2008). Many parents insist that texting and other social networking features threaten their children's ability to establish solid face to face conversations with their peers despite the social networking sites providing much more freedom in contact with many people at a time on regular basis (Hogan, Gilbert, Leckington, & Morris, 2008).

According to Rather (2013) it is expected that Facebook use may affect academic grades in addition to one's personality. Rather (2013) conducted the study with an aim of unravelling the impact of the use of social networking sites of student users and how the students balance the use with their academic commitments. Rather (2013) found that social networking sites, particularly Facebook has a negative impact on the majority of 87.50% respondents and that these majority are of the view that its use

does affect academic grades as users spend most of their time online browsing this site to establish contact with unknown and unknown friends. As established before, among the interest of the students to use social networking sites is to become socially correct and connected as it has become fashionable around their calibre. The study revealed that out of the majority of the respondents, 23.81% reported that addiction of using Facebook compels student users to be online daily for most of the time without any break (Rather, 2013). Additionally, as a result, they end up spending less time studying and their studies are affected negatively leading in downside of the academic grades. It is evident from the findings of the study that there is a contrary relation with the overuse of Facebook and academic grades as it is generally believed that more time spent on Facebook leads to low academic grades (Rather, 2013).

### **2.1.2 The foundation of procrastination**

Procrastination is generally understood as an irrational tendency to delay tasks until an individual discovers discomfort (Solomon, & Rothblum, 1984). Alternatively, procrastination can be defined as a deliberate delay of executing an activity or action until late when regrets and disappointments emerge because of failed results. Procrastination is defined as the avoidance of implementation of an intention (Van Eerde, 2000). In other words, it is a detailed purposeful act to elude work or responsibility (Wang, He, & Li, 2013). Furthermore, in the case of students' procrastination, it is an act of avoiding to study and to satisfy other academic purposes. In the event of today's students, procrastination is technologically motivated and it is at their reach that the students end up ignoring the activities such as assessments and end up in regrets. Many studies such as the one done by Day, Mensink and O'Sullivan (2007), Steel (2007) and Klassen, Krawchuk and Ranjani (2008) suggest that procrastination is a commonly occurring phenomenon among undergraduate students. Furthermore, the tendency to procrastinate among students has led to the development of excuses and invention of self-handicapping reasons to cover procrastination on late submissions of assessments.

According to Wang, He and Li (2013:54) "fear of failure is an important factor in predicting procrastination". The orientation of procrastination as it is known, it is not exactly founded on actions or certain activities done by the person who might be procrastinating at that point, however, by the emotions and the interpretations of their



set goals. Basically, when you set goals to achieve them in the long run, you run a risk or procrastinating towards achieving those goals. In comparing the postgraduate with the undergraduate students, it was found that the postgraduate students run a risk of procrastinating because of their self-directed learning tasks and the difficulty there of (Wang et al., 2013).

Academic procrastination in college or university students is a well-researched area and there are several empirical findings on procrastination (Zeenath & Orcullo, 2012), however, despite that lucrative existing literature, scholars such as Steel (2007) still stress a need for examining the causes of procrastination. Most of the existing literature is about procrastination and its causes in the Western regions, with less to none literature about procrastination in South Africa. This therefore, forms the basis of this study with the goal of exploring the concept of procrastination from an African perspective. In a study conducted in Malaysia by Yaakub (2000), it was found that evidence of existence of procrastination are at a proposition of 80% when student self-reported chronicles of their exam preparation study patterns. This study seeks to question the existence of any evidence which tells of the procrastinating tendencies among the students attending universities in South Africa in terms of doing their assignments and activities.

Zeenath and Orcullo (2012) found that many students have a difficulty prioritizing their studies over their social life while at university and that tendency lead to an unknown birth of boredom which eventually results in procrastination. The balance between the academic activities and extra-mutual activities in this case, social networking use, seems to be a difficulty among the university students today. The developments in social circles and emotional behaviours of students run them oblivious to an inevitable reality of internet dependence (Odaci & Kalkan, 2010), and the accessibility within the university premises of internet technology increase the possibility of students involving in negative use of internet (Odaci, 2011). Social use of internet has proven to be the culprit in many studies of students' behaviour toward academic achievement these days and the use of internet among students increases rapidly.

A study by Odaci (2011) found that there is a high existence of catastrophic internet use within the student community of both sexes whom are at universities, however, the study failed to establish any link between procrastination in academia and internet

use. Odaci (2011) concluded with the aim of probing the relationship between self-efficacy and procrastination in academic to find out if they can be used as predictors of catastrophic internet consumption of university student. The participants of the study were 398 in total with a sample of 54.3% female and 45.7 male aged around 18-28 years old with the study conducted in Turkey. Odaci's (2011) study concluded that there is a possibility that self-effectiveness could influence problematic internet use on huge scales while procrastination has no influence to problematic internet use. Furthermore, it was found that gender of the participant made no difference in understanding the university students' problematic internet use as there is a huge increase in the use of computers by both sexes of university students (Odaci, 2011:1111-1112).

Academic procrastination tend to be a common phenomenon among the postgraduate students with 57.71% attesting to this and a proportion of 97.38% of those postgraduate students willing to reduce procrastination (Wang et al., 2013). The high procrastination levels among postgraduate students may be because most of them no longer have to attend day by day and dealing with the routinely deadlines of assignments and assessments. Fritzsche, Young and Hickson (2003), and Ariely and Wertenbruch (2002) found that procrastination in most cases develop when there is less feedback on assignments or no fixed deadlines on assignments. However, this is highly relevant in terms of postgraduates because there is feedback on their work among the self-imposed deadlines.

There are many technological appliances at the disposal of today's youth which many use to complete their homework, while some play games and the wide range of developments in the cell-phone industry to choose from (Cotten, Anderson, & Shipes, 2010; Rideout et al, 2010). Multitasking has mixed evidence which is prone to either positive or negative outcomes for those engaging in it. Some suggest that although multitasking does allow engagement in more activities at once, there is an element of slow performance in providing results than when the individual is doing one thing at a time (Jackson, 2008). This by far has become the birth of procrastination. According to Mayer and Moreno's (2003), multitasking along with its merits has a potential negative impact on academic learning and performance because in most cases, the processes of multitasking lead to procrastination.

When online sites like Facebook, MySpace, and Mxit surfaced, teens consumed them as a means of relaxing and communicating as well as interacting with other individuals (Birchmeier et al, 2011). Online social networking distinctions are easily getting distorted from the users' conscious as technology applications and features advances. Juncoa and Cotton (2011) found that multitasking within students takes place when students are using social networking sites and instant messaging (IM) while doing their homework and a sampled majority of students reported realization of detrimental outcomes from their use on their school work. Although Cotton (2008) suggests that there are benefits in IM use for purposes of enhancing public contacts with other people, however, Juncoa and Cotton (2011) maintains that the use of IM and the time spend in between contribute less to the completion of students' homework. In United States of America, for example, teens adopted these and other online social networking sites to justify their identity and socialization potentials, predominantly to strengthen current relationships, both of romance and of friendship (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008).

The use of technology for social tendencies enhances social interactions (Birchmeier et. al, 2011). The technology enhanced social interactions are no longer happening face to face, such as students in a dining hall discussing assignments, but has changed to texting, instant messaging (IM) and chatting via video calls on phones and laptops. This, however, contributes greatly to procrastination. In addition, many students have since blamed their use of the social networking sites and Instant messaging sites while doing their homework which tends to be an act of multitasking as the cause of their school work travail (Juncoa & Cotton, 2011).

Salaway, Caruso, and Nelson (2007), reveals that college students in America spends a reportedly approximation of eighteen hours weekly in consumption of internet technologies for various purposes ranging from information search to online video chatting. The significant question is, where do the student get the time to study since they are busy using the internet for reasons which are somehow personal other than academic. In Terrell and Shei's (2012) study, many participants reports that boredom in most cases influence them to use social networking sites such as Facebook which usually leads to them to find information not intended to find yet relevant such as a friend's birthday, family anniversaries and reunions. Media technologies have become part of the today's youth to that extent that they have connected the physical and virtual

worlds with help from social networking sites which enable the youth to keep up with the physical world while they are not part of it for purposes of sexual and identity expressions (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). These virtual world afford the users a means of technologically interacting with people while in a grounded area, thus this act equal the time of studying being used on something else.

Multitasking, particularly of gaming, online social networking sites and doing homework, further provides a difficulty for individuals to afford a realistic and reliable estimation of the time spend on different activities done simultaneously which the individual has been involved in (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Students however, tend to be in knowledge that their division of attention between activities have somehow unfavourable outcomes to their studies yet still continue to engage in those activities (Juncoa & Cotton, 2011). Compulsive Internet use remains on the rise in the current trends of use of social networking sites by the students. It refers to the state that Internet users cannot stop themselves from using the Internet even though they have to stop or they want to stop. Procrastination goes into psychological extremes which the individual user pushes them into but cannot return. Furthermore, this is because the psychological manipulation of the user gets affected by the virtual identities which lead to the user eventually forgetting what it feels like to be in the so called reality life.

According to Pew Research Study (Lenhart, et al., 2010), although the phone use in schools is being treated as a problem which is solved and contained, an average of 62% of all students reported their possession and use of cell-phones in the school premises however, just not during class hours. The culture of distracted youth who end up being perpetual procrastinators is born at an early school age. The notion of sending texts even at the school premises has been a cry for many parents and possibly teachers but less has been done to overrule that problem. In United States of America, 58% of social networking sites user have reported sending and replying more than 20 text messages each and every time, not to mention the number of instant messages send and received. (Pew Internet Research Study, 2012). However, Gurung and Rutledge (2014) maintains that the teachers and lecturers need not to dismiss the interests and potential of digital students and their digital capabilities, rather, the

applications and use of technology at home and school should be advised, encouraged and explored.

Stollak et al (2011) reveal that about 77.2% of the student users of cell-phones in USA say they spend an approximately 30 minutes or more on the social networking site Facebook per day. Stollak et al (2011) study aim to differentiate the social media use against grade difference among students. Stollak et al (2011) used online questionnaire method of data collection to ask students about their social media understanding and their usage. The questionnaires were sent using e-mail to an approximately 2 100 students at a liberal arts college, in USA in 2010 and only 430 were received. Out of those 430 received questionnaires, Stollak et al (2011), analysis found that Facebook, followed by YouTube, consume most of the students' time as well as these other social networking sites such as reading blogs, Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn. In essence, the most time spend on a social networking is directly correlated with the type of social networking site visited and the type of phone used. Students who have smart phones were more likely to both access social media tools and spend time engaging with others (Stollak et al, 2011). The study that the academic performance of the students did not shift or be influenced negatively as a result of the use of social networking sites, on a general level. However, the value of the time spent on Facebook reveal much difference to support the negative relationship between time spent on the social network and one's grades (Stollak et al, 2011). This comes as a result of the finding that *Facebook* is the sole consumer of the students' academic time more than any other social networking site.

Nowadays, the setting of online social networking use has changed to mobile pockets which allow participation by a wide range of people and in their comfortable circumstances. Gafni and Geri (2010) point out how the transition of technology by turning phones into mobile phones that fits in the pockets has done to prioritizing between social lives and academic lives among students. "Procrastination is wide spread in academic contexts, where students are required to meet deadlines for assignment completion in an environment full of events and activities which compete for the students' time and attention" (Gafni & Geri, 2010: 116). Procrastination is notoriously known for swaying away the productivity of students as an American study estimate an average of more than 70% students demonstrate procrastination

behaviours (Knezevic, 2012). This student practice has become widely used among the youth and is greatly used on mobile phones.

Heiberger and Harper's (2008) study found an affirmative correlation between the use of online social networking sites and the students' academic engagements positive, which in short relates to a greater percentage of users of social networking sites having a higher participation turnout to various student organisations. This means that those who use social networking sites tend to be more distracted from their academic duties, rather, they tend to be involved in student organisations in campus. Many students who are guilty of multitasking have reported their school work suffering a negative impact which came as a result of multi-tasking (Mayer and Moreno 2003) while Ophir, Nass and Wagner (2009) indicates that substantial multi-tasking people are unable to point out inessential information. The activities which mostly come as a result of multitasking seem to be done through cell phones given the mobility character of the cell phones.

The scores of research have found that students who have reported high-levels of multitasking through using social networking sites report that their use have a sufficient contribution to their failure to complete school work (Juncoa & Cotton 2011). This tends to be true for students who are engaging in other activities other than their studies which has shown to make students suffer to complete their work. In agreement with Huang and Leung (2009), students spending much time on their internet while chatting have reported an increasingly high possibility of their studies suffering poorly as a result of their social networking sites and/or instant messaging use.

The teachers in Rachtel (2012) study have an alarming worry about the constant use and impact of the digital technologies on the attention spans of the students when they are in class. This concern rises in the mist of deteriorating results of students having poor abilities to persevere in class activities, particularly those challenging tasks. McCoy (2013) reiterate Purcell, Rainne, Heaps, Buchonon, Frideorich, Jackling, Chen and Zuchhr (2012) study that there is a general believe among the teachers that continuous use of the digital technologies are creating a world filled with distracted students suffering from short attention spans. The realisation McCoy (2013) draws is that digital technologies help very little academically at the benefit of the students, rather it distracts the students from their academic activities. Froese (2012) created a

mock classroom setting by giving the students various tasks and activities and gave half of the participants their cell-phone and allowed them to text and surf the internet while the other half did not have their cell-phones and the results were a 27% drop in the students' scores because of texting.

According to Forde and Poldrack (2006), it becomes easier for a person to be distracted when they are trying to learn new things and engaged in various activities at the same time. The introduction and integration of the cell-phones in the learning environment at the hands of the students have more potential for creating distracted students in their engagement of academic activities. The capabilities of the students to regulate their self-aware while in class is often distracted by the use of the cell-phones and thus their attention levels result in poor learning abilities (Wei, Wang & Klausner, 2012). The abilities of the students to study seamlessly is distributed because of their continuous texting which at times appear to be unconscious at the control of the students.

### **2.1.3 Technology language and academic writing**

The limited available investigations of text language suggest standard and non-standard forms of language happen interchangeably and that most of the language is actually standard (Crystal, 2008). In texting language use, texted words do not exist on their own, rather, they need to have standard or complete words to corroborate their function. Contrary to that, Shortis (2007) reveals that text messaging has altered what counts as Standard English spellings by creating new spelling itself. Many words then become shortened to the length of a single syllable, and in many instances, vowels are removed, capital letters are added for emphasis while numbers replace prepositions. In that regard, the known articles and conjunctions of English may be omitted, while graphemic units replace numbers and letters in the texting social networking sites, such as in like, 4 standing in for "for", stra8 for "straight", la8/l8r for "late/later", 2 for "to", 2morw for "tomorrow" c for "see" or gr8 for "great" (Lyddy, Farina, Hanney, Farrell, O'Neill, 2014).

The goal of academic writing is clarity and lack of ambiguity (Myers, 1996). Many scholars such as (Spears et al., 2002; Floyd, 2008; Birchmeier et. al., 2011; Lovink, 2011) have been focusing on studying the network growth of the social networks and the various characteristics of online social networking on both global and local

platform. The use of these online social networking sites poses threats to proper English language use. Consequently much concern is over the impact use of such forms of language has on youth literacy despite less experiential evidence to support the existence of this concern (Plester, Wood, & Bell, 2008; Plester, Wood, & Joshi, 2009).

Eventually, the use of social networking writing will influence the literature of the future (Fagorusi, 2013). This implies that next generation children will not be good at writing the English language and possibly their mother tongue which will result in children having difficulty reading and writing with confidence outside their virtual social networks. Academic writing experience means knowledge of writing in the academic context which is shared and clarified to understand needs significant to improve learning (Maharsi, 2011). The 140 character writing of the social networking site *Twitter* quickly decompose correct grammar and syntax use as well as other aspects of language applications with this commonly happening globally. There is a chance that Queen's English words with longer spellings that have shorter or newly made up synonyms may become extinct from non-use in the near future.

The features and the end results of textism in text messages have been repeatedly reported, highlighting the effects and the end results of this use in social networked conversation, particularly among the student communities. The media has grossly exaggerated the level of occurrence of textism in text messages by labelling text messaging and the textism culture as "foreign" language (Crystal, 2008; Jones & Schieffelin, 2009; Thurlow, 2006). Fagorusi (2013) elaborates on how the social networking language use shortens the elaborative use of language as compared to academic writing:

The beauty of social media language lies in its brevity. When text messages came and cost was a consideration, it was appropriate to try cramping an idea into 160 characters, which was the limit. Then came twitter, with 140 characters; and the silliest of abbreviations and other truncated spellings have found space (Fagorusi 2013).

The rising number of blogs and the use of abbreviations and popular words (Fagorusi, 2013) present a moving rejection of English quality writing in academic writing. It is not only time which is lost in the process of social networking use but also the integrity of language use and writing skills (Stollak, et al 2011). Although many scholars



supplement the use of shortened texting in messages as an appreciation of syntax sounds, negative effects on literacy can be spotted from the user of social networking sites.

Experimental research was done recently in order to support or disqualify the growing concerns about the effects which textisms has on literacy as well as costs to the current and future generations (Lyddy, et al., 2014) such as the one done by Pew Research Internet (2010; 2012; 2013). While the social media is not a downright harm to the English language, the use however provides possibilities to it. In social deterministic accounts, individual users of online social networking sites construct their own meaning (Birchmeier et. al., 2011), collective obsession with identity management (Lovink, 2011: 38), and new language typo which become socially relevant to the users (Fagorusi, 2013). This means that there is a high possibility whether it negative or positive which the social network setting of social networks can influence on the offline communications and language use. Adenubi, Olalekan, Afolabi and Opeoluwa (2013) reported a limitation in their study and made a recommendation that further research should be done with a larger population of students.

The widespread of the texting language and patterns of its use in academic area is causing calls of concern from parents and educators. Aziz, Shamim, Faisal Aziz and Avais (2013) contest that there is a huge overlooked role that technology plays communication and in the popularity of texting among the young generation because texting proves to be economically and time efficient. The learners tend to adopt the use and end up encountering errors in spelling and in certain extremes encountering construction of ungrammatical sentences. The educators have made a leap into trying to fix the situation by penalising the students who are guilty of grammatical and spelling errors (Thorlow, 2011; Crystal, 2008). Aziz et al (2013: 128885) points out that “mostly, the SMS language affects two aspects of learner’s language proficiency i.e. skills to express oneself eloquently through writing and skills and ability to use words appropriately in context”. Thus, the continuous use of the texting language renders the user to have a difficulty in expressing themselves in grammatically acceptable manner.

For texting, according to Aziz et al (2013), the spelling of words is drawn on how they sound and how easier the words can be written to get the meaning across. The point is that texting users are more concerned with getting the message or the meaning

across as long as the recipient of that message understand the meaning regardless of the damages the process of communicating meaning is doing to the Standard English language writing. Even though there decreasing correct use of English language right or wrong being blamed on SMS/Texting language, scholars such as Thurlow (2011) insists additionally that the use of SMS/Texting language is the display of creativity in writing and that the users need to be given quite credit for that. Crystals (2008) points out the creative part of the SMS/Texting language have been ignored utterly and that there is a room for improvement of literacy from the younger age. Recent study by Crystals (2011) suggested an initiative called internet linguistics which encourages the use and appreciation of the value and quality of text language writing. In support of this, Aziz et al (2013) suggests that the cell-phones have more creative potential of communication functions and use that is beyond how they are currently being used.

Text messages are used for particular purposes (Lyddy et al., 2014), it might be constrains of time, costs of sending those SMSs, or maintaining social ties and cultures which the users have with one another in an attempt to provide a meaningful description of reality through text experience. Many experts in the texting studies such as Lyddy et al (2014) maintains that there is no harm with the students using texting to communicate with one another however, the students need to be made aware that the texting language has no place in their academic studies (Cullington, 2012). There is, however, an issue with Cullington's (2012) results in that, the teachers may not always be around to facilitate the formal language means of writing. According to Cullington's (2012) study, student participants reported a use of abbreviations in their formal writing on few occasions however, the participants maintains knowing the harmful consequences of using those texting associated abbreviations in formal academic writing .

Scholars such as Carey (2007), Walsh (2007) and Crystal (2008) have separately found that there are contradictory submissions insisting a negative influence of texting language on the students' formal writing abilities in academia. Plester et al (2009) study found no correlation evidence of undesirable impact of texting on literacy for young users, however, some studies such as that of Plester et al (2009) have reported an existence of benefits to children who are exposed to texting for their literacy while phonological understanding will be highly required. The student participants sending

more text messages per day have demonstrated informal writing skills however; their formal writing skills were reportedly horribly (Rosen, Chang, Erwin, Carrier & Cheeve, 2010). This therefore begs the question, what is the point of using the abbreviations and synchronized texting words to begin with, since their use has potential bad results on academic writing.

Rosen et al.'s (2010) study of young texting users indicated a negative correlation between self-reported textism use and formal writing, while there was a positive association with informal writing. There is however, nothing wrong with the familiarity with informal writing, as long as one is able to identify the exact moment where there is a need for correct formal language use, particularly in academic contexts. Kemp (2010), using a textism translation/generation task, found that text messaging have simplified conversations by making the messages short than those of standard English languages which in turn minimises the user's time to read the text message on their phone despite the associated reading errors. In reiteration, this points out to an evitable fact that informal language is bad for every students and that academic excellence is found in prescribed writing.

Plester, Wood, and Bell (2008) found that there is no relationship between verbal reasoning and texting to formal language translation. For their study, Plester et al. had about 65 participants of 11-year-old children to translate a piece of text passage from English to textisms and from textisms back to English. Their findings shows that those with high intellectual understanding capabilities in terms of textisms had less difficulty familirazing with the texting rules and translating from English to textism and back however those without intellectual capabilities has since showed intellectual density. Plester et al (2008) also found contradicting evidence that frequent texters with a history of sending and receiving three or more messages per day have relatively managed to score significantly fewer errors than any rare texters and non-texters on a verbal and nonverbal reasoning test. It is believed that text messaging has damaging abilities on writing capabilities (Thurlow, 2006) and this further suggests that whenever an individual use texting messaging languages constantly, their chances of writing proper English language grammar and formal writing are diminishing day by day (Rosen, et al 2010).

Rosen et al (2010) study of a pattern developed in the excessive use of texting language in communication and the relations to formal writing has proved that texting language and its informality has a huge damage to the formal writing of students, particularly those in Universities mostly using IM and other social networking sites. Rosen et al (2010) study had two sets of experimental studies which employed a sample of between 1, 226 and 1,319 participants of students made of approximately 335-383 18- to 25-year-olds; 38% males and 62% females (Rosen, et al 2010). Those participants with some college who reported sending more text messages demonstrated worse formal writing but better informal writing and across all participants, sending more text messages was related to better informal writing (Rosen, et al 2010). This means that the new means of communication by use of text messages and chatting technologically is the primary cause of the writing problems students suffer. Additionally, this study purposely aim to establish the levels of harm at which the social networking sites and texting language have on the formal writing capacity of the students at institutions of higher learning, particularly through the language English.

Rather (2013) concluded that social networking sites particularly Facebook present harmful effects on academic activities of students when used continuously. Rather's (2013) study suggests that continuous use of social networking sites particularly as students, not only harm students' academic stands but also the grasp of informal and formal language writing. These results suggest an existence of a level of difference between texting and textisms and that difference extend to the formal and informal writing and further to level of education the user of texting has when using the texting language in their writing (Rosen et al., 2010).

Rosen et al (2010) further sustains that there is a need for additional research on the daily application of textism to assess the existence and identity of the relationship between prevalence of textism in classroom writing and daily use of textism in informal settings. Even though data from the study have validated the means of measuring daily use of textisms, a different approach to obtain successful insight into the use of textisms will be to directly transcribe the digital communication platforms of participants which include social networking sites, instant messaging services, their emails to observe the daily use of textisms (Rosen et al., 2010). The problem in the teachers' approach to social networking sites use among students and its documented

damage on students is that teachers confuse the students' personal digital engagements and educational digital engagements (Gurung & Routledge, 2014). As Bennett and Maton (2010) put it, there is a significant lack of agreement to the extent to which the effects of digital technology have on young people

Junco and Cotton's (2011) study maintains that there are limited available means of measuring use of technology and this is because studies about technology use should examine variants of technology types, their available amounts and the time frame of usage in order to determine the impact these technologies have on academic performance. There is also a need for future empirical studies which focuses on the usage of technology among the students based on the constant availability and years of exposure to these technologies in order to identify the root of the impact. Furthermore, at times, even for the studies of huge magnitude, the lower rate of survey participants taints the expected results by the researcher and in turn, the findings become inconclusive. In as far as the use of social networking sites is concerned, there are many benefits attached to a healthy use of those sites when used appropriately, however, there are also consequences as a result of over consumption of the internet and social networking sites.

In as much as many scholars Crystal (2008) and Fox et al (2013) investigated the dangers of using cell-phones in the learning area, many researchers have begun to investigate the language learning using these cell-phones and the applications that comes with the cell-phones (Kim, Rurckert, Kim & Seo, 2013). In Stockwell (2010), and in Zhang, Song and Burton's (2011) study, mobile phones are being found to have increasingly qualities of improving vocabulary knowledge of its users, grammar writing in both formal and informal settings. Kim et al (2013) points out that the advances in the mobile technologies introduces flexibility in the interactions that the students and educators can have. Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has become easier and more flexible which encourages ultimate participation in cooperative learning environments. Scholar such as Valk, Rashid and Elder (2010) demonstrated the applicability of the cell-phones with increased access particularly in developing countries.

According to Kim et al (2013), it has been reported that the students want to be at the controlling front when coming to their learning experiences in that they want to learn at their most convenient means. Despite this intention for development in learning

environment, there are still challenges in learning and for the educators to draft the new learning methods that are in line with the new advances in the technology use. Rueckert, Kiser and Cho (2012) recorded that teachers are resisting the technological advances, developments and changes that are expected from them. The flexibility that is offered with the new technology advances can somehow present difficulties for both the students and educators. Earlier studies of Stockwell (2008) predicted that there are various factors such as psychological, technological and even environmental barriers restricting the students to taking advantage of the technological advances in language learning.

Aziz et al (2013) found that the Standard English language writing of students is not in any pressing danger from being overshadowed by the SMS language. An early study by Crystal (2008) point that the language is entering a new generation of revitalization and that technology is the vehicle of this process through texting. Aziz et al insist that students have free will to switch from one register to another and one context to another when writing and that the students are much aware of the difference between text writing and standard language writing. This direct that the students are duly aware of the difference between texting language and the academic writing whenever they are writing and thus can switch seamlessly whenever they choose. Aziz et al (2013) argue that the primary problem which the students and the educators have to concern about is the negligence of punctuation that the students are getting comfortable to commit.

This study seeks to uncover the effects while detecting changes in access patterns of social networking sites and their impact on the students. The imperative of this study is an educational perspective and the extensive use of social networking sites by the students at the institutions of higher education. Therefore, this study in a conventional way, seek to elucidate the nature of the relationships between the use of online social networking sites and academic performance and impairment if any, among the student population.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In understanding influences on social networking behaviour, a common behavioural model is selected, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) as developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and the Uses & Gratification theory as developed by Cantril, 1942.

Dystopian approach was first mentioned by the media theorist Marshal McLuhan in the early 1980s as reference to damages which technology use or over-use amount in society.

### **2.2.1 Technological determinism: a dystopian approach**

Today, the world lives in an era which the use and understanding of technological applications is based on a social or cultural context and that technology is a means to an end in itself. Most technological innovation stories known to man have since technological revolution being future-oriented and looking upon the new technology as a driving force of positive developments (Hetland, 2012). However, the dystopian approach to technology reveals that there is a dark side of technology use to what is generally known in new technologies. The dystopian position takes its lead in the view that technology implies risk and its users may be ungovernable (Hetland, 2012; Rogers, 2003).

The internet as a beacon saturate of online social networking sites has over the years become a universal medium, accessible on a wide variety of media and the advantages of having access to such an information rich medium are many (Carr, 2008). The advantage of the Internet technology is that it has different means of affecting the users usually at first the participants as spectators then as users and later as scholars of technology theories and possibly the designers of technology applications. However, social networking sites are, just like anything else on the Internet, it has no sense of security assurance which means that information about a certain user can easily reach the other person any moment's notice (Karl & Peluchette, 2008). The creation of meaning always brings the introduction of the contradictory nature of new technology in terms of their impact on the users (Hetland, 2012).

According to Gurung and Routledge (2014) and Bennett and Maton (2010), most of the students, particularly the technology savvy tend to be in support of technological determinism, which is a dreamy viewpoint that technology provides solutions to historical problems of society, education and student learning and achievements. The students' technological uses have tended to be of new capability that the students access the internet to create and re-create more data rather than using the information which is available to their disposal. Changes in technology support the utopian visions of a brave new world which allows for thrive in equality and participation (Bennett & Maton, 2010). However the further dystopian issue is that process of creating new

data through access to technologies by the students happen unaware and oblivious. This is more applicable in the academia that the students would often track, find data on the search engine Google.com and edit the data to add their own then re-publish the data again.

Gathering information and interaction without geographical prohibitions has since become a reality since the arrival of social networking sites and other online academic facilities at the disposal of students (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2008). Many people who use the internet daily for various purposes such as blogging and twitter have since developed a habit of not being able to read longish articles given to them. Therein lays the true danger of social media: users are so reliant upon it that they will overlook any sinister developments in social media, employing a lukewarm version of doublethink that could easily become scalding hot (Aldridge, 2013). This is the reason why it is important to study the level of distractions which technology benefits have created in the society. Furthermore, the determinism approach provides a path to which the negative side of technology can be explored.

### **2.2.2 Theory of reasoned action**

According to the theory of reasoned action, the attitude of a person towards behaviour becomes favourable when there is a strong intention for the individual to engage in that behaviour (Chow & Chan, 2008). This means that the behavioural patterns on an individual are influenced by the attitude and interests towards that behaviour. In studying behavioural intentions in a choice situation, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) suggested that if there is a high correlation between behavioural intention and behaviour, one should not only be able to predict behavioural intention, but predict behaviour as well (Smith, 2010). This means that the level of use of online social networking sites by students can lead to negative impact to their academic performance.

Theory of reasoned action assumes that people evaluate the implications and their end benefits before considering engaging in that behaviour to avoid poor turnover results (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). However, in as far as the use of online social networking sites is concerned, the evaluation of intention is poorly considered (Flad, 2010) and the primary interest is in satisfaction of the intention-that being to increase their social status online (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2008). Actual behaviour



generally follows intention (Riemenschneider & Hargrove, 2001; Peslak Ceccucci & Sendall, 2011), and the intention is based on two influencing parties which are attitude towards an action and subjective norm.

The performance of behaviour is a chain reaction which begins with the subjective norm and the value of that norm leads to draft in intention of the individual to draw the actual performance of such behaviour (Chow & Chan, 2008). Subjective norm represent the people in social circles with whom the user get influenced before executing an action and the intention is the personalized choice made by the user alone. The intention of social networking use has been positively associated with attitude toward social networking (Peslak, Ceccucci & Sendall, 2011). The importance of this theory in the study is to define the behavioural process which leads to negative use of online social networking sites by the students.

Smith (2010: 16) quoted Fishbein and Ajzen (1975: 5) as they elaborate that “the theory of reasoned action assumes that a choice to or not to engagement in a behaviour depends on the people’s considerations of implications to that certain behaviour”. The ultimate goal of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) was to understand the human behaviour, not to only predict behaviour. This theory applies when behaviour appears and it’s under subject’s control and the intentions therefore lead to be the best predictor of behaviour. This basically means that with intentions, the behavioural patterns can be predicted and identified as there is a direct correlation between behavioural intention and intention. In the context of the study, if the students have a strong intention to use the online social networking sites, then it is highly likely that they will do as their behaviour is predictable based on intentions.

The theory of reasoned action was established as a model to predict behavioural intentions and match it with corresponding behaviours (as cited by Ajzen & Fishbein 1969: 400) as means to explain the actions as a result of intention. According to Cappella, Fishbein, Hornik, ahern and Sayeed (2001), the theory of reasoned suggests that intention is viewed as a function of two determinants which is the person’s attitude towards performing behaviour (which is based on the subject’s beliefs about the costs and benefits of performing the behaviour) and the person’s perception of the social (or normative) pressure exerted on him/her to perform the behaviour. In the case of students’ use of social networking sites, this means that most

students weight their attitude as beneficial to suit into to the social circles and communicate efficiently. At times, the students' perceptions also play a role in their choices and though it seem wrong not to have social networking accounts and occasionally visiting the internet.

Ajzen (2005) insist that normative reflections intentions then to less important than attitudinal consideration intentions while normative considerations predominate the rest of the intentions. The South African government has been joining the continent and the whole world in the battle against digital divide and encouraging access to technological advancements for life and social living advancement. This therefore satisfy the attitudinal consideration in that everyone should have access to technology which includes computers and internet, however, normative considerations kicks in and overcome the attitudinal considerations in that the world populations began to understand what this internet is and what are the effects of its application.

### **2.2.3 Uses and gratification theory**

The Uses and Gratification theory studies the level of attraction and elements of satisfactions which grasp the audiences to media attention depending on media type and content type to satisfy the audience's social and emotional needs (O'Donohoe, 1994; Cantril, 1942; Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010). The theory develops a measuring stick to which it explores the use of mass communication mode by the individuals. In social networking context, this theory is used to measure the level of use of online social networking sites. Uses and Gratification theorists such as (Rubin, 2002; McQuail, 2005) argue that people's response to a medium and levels of usage is primarily perpetuated by those people's needs.

The theory maintains that the use of these media and networks is generated from a social and psychological base of needs (Dunne et al, 2010) which the individual seek to satisfy. The uses and gratifications approach gives the audience the power of selection of content exposure levels and usages and this approach provides helpful perspectives when trying to apprehend the usage, exposure and effects of media content on those audiences (Ballard, 2011). The primary importance of study is to investigate how the students perceive and explore online social networks sites as

medium of communication. According to this theory, the use of a social networking site is an activity influenced by the choice made by the user with the hope of getting gratifications after the use. The importance is that users evaluate the expected gratification before use, and in the case of social networking sites use, the user seek to fit in, within the digitized society of today.

The main point of the uses and gratifications theory is based on the view that the argument is not "what do the mass media do to people?" but rather "what do people do with the mass media?" McQuail (2005) quoting Katz, Haas and Gurevitch (1973:2). The individual uses of the media have always driven the tone of the gratification the media users get from their use. In comparison with the wide spread of technology, the important thing is what do the people do with these technology, and thus, several uses include socializing and accessing information.

Katz et al. (1973) offer a typology of needs of media users that can be expressed as:

- Cognitive needs - for information, knowledge and understanding of our environment.
- Affective needs - for aesthetic, pleasurable and emotional experiences.
- Personal integrative needs - for credibility, confidence, stability and personal status.
- Social integrative needs - for contact with family, friends and the world.
- Escapist needs - for escape, diversion and tension release.

This typology describes the various uses and the gratifications that the media users get out of their use. The cognitive needs and escapist needs are paramount in as far as the students' use of the social networking sites in that the sites offer information, knowledge and a room to escape and tension release. Furthermore, the social integrative needs also play a vital role in that the users connect with distant friends to forge and sustain relationships with the aim of building the affective needs and personal integrative needs.

The Uses and Gratifications theory assumes that media selection and consumption is in its own identity, goal orientated, purposive and motivated (Williams, 2006). The use of social networking sites in this case is motivated by choices made by the user in the hope of gratification. In its essence, when a user login on a social networking site, such as Facebook, Twitter, Mxit, Google plus, etc., the user have gratifications in mind which the user seek to receive from use. According to Hargittai and Hsieh (2010) and Papacharisi (2010) these customized expressions of online sociability presents various options of social behaviours which allow users certain practical levels of involvement, activity, and multi-tasking. Thus however, the use and multi-tasking as means of satisfying multiple needs has been documented as impairment to the academic activities of the students.

Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009) study, users' behaviour was found to be correlated to uses and gratification theory in that the motives of the user influence the uses to have a certain expectation of gratification after using the networking site. In the study, the participants were asked on why the use the social networking sites and the outcomes expected as gratifications. The results were that the users mostly use the social networking sites to keep up with the social nature of their youth and to be updated about the activities and events happening in their surrounding areas. According to the theory, "relationships people have among themselves are more influential than the relationships people have with the media, although, this depends on their levels of gratifications from media content" (Dunne, Lawlor, & Rowley, 2010). This means that the users have power in their selection of media content which they will be consuming and in most cases, the gratifications earned after use are for mingling with people, amusement and knowledge (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009)

The theory maintains that there is a high level of choices and selections people go through in their use of vehicles of communications in their pursue for gratifications of their needs (Dimmick, Chen & Li, 2004). Fogg and Iizawa (2008) suggests social networking sites are used as subject to a persuasive attitude of the social website content and attitudes of users towards the social networking in general. This, thus means that social networking sites usage in the case of the student might not necessarily be because of particular gratification to be held as a trophy after use, rather as a result of peer pressure particularly in students. These gratifications sought from

the social networking sites include socializing and amusement as well as knowledge data (Dimmick, Chen & Li, 2004), and these depends on the social roles and psychological disposition variance of an individual user (Williams, 2006). This theory aids an understanding of the user's motives and their actions as the users seek gratifications from the use of social networking sites.

## **2.3 CONCLUSION**

The chapter two outlined the published literature on these following topics; students' technology use and distractions, the foundation of procrastination and technology language and academic writing. The various elements which influence the use of social networking sites and the benefits of technology to the users were discussed at length. Furthermore, the other sites of the benefits of technology and social networking sites were also discussed which included distractions from academic activities and language writing difficulties as a result of using social networking sites or texting with validation from theories. The various needs encouraging the use of social networking sites and the reception of the sites on the academic status of the students remain a pressing matter with many elements of interpretation. Chapter three will discuss the research methodology applied in the study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter engaged literature about the use of social networking among the students, the acts of procrastination as a result of social networking use and the impact of social networking sites on academic language use. This chapter discusses the research methodology. Furthermore, this chapter describes the procedures and processes that were used in the processes of data collection and the data design as well as the analysis of data on the effects of social networking sites on the students and the level of use on the academic performance of students at University of Limpopo.

Leedy and Ormrod (2010: 2) say “research is a systematic process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information in order to increase our understanding of a phenomenon about which the researcher is interested or concerned with”. They also outline that research originates from the question in the mind of the researcher. The researcher has to follow certain steps in the process of conducting the research and in this chapter; the focus is on choosing the appropriate methodology for the study. Babbie and Mouton (2004) describes research as a three categorised process namely exploration, description and explanation.

The majority of the literature the researcher reviewed is about the students and technology influenced distractions, the foundation of procrastinations as well as the social technology language compared with the academic writing language. The researcher here attempts to explore the relationship the students have with their social networking sites and their use of technology as well as comparing the language used in academic and social networking circles.

Research methodology provides a channel which the researcher follows in moving from one point to another through using the specific steps with the aim of achieving the complete study. The research methodology is a systematic yardstick used in measuring the processes to be used in the study and lays out guidelines in which the researcher has to proceed in choosing the methods in research. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) identify the research methodologies as qualitative and quantitative and for the

purpose of this study, the researcher chose to use both the qualitative and quantitative methods.

Babbie and Mouton (2004) maintain that the quantitative researcher believes that the only way to understand and size phenomenon in many cases, the attitudes of human behaviour and its details is to use numerical items to the behavioural attitudes. They further state that qualitative researcher makes attempts in studying the perspectives of human behaviour from the surface. The numbers in a quantitative study are very important and scholars in this field believe that it is the best way in which individual behaviour can be conceptualised and understood. However, the qualitative scholars assumes that in order to study the human behaviour, is to become one with the subjects of the study in order to understand closely the perspectives of the respondents of the study.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010) quantitative researchers are constantly in the lookout for explanations and prediction that provide generalisation effects of people or places with the intentions to establish, confirm, or validate relations in development of generalisations that validate existing theories. However, the scholars maintain that the qualitative researchers are explorers of better understanding of complex situations and their work is usually in the fact finding field of building a theory up from the ground rather than validating existing ones. The qualitative researchers establish new facts from the data collected or observations in the field and the holistic nature of their focus makes the field unique to their merits.

### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Recognising the complexities of the students' engagement of social networking sites and the perceptions of the lecturers towards the use of these technologies by the students, the study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods of research study. This is where the students perceptions on the use of social networking sites will be evaluated in quantifiable metrics while lecturers' perceptions about the students' use of the sites will be evaluated in qualitative metrics which makes the use of mixed methods to be relevant for this study. The main source of data collection is self-administered questionnaires. Babbie and Mouton (2004) define research design as the plan of action or a building blueprint the researcher intends to use in order to conduct the research. This basically means that research design is a collection of



guidelines and plans to which the researcher must use in order to conduct and arrive at the findings of the study. The questionnaire is attached as annexures A.

The IBM SPSS data analysing program was used to analyse the qualitative data coded from the field collection. The importance of using the IBM SPSS software is that the programme is known for producing refined data results which can be proved both valid and reliable. The coding procedures were done using IBM SPSS data coding software to analyse data and provide results to be interpreted by the researcher. The data was loaded into the IBM SPSS software and was analysed to determine the frequencies of the data variables. Data from interviews was analysed using selective coding to review its intensity and relevance to the study.

### **3.2.1 Population of the study**

The population of the study consists of the students of the University of Limpopo. Self-administered questionnaires were provided to the participants and were used as the primary sources of data collection. The age group of the students range from 17 years old to 35 years old. The participants were also from various levels of study from first year to masters level. The secondary population consists of the lecturers of the University of Limpopo in the department of Sociology, psychology and media studies. This is because the lecturers are much involved in the studying patterns of the students and engage closely with the students during lectures. The lecturers from the department of psychology and sociology were chosen because of the understanding of the operations of the society and the human psychological interpretation of concepts in their reach. The other reason is because the lecturers in the department of media studies have an understanding of the applications of social networking sites as an extent of social media and communication in general.

### **3.2.2 Survey**

For the purpose of this study, self-administered questionnaires were used as tools of data collection which were randomly distributed among the student community of the University of Limpopo, ranging from first year to masters level of study. The researcher aimed to have 120 respondents. Furthermore, a total number of 340 questionnaires were distributed to the participants and a total number of three hundred and nineteen (319) questionnaires were received by the researcher, however, twenty one (21) were

damaged, therefore the total amounted to two hundred and ninety seven (297) questionnaires usable were returned to the researcher. The questionnaire contained both open ended and close ended questions. The purpose is to allow greater uniformity of the answers given while giving the researcher the power to determine the level of attitude and perspective to which the respondents have. Data coding software of IBM Statistical Package for Social Science (IBM SPSS) version 22 was used to analyse the raw data in their original form from the collection. The data were presented in the forms of graphs, charts and frequencies. In an effort of simplifying the data for understanding purposes, the researcher used a form of narration to provide meaning to the interpreted data.

The researcher took much consideration in to the questioning techniques when designing the research due to the crucial nature of these techniques. There are two main approaches to questioning techniques, which are, Thurstone and Likert (Currie 2005). The questionnaire contains various sets of questions from the ones which requires the respondents to choose between “yes” and “no” and also options for elaborations in support of the answer given, be it “yes” of “no”. Furthermore, there are also other questions which have more than two answers in which the respondents will choose from. However, there are also other questions which allow the respondents to choose more than one answer to actually express the status of discussion. The majority of the questions which needs more than one answer are about the various social networking sites responders use and also the levels of that use.

The traditional Likert questioning structure have questions which allows the respondents to respond to the questions through scales, choosing between “strong agree”, “agree”, “neutral”, “disagree”, and “strongly disagree”. However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher chose to use the “yes” and “no” options for the respondents to choose from. This is because the “yes” and “no” choice gives the respondents equal chances of choosing the other, depending on their perception of their behaviour and understanding of the question. There were also questions which required the respondents to rate between “regularly”, “occasionally” or “never” to their use of cell phone, tablet and desktop or laptop computer.

The other question required the respondents to rate their strength to access information on internet on categories such as “very confident”, “somehow confident”,

“not confident” and “I don’t know how to use the internet”. The other question required the respondents to rate their visits to the social networking sites from “more than 5 times a day”, “once in a day”, “once in a week”, “once in a month” and “never”. Additionally, other question required the respondents to gauge their time spend on social networking as “several times”, “more than one time”, “just one time” and “never” while the other question required the respondents to rate their importance of their membership on social networking sites on categories such as “very important”, “least important” and “not important”.

The research design is in many ways controlled by the purpose of the survey and the category of information which the researcher wishes to collect. There is, however, a criterion in which all the designs must conform to, such as:

- Be distributed randomly to the random sample as identified and to whom the subject of the study is relevant.
- Be carefully drafted and structured in a way that the questions are clear and straightforward to avoid ambiguity and be likely to provide the proper responses needed.
- Be open to cultivate the willingness of the respondents.

Babbie and Mouton (2004) emphasise that the research design of research questions should avoid negative items because the appearance of negation in the questionnaires creates a room for misinterpretation and thus lead to misunderstanding. The questionnaire as a tool of data collection should indicate in detail the purpose and the objectives of the research study. Additionally, it should provide a clear description of the aim of the study in hand.

The questions in the questionnaire were grouped into two sections based on the research objectives. The original questionnaire attached to the research proposal had section A as the Demographics which include the gender, age and educational qualifications, while section B had the questions as guided by the research questions, aim and objectives of this study. However, for the data collection purpose, the questionnaire was restructured to have section A as the questions and section B as the Demographics. This is because the researcher did not want the respondents to be negatively influenced or somehow distracted by the demographic before facing the actual questions.

The researcher explained the research objectives and the research title upon issuing the questionnaire to the respondents so that they can understand what was expected of them. The convenience of the participants played a huge role in that the researcher encouraged the participants to take the questionnaire with them to their respective rooms to fill it on their own. This activity happened after the researcher has fully explained the objectives of the study and answered any question which the participant might have had on the ground. The participants had a luxury time adjustment so that they can take their time to read and understand the questions and answer them as honestly as possible. Furthermore, some participants even requested an extra time adjustment so that they can continue in the study willingly and actively.

Analysing codes were assigned to the questions to make it easy for the analysing software to crunch the questions smoothly. The questions such as those which required the participant to choose between “yes” and “no” were given a scale of 1 and 2, the number 1 representing “yes” and the number 2 representing “no”. Depending on the question and the possible answers provided for the respondent to choose from, the scale was designed.

### **3.2.3 Interviews**

The researcher employed the face to face method of interviewing. This method is productive because it allows the researcher to observe the respondents closely and also get a human element attached to the responses. The researcher approached the participants and requested to interview them and further made appointment arrangement for the actual interview session. The research aim and objectives were explained to the respondents before the actual interview can begin. This is to enable the respondents to understand the study and the context in which the questions are asked and should be responded.

The interview sessions involved four lecturers from various departments of the University of Limpopo, namely; lecturer 1 is from department of Media, Communications and Information Studies, lecturer 2 is from Department of Languages and Translations, while lecturer 3 is from Department of Psychology and lecturer 4 is from Department of Social Work. For the purpose of protecting the identity of the

participants of the study, the names of the lecturers were withheld and the interview responses were named as per response from the lecture number as identified above.

The interview sessions were held at the interviewee's offices in the campus. The reason was that the respondents be as comfortable as possible when answering the questions. The convenience of the respondents is very important to their turn out responses. The participants were informed that the interview sessions were going to be voice recorded and all agreed on condition that neither their names nor their identity be recorded. They were identified using numbers, from the first respondent represented by the number one and identified as participant 1. The researcher opted to have the whole interview session as a social interaction between the researcher and the interviewee. This helps to make the participant to be as much relaxed as possible while answering the questions as professional as one could be.

Although not many lecturers were reluctant for interviews, cooperation was received positively by almost half of those with whom appointments were arranged beforehand. Both the students and the lecturers exhibited a huge interest in the findings of this study and a positive interest to have been involved in the study that contribute to the understanding of social networking use in the academic area.

### **3.2.4 Confidentiality**

The confidentiality of the participants is very important in the data collection when interview and questionnaire are used as the data collection tool. The respondents needed to be assured that their confidentiality and privacy was not going to be tempered with. There were no names required from the student respondents during the data collection processes for this study. Therefore, the identities of the respondents were only known to the researcher and shall remain classified. For the interviews, the researcher assured the respondents that their names will not be used rather, be replaced with the initial titles of "lecturer 1" and "lecturer 2", etc. for protection of their identity. The assurance of confidentiality enables the respondents to respond to the questionnaire without fear of being victimised.

### **3.2.5 Pilot study**

The pilot study remains the integral part of the study before the final version of the questionnaire is approved for use in the study. The main reason for a pilot study is to allow the researcher to make changes and additional corrections necessary to the main questionnaire. Thus this helps the researcher to validate the questions in the questionnaire and find levels of understanding among the participants. The pilot study for this study was done at University of Limpopo, at random means of allocation to the participants. A total number of ten (10) questionnaires were administered to the students of University of Limpopo. The interview questions were given to three (3) staff members of the University of Limpopo, at the department of Media, Communications and Information Studies.

### **3.2.6 Procedure**

After the proposal for this study was accepted by the University of Limpopo Ethics Committee, the researcher began distributing the questionnaires among the students of University of Limpopo. The other step was to also approach the selected staff sample made up of lecturers from the Department of Media, Communications and Information Studies and the School of Social Science in the University of Limpopo. The pilot study was, however, done earlier during the process of evaluation by the University of Limpopo Ethics Committee and the questionnaires were distributed randomly in the student community. The level of cooperation from the students during the pilot study was very tremendous and full of positivity in participation in the study. The names and the identity of the students participants was only known to the researcher and every participant were assured that their identity will remain a secret.

The researcher also did explain the main topic and the objective of the study and what was expected from the participants before handing the questionnaire to the participants. The confidentiality of the participants was emphasises to be a priority and also there was nowhere in the questionnaire where the names of the identity of the participant was required. The findings of the pilot study were not used in the main study.

### **3.3 DATA COLLECTION**

There are two types of data, which are primary and secondary data. The primary data is the main raw data collected for the purpose of solving the research problem that initiated the study. The questionnaires in the study are the primary data collection method. Many research scholars define secondary data as the pre-existing form of data in any form available, be it in statistics, charts, field notes or even existing research studies which is going to be re-used parallel or in supplementary to the primary data. The researcher chose to use the interviews as the secondary data collection method for this study.

Primary data refers to the end data collected through methods specified for that research in a specific manner to respond on the given problem on hand. Hox and Boeiji (2005) define primary data as the source data which is collected for the specific research problem at hand and which end up being an addition to the social knowledge. The procedures of primary data collection for the purpose of this study are interviews and the most commonly used questionnaires. Most social studies prefer finding their own data so to benefit from the operationisation of the theoretical constructs and data design drafting than relying on someone's collected data (Hox & Boeiji, 2005).

Secondary data on the other hand refers to the already collected data which is available in certain forms which the researcher cannot divert from. The secondary data is the data which was already collected by someone for a specific purpose.

#### **3.3.1 Questionnaire**

The questionnaires used in the study were self-administered. These questionnaires contained a series of both close ended and open ended questions for ultimate information gathering from the respondents. The questionnaire that is frequently used is therefore designed to generate response while also measuring the behavioural attitudes of the respondents. There are many techniques to questionnaire administration, however, self-report turned out to be more effective.

A total number of 340 questionnaires were distributed to the student respondents of the age between seventeen and thirty five (17 to 35) years old. The students were

approached after attending their lecture while others were given at the resting areas around campus while they were waiting for the next lecture class and others were given at the student cafeterias during lunch breaks. The questionnaires were distributed randomly between the genders of male and female and also, this created the situation which allowed equal representation from all students regardless of their age group of gender or level of study. Subsequently, a total of three hundred and nineteen (319) questionnaires were received by the researcher, however, twenty one (21) were classified as damaged because they were either not completely filled up or the students ticked both boxes on the question requiring either a “yes” or “no”. Therefore, the total number of questionnaires amounted to two hundred and ninety seven (297) which were actually usable in coding through the data software. The coding of the questionnaires was done later after all the questionnaires were returned. This enabled the researcher to quickly crunch the numbers into the program for analysis. The researcher explained the questions to the participants, however, did not supervise the participants during the process of answering questions. Furthermore, this allowed the participants to study and understand the questions and answer the questions at their own convenience. The researcher was also available to collect back the questionnaires and an office was designated as a drop zone where the participants could return the filled out questionnaires. Furthermore, at certain occasions, the researcher used the method of approaching the participants and collecting the questionnaires back from their residential areas.

### **3.3.2 Interviews**

The interviews were recorded using voice recorders in agreement with the interview participants. The researcher spelled out all the activities that were going to take place in the study before beginning the interview with those participants. The voice recorders are therefore used as tools to enable the researcher to transcribe the interview. The total of 4 interview sessions was held in secure locations which many were the offices of those lecturers. This is in order to enable the lecturers to be as relaxed and confident as possible in the interview. The interview questions were given to the participants for the duration of two to three days before the actual interview taking place. This is to help the participants understand the questions and be able to respond sufficiently.



### **3.4 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY**

Validity and Reliability in a study provides measurement instrument which the primary basis of the whole research is based on. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) insist that these research measurements need to be relevant, concise and trustworthiness to qualify the whole effort of the study because errors in measurement has little to none importance and contribution to the arrival at a solution to the problem. The elements which make the study complete and credible on social levels depend primarily on the researchers' urge to stay pertinent to the knowledge outputs of the study with its reliability merits. Chevalier and Buckles (2013) stress out that the tool validation points to both the social and factual aspects of knowledge considered being valid.

Qualitative researchers have described validity and reliability issues to the greatest lengths. The difference in the research methods, from qualitative to quantitative provides the difference in the application of validity in the studies. Validity in qualitative study describes the state of data and its trustworthiness, credible and actionable to stand relevant when challenged (Muhammad, Muhammad & Muhammad, 2008). This means that the data collection process has to be credible enough to validate the end result collected data to be used in the study. The importance of credibility in both qualitative and quantitative studies cannot be undermined and furthermore, the efforts of the researcher to stay objective and truthful qualify the validity of any given study.

The generalisation in the results of the study can be established if the data collected is rendered valid, truthful and trustworthy to make a reasonable defence of the findings. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), both validity and reliability helps identify and the pinpoint the area at which an error in the data collection and data analysis procedures. Babbie (2007) describes reliability as a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, yields the same result each time, whereas validity is referred to as the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration.

On the other hand, Leedy and Ormrod (2010) describes validity and reliability features measurement instruments which influence the outcomes about the subject of the study, provides the opportunities to obtain statistical significance in the data analysis process and the means to which significant conclusions can be drawn from the data. Furthermore, reliability comes when the tools used in the process of data collection

and the extent to which conclusions drawn about the study are being questioned for their relevance in the study.

Validity and reliability take different forms, depending on the nature of the research problem, the general methodology the researcher uses to address the problem, and the nature of the data that are collected. However, Leedy and Ormrod (2010) also attest that there are no measurement tools for physical phenomenon, but the systematic standpoint of validity and reliability provides probability of substantial implication outcomes and the defence of the conclusion made out of those findings. Therefore, collecting the right interconnected data is necessary, but it is what is made of the data that completes the thick description.

The study adopted the content validity aspect of research data collection. This was achieved in such a way that the participants involved in the study were selected randomly. The variety of the personality traits in the participants and their gender as well as their level of study makes the data collected on them to be valid. The reality of the participants in the study was not disturbed as to influence their judgement, rather the researcher randomly approached the participants' reality and randomly select the student participants with whom the questionnaires were answered. The lecturers' participants involved in the study were approached purposely for their knowledge and understanding of the subject and the construct validity was adopted to define the observation of the participants. While there are different outcomes and perceptions from the participants, the content was based on the same understanding of the objectives of the study.

The pilot roll of the questionnaires to the participants proved to be the first step in establishing the reliability of the questionnaire question and establish a broader view of the understanding objectives of the study as displayed in the questions. The answers proved on the pilot roll of questions were not different from the answers given in the general roll of the questionnaires to the students. The consistency is established in that the questionnaires given to the student participants at the University of Limpopo, from the pilot to the final roll of questionnaires. Although the student participants in the pilot and in the main roll of questionnaires are not the very same people, however, the consistency can be drawn to the fact that they share the same

circumstances by virtue of being students at the university and majority using social networking sites.

### **3.4.1 Validity**

Validity of the study simply refers to the validation of the methods of data collection and the validation of results not to have the results been biased of the researcher or favouring the ideas of the researcher. Qualitative method was used in the study to determine the legitimacy and the accuracy of data to avoid biased data pile.

The objectives and research questions were used to classify the validity of the study based on those objectives. The questionnaire questions intended to measure the student attitudes and perceptions towards their use of the social networking sites and this was achieved with the wording of the questions with the personalised pronouns in first person references e.g. your, you, etc. On the other hand, the interview questions intended to measure the personalised perceptions of the lecturers seeking to evaluate their observations of the daily encounters with the students. The questionnaire and interview questions were written in simple English and therefore, there were no big or clumsy words in the grammar of the questions. The researcher did explain all the questions which the respondents might have had and also did explain the research objectives of the study.

The questionnaire and the interview contained both types of questions which are open and close ended questions to allow ultimate response and representation from the respondents. To avoid subjectivity, the researcher collected and crunched the data into the IBM SPSS data analysis program as raw as the data were from the collection. The interview data was analysed using selective coding in that the researcher selected important information out of the interview content and made a reference thus representing the generic nature of the interview session.

### **3.4.2 Reliability**

Reliability of the study represents the procedure that the results or the finding of the study can be used in another study. The IBM SPSS program was used to present the data in a more reliable way that is parallel to the research methods used. The pilot study was a step in verifying the reliability and the relevance of the questionnaire and ultimately a view of the expected findings. The aim of the pilot study was to evaluate

the relevance and the reception of the questionnaire and ultimately leading to correction of the mistakes and errors of those questions. Therefore, the pilot study was used as a corner stone to the reliability of the whole study.

The study followed closely the University of Limpopo's Code of Ethics during the conduct of this study. The respondents were duly informed of the aim and objectives of the study before being involved in the study and also participated in the study on voluntary basis. Furthermore, the researcher reminded the participants time and again that their participation and response to the questionnaire and the interviews were absolutely confidential and only for academic use.

The reliability of the study was tested using the consistency method in that the data collected in the pilot study and in the main roll of the questions were very consistent despite the fact that the student participants were no the same individual. Although methods such as test-retest to determine validity of the study were applicable, time constrains and the second-time accessibility of the participants who were given questions randomly, the application if this method proved to be difficult. On the other hand, as for the interviews done on the lecturers' participants, time constrains and the willingness of the lecturers due to the personal and work related commitments, the application of any reliability measuring method became practically hopeless.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data was collected through descriptive survey, with no interference to the orientation of the environment of study. The researcher approached the student participants randomly in their natural state of reality in that there were no selection of the participants into a focus group, rather, the environment of the participants were not interfered during the data collection. The coding procedures were done using IBM SPSS data coding software to analyse data and provide results to be interpreted by the researcher. The data that is loaded into the IBM SPSS software was analysed to determine the frequencies of the data variables.

Data from interviews was analysed using selective coding to review its intensity and relevance to the study. The importance is because the researcher only selected the important content out of the whole data from the interview session and made a reference out of it. This is because the direct word for word display of the interview

session is null and clumsy and rather difficult to understand, therefore, selective coding emerged as the best method of analysing the interview data. This process requires a diligent approach because it is a crucial section of the whole study. Poor interpretations of information can result in poor findings.

### **3.6 SAMPLING**

The study is limited to the student community of University of Limpopo and selected lecturers from the department of Media, Communication and Information Studies within the campus of the University. The respondents are between the ages of seventeen to thirty five years old. These participants were randomly selected for participation in the study. However, the sample of lecturers was purposively selected considering their knowledge of the subject and their understanding of the human behaviour in the case of students. Therefore, the population and sample are expanded as follows:

#### **3.6.1 Description of the population**

Lehtonen and Pahkinen (2004) define population as a collection of people which a sample is drawn. There are various sizes of the population which are finite population and super population (Lahtonen & Pahkinen, 2004), depending on the type of the study and the elements of the sample quality, the population type is chosen. The reason is that the population type has to be managed easily throughout the study. In this study, the population is made of the students and selected lecturers from the department of Media, Communication and Information Studies and Department of psychology of the University of Limpopo.

The researcher has to consider the type of sample design he/she wishes to select for the study as it is the sample that choose the various means of yielding more data for the researcher to evaluate. The population is very important in the study as it gives the study life and a sample at which the study should be focused. The population of the study has to be creatively selected so that every part of the general population to which the study is. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the population of the students of the University of Limpopo is 19 679.

### 3.6.2 Sample size

The sample is made of the students of the University of Limpopo using the random sample collection. The students were selected randomly in the campus of University of Limpopo and issued with the questionnaires of the study. The lecturers on the other hand were selected using purposive sampling with the reason being that they were selected looking at their professional expertise and understanding of the topic. Furthermore the lecturers in the purposive sample response to the topic are bound to be valid and reasonable on the grounds of professionalism and experience with the student use of social networking sites.

There are about 18 679 students in the campus of university of Limpopo and the sample selected was about 297 students which represents one and half percentage of the total 18 679 students registered at the University of Limpopo. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010) sampling is a process of selecting portions of the population that incorporates certain levels of appropriate proportions of the subgroups of the total overall population. Furthermore, sampling is about finding the appropriate population that relate to the topic of the study and therefore, depends mostly on the research questions the researcher wants to answer (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

The procedure of choosing the sample depends mostly on the type of study which the researcher chooses to use in the study, whether be it qualitative study or quantitative study. In qualitative study, the sample is usually purposefully selected because their selection is carefully collected on the population or objects that are bound to yield much data about the topic that is being investigated. However, quantitative studies usually use the random selection of the population in their sample to represent as wide appropriate proportions of the total population as possible.

Sampling strategy as identified by Curtis, Smith and Washburn (2000) to present the criterion for sampling evaluation are as follows:-

- The sampling strategy should be relevant to the conceptual framework and the research question addressed by the research.
- The sample should be likely to generate rich information on the type of phenomena which need to be studied.
- The sampling should enhance the generalizability of the findings

- The sample should produce believable description or explanations (in the sense of being true to real life).
- Is the sample strategy ethical?
- Is the sample plan feasible?

From these strategies, it is deduced that the sample becomes relevant when it is based on the research question since the sample has to be relevant and capable to provide feasible data which if and when analysed will yield reliable findings. The respondents of the study were duly informed of the purpose of the study and the objectives of the study. The questionnaires for the study were randomly distributed to the students. The sample size identification did help the researcher understand the sample population needed and the random distribution appeared to be a feasible means to achieve maximum participation in the study. However, the students which were used in the pilot study did not participate in the final survey of the study as their familiarity with the question could provide subjectivity towards the study.

The researcher adopted the sample size of a population originating from Krejcie and Morgan (1970) which is presented below as table 3.1. The researcher needed this table to determine the sample size for the study.

Table 3.1: N population size; S- sample size

S	N	S	N	S
10	220	140	1200	291
14	230	144	1300	297
19	240	148	1400	302
24	250	152	1500	306
28	260	155	1600	310
32	270	159	1700	313
36	280	162	1800	317
40	290	165	1900	320
44	300	169	2000	322
48	320	175	2200	327
52	340	181	2400	331
56	360	186	2600	335

59	380	191	2800	338
63	400	196	3000	341
66	420	201	3500	346
70	440	205	4000	352
73	460	210	4500	354
76	480	214	5000	357
80	500	217	6000	361
86	550	226	7000	364
92	600	234	8000	367
97	650	242	9000	368
103	700	248	10000	370
108	750	254	15000	375
113	800	260	20000	377
118	850	265	30000	379
123	900	269	40000	380
127	950	274	50000	381
132	1000	278	75000	382
136	1100	285	1000000	384

According to the statistics above, University of Limpopo has a population of 18 679 registered students in the academic year of 2014. This student population was used in the study. According to the table above a population size of 5000 is equivalent to sampling size of 357, and 10000 population size is equivalent to 370 and furthermore, a population size of 15000 is equivalent to sample size of 375. Additionally, the population size of 20000 is equivalent to a sample size of 377 and the population size of 30 000 is equivalent to a sample size of 379. Therefore, since the population in the study is in between the 15 000 and 20 000 population size, a wild estimate is that the 18 000 population size is equivalent to 376 sampling size. Consequently, the views of the participants at the size of the predicted sample statistically represent the views of the whole student community of University of Limpopo.

The ethical and feasibility establishment in the study is very important in validating the sample evaluation. The researcher elaborated in detail that the anonymity and the



confidentiality of the participants in the questionnaire and the interviews and this shows that the researcher made vast levels of considerations in the study. The study amounted to feasibility considering that the community of the study is among the students and the lecturers of the University of Limpopo and the medium of instruction is English language and understood by the researcher. In this case of the study, there was no need for translation of the questionnaires and the interview questions since they were written in the English language. There was considerable number of time given to the respondents to respond to the questions with knowledge and understanding because the respondents were given the questionnaires to fill them at their own convenience and the interview questions were provided to the interviewees a week early before the interview.

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter described the process at which the research was conducted. Among the topics discussed are study methodology, research design, data collection methods, reliability and validity procedures and processes, data analysis and the limitations of the study. The questionnaires and interviews were used as means of data collection for the purpose of the study. The next chapter discusses constant availability of technology and student academic performance. The focus in chapter four is on pattern of access to and use of social networking sites, perceptions of lecturers on constant access to social networking sites among students, the pattern of students' use of the internet as well as pattern of availability and use of social networking sites and impact on students' academic activities. The availability and access of the social networking sites plays a central role in chapter four.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONSTANT AVAILABILITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the findings on the section of the impact of availability of technology on student academic performance as stipulated in the research objectives. This chapter extends the focus stipulated in the literature review about technology and student academic distractions. Flad (2010) stresses that the use of social networking sites has attracted attention internationally over the past several years since the new technologies which support applications of social networking sites emerge daily. The adolescent group is perceived to be the highest among all those who use social networking sites as well as the teachers looking for means of establishing channels for academic discussions for their students.

Furthermore, a study done by Kist, states that half to almost three quarter of the American teens have access to the internet and are members of one or two social networking sites (Kist 2008). On the other hand, Coyle and Vaughn (2008) also stresses out that the aim of social networking sites is to help and establish social connections for those who are not socially uninvolved as the generation of today is always indoor and looking at their computer monitors or outside looking at their cell-phone screen. The new technology provides a new economic revolution with endless opportunities and thus has caused the students to take advantage of these new technological advancements. The study done by Pew Internet Research (2013) add that about 93% of the American teens have access to a computer at home and at times own a computer and about 78% of the teens have a cell-phone and internet access.

This chapter stresses the academic distractions that are brought by the on-going use of the technology by the students. According to Livingstone (2009) there is a lack in the essential skills that enable the students to manoeuvre the learning engagements with the digital technological tools. Most of the things that the teens do when they are in their fictional world is far away from what academia accepts and this is because, Gurung and Rutledge (2014) observe that these technological savvy teens are only

best in technological use that involves social networking and texting as well as surfing the internet during their leisure time. Furthermore, this is because, as Tapscott (2009) agrees, that the digital natives of today have assumed the use of technology and internet as part of their daily life routine and lifestyle and therefore cannot be removed from that world.

The impact of availability of technology and its use centres the argument of this chapter and further the impact that it has on academic performance of students. Furthermore, the focus in this chapter is drawn on the level of access to social networking sites with the use of various modern technological platforms at the reach of the students. The chapter presents data on the availability and use of technology among the students and the impact on this on their academic performance. The data here is based on findings from the questionnaires and the interviews. To understand the availability and use of technology, questions directly focusing on these issues were posed in the questionnaire and in the interviews and they include questions such as:

- Have you ever accessed your social networking site using cell-phone?
- How often do you access your social networking sites on these platforms?
- Which social networking websites are you currently a member of?
- Would you say the constant availability of the social networking access and advancement in technology has an impact on academic performance?
- How confident are you about using the internet to get any information?

A total number of four lecturers from different departments at the University of Limpopo were interviewed for this study. Although the names of the lecturers cannot be identified in the study to protect their identity, it can be identified that lecturer 1 is from department of Media, Communications and Information Studies, lecturer 2 is from Department of Languages and Translations, while lecturer 3 is from Department of Psychology and lecturer 4 is from Department of Social Work. The perceptions of the lectures in the students' use of social networking sites plays an auxiliary point in addressing the availability of technology and its effect on students' academic performance. The impact of social networking sites and the constant availability to social networking sites are part of the questions unpacking lecturers' perception to the students' use. The goal of the lecturers' perception is to find out how the students are

being seen or observed by the lecturers while in class and how the lecturers view the academic performance of these students.

## 4.2 DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

The findings presented in this chapter are:

- Pattern of Access to and use of social networking sites
- Perceptions of lecturers on constant access to social networking sites among students
- The pattern of students' use of the internet
- Pattern of availability and use of social networking sites and impact on students' academic activities
- Perceptions of lecturers on students' use of social networking sites and believed impact on students' academic performance

### 4.2.1 PATTERN OF ACCESS TO AND USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

#### 4.2.1.1 *Using cell-phone to access social networking sites*

Interestingly, cell-phones are used more by the university students to access their social networking sites than any other medium. This is evidenced by the fact that 61.6% of the student participants expressed that they used cell-phones to access their social networking sites. The convenience of the cell-phones to be mobile and available makes it a proper communication tool. See table 4.1 below. The high use of cell-phones to access social networking sites is visible in the high access of Facebook as the most common platform for the students to socialize.

Table 4.1 Using Cell-phone to access social networking sites

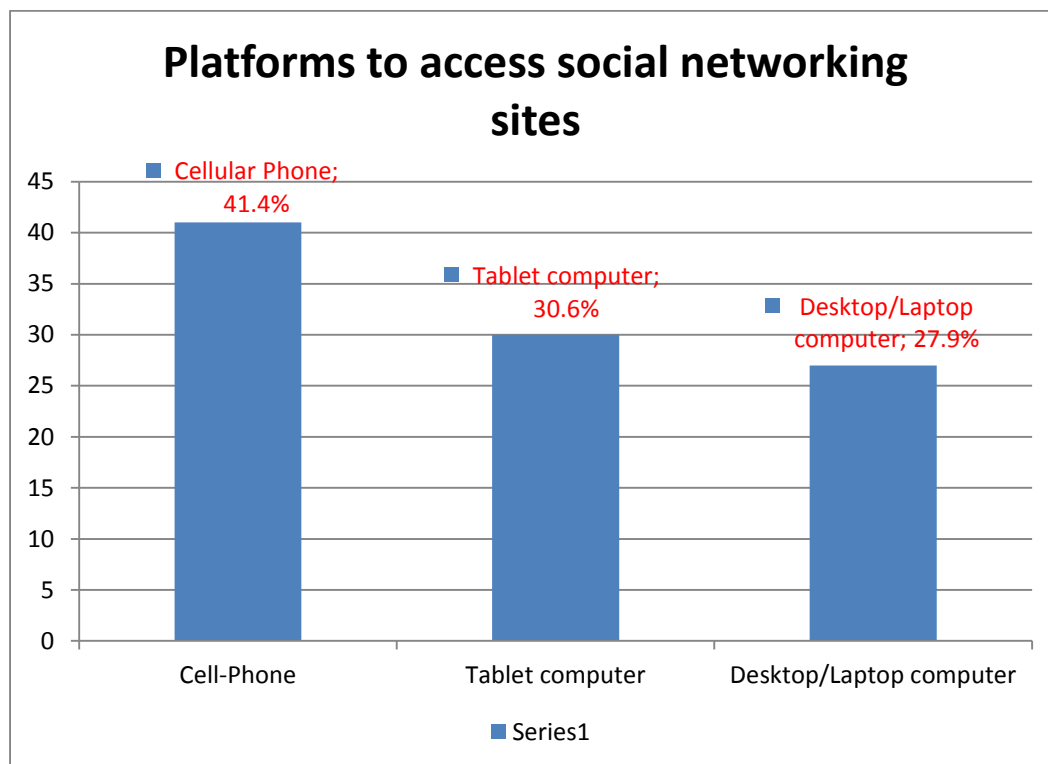
Have you ever accessed your social networking site using cell-phone	Percentage
Yes	61.6%
No	38.4%

#### 4.2.1.2 *The different platforms used to access social networking sites*

At 29.9%, the laptop/desktop computer proves to be the least used for the students to access their social networking sites. This is because the laptop or desktop computer

provides less room for convenience that comes with mobility for the students. The frequency of access and use of the desktop/laptop computer to access the social networking sites seems to be declining for this access platform. However, cell-phones still remain the method of accessing the sites which the students prefer over the others. Furthermore, 41.4% of the students reported that they have used their cell-phones with a staggering 53.2% of female participants in the study. The tablet computers on the other hand provides a breakthrough which enables the students to experience the same wide reception of the social networking site just like they receive on their desktop while also providing the mobility for the students to carry the tablet along with them. See figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.1 Different technologies used to access social networking sites

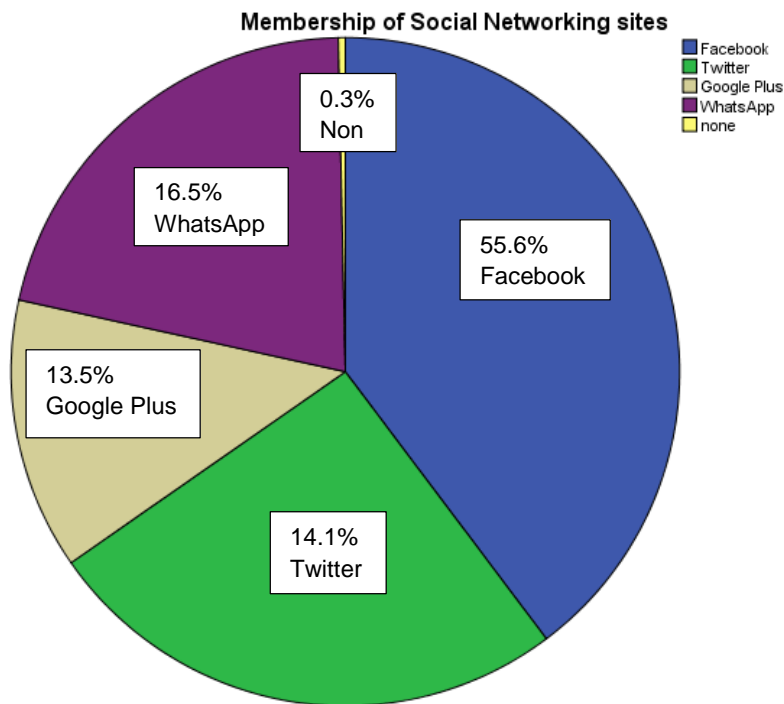


#### 4.2.1.3 The types of social networking sites and their usage.

The research also indicates that Facebook is the most visited social networking sites among this community of students. This is supported by the fact that more than half of the students (55.6%) in the study use Facebook. This understanding is also maintained by the fact that social networking sites are easily accessible on the cell-phone which is both mobile and convenient. At 16.5% the social networking site,

WhatsApp follows Facebook popularity among the students See figure 4.2 below. The Google Plus social networking site is the least popular used social networking sites with 13.5%. In a broad view of the Google Plus social networking site, the 13.5% may be because of the fact that the application of the site is not supported by many phones and thus limits the frequency of use among the student community.

Figure 4.2 The usage of social networking sites by the students



#### 4.2.1.4 Perceptions of lecturers on constant access to social networking sites among students

The lecturers perceive that the current level of constant availability of technology among students leads to a definitive proof that the extensive of such a use of the technology has a negative impact, although remotely, positive results emerge. The lecturers further note that access to technology which the students currently possess has brought positive impact into the academic interest and behaviour of the student. In lecturer two's observation, the technology enables the students to be in the forefront of learning and be well updated. This lecturer further adds that:

- Lecturer number two states that *There is also a room for improvement which the university need to manipulate this high availability of the technologies in the*

*possession of the students to help them study smooth by making extra lessons and topic discussions platforms available at the access of the students on their technologies.*

However, another lecturer insists that such improvements in technology application in academia depends on the interest of the individual user and it is also those interests that draft the student users to be vulnerable to the overuse of these technologies. Although this is interesting the lecturer 3 maintains that:

- Lecturer number three: *This is an individual preference in as far as I am concerned. Because no matter how advanced the cell-phone is, you have got to make a decision as a person on whether you go on social networking sites or do not.*

Furthermore, the lecturers' perceptions reveal that the outcomes on progress of the students when using advanced technological application in academia rest in the personal performance of the very student. Although definitive means of access to and the danger of the use of social networking sites are not clear but filled with speculations, the lectures argue that the true source of the academic impact and the vulnerability of the students lie within the students themselves. See annexures 3 for further details.

The lecturers further believe that the technological era that South Africa is currently embracing is bringing a turning point in the understanding of social lives and the learning process. Thus, one lecturer argues that the institutions of higher learning are brought with a need at their hands to take advantage of these wide spread use of technologies by the students and bring along or craft means at which a learning relationship can be created between the lecturers and the students. Lecturer number one suggests that:

- *I think the learning institutions, your schools; universities need to invest more into technology, to train staff members to use these platforms in order to reach the ultimate attention of the students.*

This further creates a future for use of these technologies in various levels of the education system in the country. The virtual world as the lecturers observe, is an inevitable future that needs a strongly based foundation to brace the transformation of



social interactions into learning forums and peer engagements. Moreover, as one lecturer insists, preparation for this technological future is needed to enable the learning institutions to have an upper hand in students' learning processes. Lecturer 2 argues that:

- *The lecturers need to develop skills to navigate these new waters and manipulate them further to benefit the students' learning progress.*

On the other hand, lecturer 3 points out that the understanding of the applications of these technologies and ways in which these applications can benefit the whole student community need to be taught among the technology users.

- *In as much as one needs media literacy and the understanding of how media works, the same should go into social networking literacy. This people need to be given proper understanding of the culture is social networking, particularly the implications.*

Therefore, lecturer 3 maintains that this use brings out things such as virtual classes which were otherwise considered foreign for the benefits of the students. Although, these manifestations and incorporation of technology into the education fraternity have beneficial values, the lecturers caution means need to be observed and the time which the students spend on social networks need to be reversed to controllable levels for the benefit of the students.

## **4.2.2 THE PATTERN OF STUDENTS' USE OF THE INTERNET**

### *4.2.2.1 The confidence in the use of internet to get information*

The research shows that there is a huge manifestation of confidence in the use of internet among the students with almost three quarter (69.7%) reporting that they can confidently execute information search commands through the internet. This is demonstrated on the fact that when the student registers at the university, the assumption is that they know how to use the internet and in the event they do not, the university computer labs are at their disposal any time of the day. The 53.2% of the female participation makes this finding interesting that women are increasingly becoming confident in their use of the internet to search information. Furthermore 26.6% of the student respondents reported that they are somehow confident in using the internet. Although it is not surprising that certain students still experience difficulty

in using the internet to access information, there is a 1.7% of the student respondents who indicate that they do not use the internet or have never used the internet to get information before. See table 4.2 below

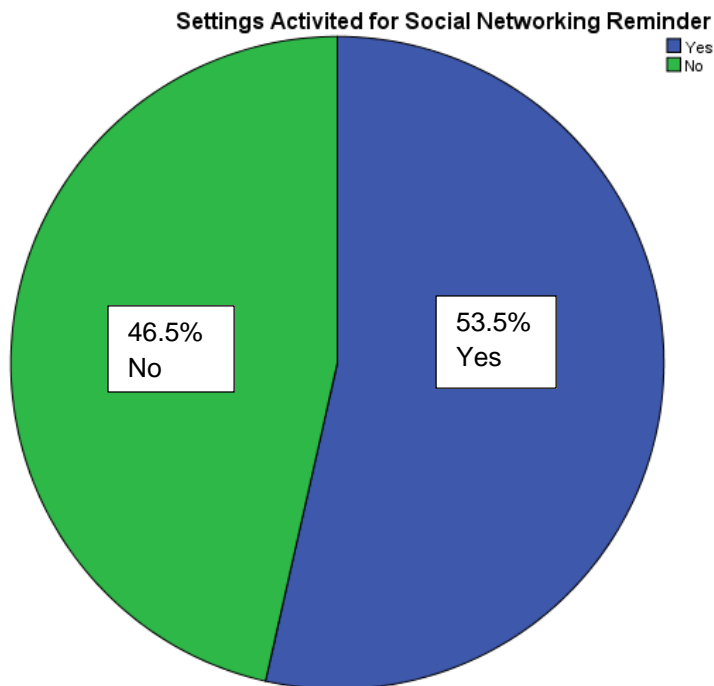
Table 4.2 Attitude in the use of the internet

Confidence in using internet to access information	Percentage
Very Confident	69.7%
Somehow Confident	26.6%
Not Confident	2%
Never Used Internet	1.7%

#### 4.2.2.2 Student activations on e-mail about social networking sites

Today, students have made notification activations on their e-mails about the activities on their social networking sites' accounts (Gurung & Rutledge, 2014). This means that each time there is any activity taking place on their account, even if they are not logged in, they can still follow the hype of social networks on their e-mails. The research reveals that there are a high number of people who have e-mail notification activations which enable them to keep up with what is happening on their social networking sites while checking their electronic mails. More than half of the study respondents (53.5%) reported that they have e-mail notification activations to notify them of what is happening on social networking sites. The high number of students who are very confident in their use of the social networking sites is a very important source of evidence for the foundation of this cultural inclination, which the students have succumb to. Interesting as this sound, there are those student respondents who report that they do not have such activations on their electronic mails. See figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.3 Activations for notifications on e-mails



### 4.2.3 PATTERN OF AVAILABILITY AND USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND IMPACT ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

#### 4.2.3.1 *Social networking use because of constant availability of technology*

The research results reveal that constant availability of the technology at the disposal of the students is common and remain the sole reason why the students wants to access their social networking sites whenever convenient for them. Fifty seven percentage (57.2%) of the student respondents indicated that their use of social networking sites is because of the easy accessibility of these sites. From the data presented above, a view emerge that all the platforms for access to social networking sites and the preference of the students over what is right and wrong is solely based on the access to the technology which enable the students to reach their favourite and popular social networking sites. However, on the other hand, there are those student respondents who report that their use of the social networking sites is not because of the availability of the technology, which begs the question of passion and personalised

interests and following current trends as the probable causes for their use of the networking sites. See table 4.2 below

Table 4.3 Attitudes about social access to technology

Do you think your use of these social networking sites is because of constant availability of technology at your reach	Percentage
Yes	57.2%
No	42.8%

#### 4.2.3.2 *The impact of social networking on academic performance*

The research shows that there is an impact that the social networking sites have on the students and their academic performance. The study shows that 52.5% of the student respondents reporting that they have indeed experienced an impact of the social networking sites on their academic performance. From the data expressed from above, this pattern emerges as a breakthrough in understanding the effects which the social networking sites have on the performance of the students in academic circles. The high use of cell-phones to access social networking sites and the interconnection activations made on electronic mails to remotely monitor progress of social networking sites even when one is not online paint a compromising picture for the student's academic performance in the midst of all these access.

For the students that claimed that social networking sites usage has impact on their academic performance, the impact is most on the distraction from academic activities and the effect of writing academic papers with occasional use of abbreviations use on social networking sites. For example:

- *Respondent number 35 said "I will fail as I am going to use short-cuts on my essays like I use them on social networking sites".*
- *Respondent number 143 said "thou through social networking sites, I practice my reading skills, I sometimes get caught up and use short-cuts or neglect my studies and chat the whole night on Facebook and WhatsApp".*

The respondents further indicated that their use of social networking sites sometimes is because they want to take a break from studying and the one hour break time end up being four to five hours on networking sites. Other respondents mentioned that they use so much short-cuts (abbreviations) on their social networking sites and this concerns them because they are afraid this may affect their studies as they sometimes use those short-cuts in their academic writing accidentally. The respondents also add that at times, a question about an academic activity with a fellow classmate leads to social conversations which consume time. Also some indicate that they see benefits from their use of social networking sites in terms of the fact that the sites provides them with a platform for social engagement on academic matters. The following respondents bear reference to this:

- *Respondent number 211 said “through social networking sites, we are able to create group discussions which help in our studies, however, the ideas of social nature always gets in the way”.*
- *Respondent number 249 said “because I am a media studies student, the use of social networking sites has benefits as the major news networks have social networking accounts which provides more information.”*

Although there are also those respondents who reported that their use of social networking sites does not impact their academic work, this high rate of concerns and outcomes of the respondents resulting from their use is very alarming.

#### 4.2.3.3 *Time spent on social networking sites*

The research findings reveal that students spend a lot of time on their social networking sites and that was interfering with their studies. About 59.3% expressed that they spend several times on their social networking sites and that the time spend on those sites was interfering with their ability to study. These results are actually made more interesting by a 53.2% of the female participation in the study. This means that in the perception of these females, there are more of them claiming an interference with social networking sites several times on their academic studies. On the contrary, 10.4% of the students reported never experiencing any interference in their studies with social networking use. See table 4.4 below. From the study findings, there is 29.3% high of the third level students in the whole study. This means that those

students experiencing difficulty with their use of the social networking sites are third level students who are female. Furthermore, 8.4% of the students reported spending time on their social networking sites to the extent of interfering with their ability to complete assignments and other academic activities.

Table 4.4 Student perception on time spent using social networking sites

How often has spending time on a social networking website interfered with your ability to study or complete assignments?	Percentage
Several times	59.3%
More than one time	21.9%
Just one time	8.4%
Never	10.4%

#### 4.2.3.4 Late handing of academic work as a result of time spent on social networking sites.

The research results reveal that there are many students who do not experience late handling of their academic assignments as a result of their social networking use. Fifty one percent (50.8%) of the students indicated that they do not hand in their school work due to their use of social networking sites. This means that the students have a firm grasp of their academic values despite the high usage of the social networking sites and high usage of cell-phones to access those social networking sites. Closely to this finding is a 49.2% of the students who indicated that their social networking use have caused them to hand-in their academic assignments late. This therefore means that although the students use the social networking sites, they are very cautious and are to distinguish their priorities of studying and leisure.

#### 4.2.3.5 Student perception on accessing Internet during the lecture

The research indicates that there is a high number of students who use the internet while attending lecture classes. This finding is made valid by the 61.6% of the students who reported that they use cell-phones regularly. Eighty five (84.8%) of the students reported using the internet during the lecture classes. The 84.8% is made by the 38% of the students who mentioned using their cell-phones in class for Google search while 46.8% is made of the students who use cell-phones for Google search and at some

extent the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter. See Table 4.5 below. This finding reveal that the students get caught up while using the internet in the class and extent to checking updates on their social networking sites with the most common being Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. Additionally, the use of cell-phones is made interesting by the high number of 53.2% being that of female students in the study and a high 29.3% reveal to be those who are doing third level in their studies. This therefore means that there is a high use of social networking sites parallel with the internet search which the students use their cell-phones to access such sites and the online search. This is critically important as it is in agreement with the previous finding drawing the high use of the cell-phones to access the social networking sites in class.

Table 4.5 Student perception on accessing the internet during lecture time

Have you ever used internet while attending a lecture?	Percentage
Yes, for Google search only	38%
Yes, for Google search and Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter	46.8%
No	15.2%

#### **4.2.3.4 Perceptions of lecturers on students' use of social networking sites and believed impact on students' academic performance**

The lecturers generally believe that there is a direct impact to the social wellbeing of the students because of their use of cell-phones frequently and this creates a room for the use of social networking sites. This concern is drawn on the fact that majority of the students spend most of their daily time and even evenings being on their cell-phones be it to surf the internet or to chat on those social networking sites. Lecturer 1 stated that:

- *The students are on their cell-phones most of the time. I have observed it when they were doing their group discussions lately as well as group discussions.*

There are mixed results in the use of the social networking sites. This discovery brings an understanding of the usage of these newly developed smartphone which supports the social networking sites and their applications. The lecturers further states that impact in the use of these social networking sites is both positive and negative in the

manner which the students are becoming very aware that such and such language used in their social networks is not permitted into the academic writing and have taken a firm stand to actually write paper. In the lecturers' view, the cell-phones in the hands of the students have become more than just a commodity for communication, rather a tool for driving the social life of the students. Lecturer 3 further elaborates that:

- *These cellular phones are not for any other telephonic engagement that these kids [students] can use other than to chat or visit their popular social networking site, Facebook.com”.*

On the contrary, the lecturers believe that the students' use of the cell-phones poses a threat to the fundamental basis of academic performance as it consumes some of the students' time which could have been used for studying or engaging on other academic activities.



### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the data analysis associated with the research objective about the impact of availability of technology on student academic performance. The perceptions of the students in their use of cell-phones and chronicles of use of internet during the lecture classes and the use of social networking sites to the extent of late handing the academic assignments. Interestingly, there are a high number of the students who use their cell-phones to access internet even when in class and some respondents report being caught up in their use of cell-phones to the extent that they go in lengths to access social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. This data was complemented by the lecturers' perceptions and observation of the students' use of social networking and the impact the lecturers believe the use of social networking sites will have on the academic performance of students. While the social networking sites have a wide spectrum of uses and applications, the lecturers believe that the incorporation of the social networking sites into learning institutions has fruitful benefits. The presentation of the data was done with the usage of frequency tables, bar graphs and pie charts to illustrate the data in simple means.

Chapter five discusses the research objective about the contribution of continuous use of online social networking sites to procrastination among students. The students' perception of their use of the social networking sites and the impact which the students perceive to have on their academic performance with focus being on procrastination will be discussed in detail in chapter five.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONTRIBUTION OF CONTINUOUS USE OF ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES TO PROCRASTINATION AMONG STUDENTS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the impact of procrastination in the students' academic activities as a result of their use of the social networking sites. Many researchers such as Wang, He and Li (2013), Day, Mensink and O'Sullivan (2007), Steel (2007) and Klassen, Krawchuk and Ranjani (2008) believe that the core source of procrastination is in many ways focused on the use of social networking sites. The sites, the researchers believe creates a room for delayed time spending and thus leads to complains about poor performance in academic work.

The chapter tables an analysis of the data collected on the student participants at the University of Limpopo about the dynamics of procrastinations and its impact on the students' performance as derived from the use of social networking site. The impact of procrastination is largely felt among the student community in the wide area of the higher education institutions. A study by Yaakub (2000) found high proportions of up to 80% evidence of the students who reported students experienced procrastination in their exam study preparations. Recent studies suggest that these proportions are largely influenced by the high exposure into technology use which leads to the use of social networking sites.

Findings by Zeenath and Orcullo (2012) suggest that establishment of study priorities by the students over their social lives while at university is becoming difficult and in many cases lead to a tendency of boredom which primarily result to procrastination. While Odaci (2011) established the high use of internet by the students at the universities in his study Odaci (2011) however failed to establish any correlation with the use of internet and procrastination among the student community. This study attempts to establish the foundation of procrastination and the social outcomes that lead to the problem. The technology use, as many researchers such as Odaci (2011) and Birchmeier et al (2011) hint is slowly becoming known to be one of the major sources of procrastination in the students' life since it occupies the majority of their free time. On the other hand, Wang, He and Li (2013) found highest proportions of

procrastination behaviour among post graduate students and also there is a 97.38% majority of the post graduate students willing to reduce procrastination.

The chapter further details an analysis into the causes of procrastination and create an understanding that the acts of procrastination are among the students themselves. In Terrell and Shei's (2012) view, boredom has become the culprit for the high use of technology among the university students. Salaway, Caruso, and Nelson (2007), reveal that American college and university students spends close to 18 hours of their time surfing the internet for various purposes such as video calling and sharing of videos as well as instant messaging one another. The internet has directly or indirectly created a social culture of the university students who drive away boredom and push social time by surfing the internet. These findings highlight the stages of the impact of procrastination and how in the future, it will form a central phenomenon in the study of the relationship between the study patterns of the students and their use of technology.

The level of contributions which the social networking use provides to the students' academic activities is growingly threatening the wellbeing of the students. This chapter focuses on the level of use of these social networking sites which contributes to procrastination by the students. This chapter examine how various activities of the students while using these social networking sites can influence the students to procrastinate away from their academic responsibilities. The data below is based on findings from the questionnaires and the interviews. The attempt to draw the understanding of continuous use of online social networking sites among the students and its outcomes is probed by these following questions which were posed in the questionnaires and the interviews:

- Do you check social networking sites while studying?
- How often do you visit a social networking website?
- Have you ever used internet while attending a lecture?
- How important is your membership on social networking sites?
- In your professional understanding, what are the psychological factors which contribute to the use of social networking sites by the students?

Although many studies in the field of procrastination have well documented the use impact of procrastination among the student communities, Steel (2007) and many

other scholars in this field stress out the need to examine the true causes of procrastination. This is because the causes of procrastination vary in centuries and there is a need to constantly update the studies and the findings. In the current century, internet as a wholesome is no longer a threat to the academic performance and a source of procrastination as Cotton (2008) and Salaway, Caruso and Nelson (2007) have found, however, it is what the users do with the internet now that they have easy access.

This therefore forms the base for this chapter on how continuous use of online social networking sites contributes to procrastination among students at the University of Limpopo.

## **5.2 DATA INTERPRETATIONS AND ANALYSIS**

The data in this chapter are presented as follows

- Pattern of social networking sites use while doing academic activities
- Opinions about late handing-in of academic work due to time spend on social networking sites and the impact and contribution to academic wellbeing of students.

### **5.2.1 Pattern of social networking sites use while doing academic activities**

#### *5.2.1.1 Students' perception of social networking use while studying*

Many students mentioned that they use their social networking sites while studying. Fifty two per cent (51.9%) of the students claimed that they visit social networking sites while studying. This means that there is a huge percentage of the students who are using social networking sites while busy studying. The convenience of the cell-phones and the constant availability of the cell-phones at the reach of the students as discussed in chapter four is at the forefront in perpetuating the students to access their social networking sites accounts while busy studying. Although the students acknowledge that their use of social networking sites while studying is at alarming levels, the students argue that they find the access and use of social networking sites as a way of refreshing. For example:

- Respondent number 54 said *“I check my WhatsApp and Facebook accounts once in every hour while I am studying as it helps me to refresh”*.
- Respondent number 178 said *“I regularly check my WhatsApp messages as they come in and respond accordingly while I am studying. It is something that has become part of me”*

While taking a break from the study is advisable in order to refresh the mind, the students’ use of these social networking sites creates a room for procrastination and deviation from the academic duties. See table 5.1 below. The respondents further indicated that their use social networking sites largely incorporate communicating with the fellow classmates and discussing the topics of the study.

- Respondent number 198 said *“Most of the time I spend accessing my social networking accounts is to discuss few details and topics with my other classmates”*
- Respondent number 241 said *“We usually do group discussions on our social networking sites, particularly WhatsApp as it allows everyone to contribute to the topic without need to meet”*

Although none of the participants mentioned that their use of social networking sites while studying has a direct impact either positive or negative, the use of these sites while studying not only creates an environment of procrastination but also poses challenges of the students’ commitments for their study patterns.

Table 5.1 Attitudes about social networking sites while studying

Do you check social networking sites while studying?	Percentage
Yes	51.9%
No	48.1%

#### 5.2.1.2 Students’ perception on the visits on social networking sites

The research reveals that there are many students who visit their social networking sites regularly. Fifty nine per cent (58.6%) of the students expressed that they visit their social networking sites accounts more than five times a day. This further means

that the students acknowledge the use of their social networking sites and that they visit their accounts several times. In a broad view looking at the 58.6% of the students visiting the social networking sites more than five times in a single day, a narrative that the social networking sites define the social lives of the students today. Interestingly, there is also an additional 19.5% of the student participants who expressed visiting the social networking sites once a day. See table 5.2 below. This brings the understanding that the students operate in various lives, one which is defined by their social networking sites accessed on their cell-phones and the other social life of face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, there is a 10.1% students who indicated that they have visited their social networking sites accounts once in a month. Although very remote, the idea of the students visiting social networking sites once in a month can increase to the students not visiting the networks at all.

Table 5.2: Perceptions of students about time spend on social networking sites

How often do you visit a social networking website?	Percentage
More than 5 times a day	58.6%
Once in a day	19.5%
Once in a week	11.4%
Once in a month	10.1%
Never	0.3%

### 5.2.1.3 *The lecturers' perceptions on psychological factors contributing to the use of social networking sites*

The lecturers believe that the temptation coupled with peer pressure appears to be some of the psychological factors that influence the use of social networking sites by the students. The lecturers further insist that the students use those social networking sites for the sake of getting involved with friends within their common circles. In lecturer's 1 view, the students are always in a constant battle to satisfy their self-esteem and as a result, got dragged into the world of technology usage to fit in. lecturer 1 suggests that:

- *That's the thing about the students nowadays, they don't want to be holding ordinary cell-phones, they want a certain particular cell-phone;*

*the state of the art technology because it has been researched that having such a technologically advanced phone, it increases the students' self-esteem.*

Additionally, lecturer 3 insists that the high use of social networking sites by the students has become a common struggle to fit in within the crowd. This means that the students facing fears of exclusion and being called old fashioned has perpetuated the use of these social networking sites among the student to that extent that the use has become a habit. Lecture 3 further adds that:

- *..because you want to build your self-esteem and confidence and further want everyone to understand you and recognise your existence from that group. People do not want to be excluded.*

On the contrary, Lecture 4 views the students' use of social networking sites as a bridge between the students and their social lives in a way that the students engage with the other students on various topics since the use has become a habit. Lecturer 4 further suggests that:

- *A person therefore needs people's advice and wants to know what people are thinking about and whether they are thinking about him/her for he/she to progress in life.*

This further means that the students are actually hooked on expecting advices from their friends in order to navigate their social world today. Lecturer 4 additionally points out that the current generation of the students are constantly desperate for attention. The lecturer however restraint that the levels of peer pressure that shadows the students' use of social networking sites and to the extreme levels, the use itself may be persuaded by the urge to fit in with their social groups and be welcomed.

#### *5.2.1.4 Student perceptions on the use of internet while attending lecture classes*

Interestingly, there are more students who use their cell-phones to access *Google* and various social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter while in class attending lectures. This is evident by the fact that 46.8% of the students reported accessing the internet while in class for various reasons such as to search for information and socialise on their social networking sites. This is made possible by the high use of cell-

phones as discussed in chapter four provides a pathway in making the access of the information search engine Google and in various cases, the students get caught up in the use and end up accessing social networking sites. See table 5.3 below. Additionally, 38% of the students claim that they access the internet while in class to access information via the search engine, Google. The mobility and the convenience of the cell-phones in the hands of the students prove to be the reason for this high use of the internet by the students while attending lectures. While the data does not specify the value of the information that is accessed on the search engine and how helpful is to the students' academic performance, it can be ruled out that the use of those cell-phones while in class provides possibilities of distracting the students from their studies and concentration levels while in class.

Table 5.3 Student perceptions on the use of internet while attending lecture classes

Have you ever used internet while attending a lecture?	Percentage
Yes, for Google search only	38%
Yes, for Google search and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter	46.8%
No	15.2%

#### 5.2.1.5 Student perceptions of their use of social networking sites during class lecture

The popularity of the social networking is becoming widespread among the student users. There is a 54.9% of the students who mentioned that they did use social networking sites while in class during lecture. The concern attached to this use of the social networking sites is that the majority of these students seem to be more hooked on using these sites interchangeably with each and every activity that they are busy executing. Given this high percentage of use, what emerge is that the students are constantly distracted in their level of attention that they give to the lecturers during classes and their academic activities. See table 5.4 below. The respondents mention that their use has become part of them that whenever they touch their phones, the urge to access social networking sites accounts is always in the back of their minds. Respondent number 93 and 104 point out that:



- Respondent number 93 said *“I check my social networking regularly and my phone is always in my hand. My phone has become a part of me and even when I am in class, I have it next to me”*.
- Respondent number 104 said *“I usually check various social networking sites interchangeably while listening to the lecturer. I find it as means of multi-tasking”*.

On the other hand, there are students who mentioned that their use is because that they use the networking sites as an escape from the class boredom. Respondent 112 and 231 point out that:

- Respondent number 112 said *“I pay attention when I am class, but I do check my social networking site when I am bored. I use it as a way to take my attention away from boredom, particularly when the class is repeating what they have learned the previous week”*.
- Respondent number 231 said *“my use of the sites helps me not to fall asleep when I am really bored and not to sleep while in class but I do this regularly to when there are new messages or new updates”*.

The urgency of the messages also play a huge role in the use of the students in that the students mention that when they receive any message from their family member, they quickly check their phones regardless of what they are doing. Respondent number 21 and 211 indicate that:

- Respondent number 21 said *“my phone is on silent every time I am in class and I just check on my phone every time there is a new message and also respond to those messages”*.
- Respondent number 211 said *“I just check my phone when a new message come in and when that message is not from anyone from my family or does not show any urgency, I would not check that message or even respond to that message”*.

Remarkably, the students do acknowledge their social networking sites are being prioritised even when they are in class while attending lecture. This furthermore add to the concern over the high use of social networking sites among the students and in that these sites are shaping the social lives and perceptions of these students.

Table 5.4 Student perceptions of their use of social networking sites during class lecture

Have you checked your social networking sites in class during a lecture?	Percentage
Yes	54.9%
No	45.1%

#### 5.2.1.6 *The importance of membership on social networking sites*

The research shows that the level of importance in the social networking sites membership proves to be high among the student community. At 52.2%, stands the percentage of the students who mentioned that their social networking sites' membership is important to them. This means that there are many students who value their membership on the social networking sites and this supports the finding that there are about 81.2% (59.3% + 21.9%) of students who spend more time on their social networking sites accounts. This therefore creates a wide room for the students to procrastinate away from their studies. Furthermore, there is a 38.8% of the students who mention that their membership is least important in as far as their use of the social networking sites is concerned. See table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5: Student perceptions on their social networking sites membership importance

The importance of membership on social networking sites	Percentage
Very important	52.2%
Least important	38%
Not important	9.8%

### **5.2.2 Perceptions of late handing-in of academic work due to time spend on social networking sites**

#### 5.2.2.1 *Student perceptions on handing-in their academic work*

The level of importance of the social networking sites among the students as discussed above has grown to proportional levels which are quickly threatening the students' attention levels and time spans dedicated to studying and other academic activities. However, the 50.8% of the students claimed that they have not late-handed

their academic assignments as a result of being distracted by their social networking sites use. Although there is use of the social networking sites by the students, very remote chances exists that the social networking sites do not necessarily control the behaviour of the students and that the students still retain control of their social virtues. Moreover, there is also a pressing amount, although minimum, of the students who reported late handing their assignment as a result of using their social networking sites accounts. See table 5.5 below.

Table 5.6: student perceptions on handing-in their academic work

Have you ever handed in an assignment late because you spent time on a social networking site instead of doing homework?	Percentage
Yes	49.2%
No	50.8%

#### 5.2.2.2 *The lecturers' perceptions on the academic wellbeing of the students over their use of social networking sites.*

The lecturers believe that these social networking sites have an impact both positive and negative on academic performance and wellbeing of the students. Lecture 2 suggests that the use among the students has become common to the extent that the use defines the social orientation and wellbeing of the students. Lecture 2 further proposes that:

- *A user cannot go a day without even checking their phones and one might even say that they are addicted to these technologies.*

In the social networking consumed student world, it is increasingly becoming hard for a student to pass up to 15 minutes without touching their phones. Thus, this process defies the goal of social networking which is to socialize among peers. Additionally, lecture 4 points out that the level of addiction of the students in their use of social networking sites is compromising their study strengths and their abilities to engage in other academic activities such as group discussions. Lecture 4 further adds that:

- *what they do is just to go to the computer lab and copy-and-paste material from the internet and give all that to you as the lecturer to mark*

*because they do not have time to arrange their work in an accordingly manner. They rather be on Facebook and other social networking sites that exists than being on their books or going to the library and that in my book is a waste of time.*

Although there are benefits in the use of social networking sites such as an easy access to the information high-way and increased social interactions, the paining impact is still at the highest peak. The students therefore need to draw a line between the academic and the social networking world of social interactions. Lecture 3 maintains that:

- *Many people get fired for statement made on social networking sites. The social networking does not contribute to any of academic value. Someone can just go on social networking and write anything they want and this is why we encourage our students to never rely on the internet for information as part of their reference tools.*

Lecture 3 point that the example of that damage is the total number of people who gets fired at work for things they wrote on their social networking sites. In the lecturers' observation, the students need to be made aware of the fact that the social networking sites hold little to none room for academic growth and sustainability and that the unsupervised or uncontrolled use will have a huge impact to their well-being in the long run.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

This chapter looked at and explored the data analysis associated with the contribution of continuous use of online social networking sites to procrastination among the students. The student perceptions and the perceptions of the lecturers on the wellbeing of students with regards to their use of social networking sites and also perceptions of use of social networking sites while doing academic activities. The result is that there are high numbers of students who value their membership on social networking sites accounts and that the use itself in many instances is perpetuated by the fact that the students use cell-phones for internet search while attending lectures. While the time for social networking use is clearly not defined among the student circles, the study times of the students are hanging in a balance.

The lecturers further perceive that the students have less to relatively none of the benefits that they might gain from their use of social networking sites and therefore as a result, the students become compromised both socially in the case of face to face conversations and academically in their studies. The presentation of the data was done with the usage of frequency tables, bar graphs and pie charts to illustrate the data in simple means. Chapter six will focus on the comparison between the use of online social networking language and standard academic language among students. The students' and lecturers' perceptions on the language use in social networking sites and the impact these social networking sites have on the academic writing of the student.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE USE OF ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING LANGUAGE AND STANDARD ACADEMIC LANGUAGE AMONG STUDENTS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The concern about standard of language in online social networking and impact on academic writing is another important focus of this study. Crystal (2008) note that in text language, the forms of standards of the language happen in forms which often go unnoticed and change no meaning. This is illustrated in the inventions of words or word parts which are not written the same with the original word, however, mean the same thing with the original word. Shortis (2007) contrariwise with the fact that words in text language are often as a result of how they sound and thus amount to shortened words with the same meaning of the original word. Furthermore, as a result, word assume new forms with the capital letters added for emphasis and numbers replacing the vowels and the words end up with the sound of a single or two syllable. While Myers (1996) insists that clarity and identifying meaning has always been the goal of academic writing.

Many scholars such as Plester, Wood and Bell (2008) and Plester, Wood and Joshi, (2009) accept that there is a huge impact that the text messaging language has on the English language and on the language literacy of the users of such a language although there is relatively close to none evidence of such an impact been found in their studies. Maharsi (2011) make a stand on the fundamentals of the academic writing that means of writing in academic context play a larger role in bringing the significance of understanding to improve learning. However, the 140 characters that are used in the social networking site Twitter does not make it simple for the implementation of the standard English language writing. In various times, a used will be forced to sacrifice the grammar and nature of the words of a language to accommodate the message one wants to push through.

Fagorusi (2013) elaborates that the limits placed in the social networking sites has a huge impact to the language as these languages creates a room for abbreviations and compromises on grammar of the English language with the goal to get a message across. Stollak, (2011) on the other hand points out that in the process of the use of

social networking sites, it is not only the language that is compromised but also the time that the user spends on the social networking have a huge impact when looked over a process of a week or a month. According to Birchmeier et al. (2011), Lovink, (2011) and Fagorusi (2013) the social network user identify and define their own meaning as well as the collective use time frame and the type of language in which their use and their message will contain. This means that the powers of use and the levels of impact which the social networking sites have on a duration of time has to do with the choices that the users makes when using those networks.

Texting studies expects such as Lyddy et al (2014) sustains that there is relatively less to none harm in the use of texting forms and language by the students to communicate with one another however, Cullington (2012) observes that the students need to be made aware that the texting language has no place in their academic studies. On a highly contrary note, Plester et al (2009) reported remote existence of benefits to children who are exposed to texting for their literacy while phonological understanding will be highly required. Although this present what can be considered as the good news in as far as the use of texting language is concerned, however, this depends on the various factors such as the controlled use and the time on the use of those networks. This chapter illustrate the correlation between the use of online social networking language and standard academic language among students.

This chapter brings the comparison of the use of online social networking language and standard academic language among students and how much the social networking use of the students influence their academic writing. The impact of the social networking language as well as the use of shot-cuts writing in academia is explored in detail in this chapter. The data analysed in this chapter is collected through the questionnaires and the interviews. The students' perception on this usage of language both in social and in academic situations as well as the lecturers' observation on the future of academic writing in the mist of this social networking writing. To understand the relationship between the online social networking language in comparison with standard academic language, various questions were posed in student questionnaires and in the lecturers' face-to-face interviews and these questions include:

- Do you think the texting language you use on social networking sites has an impact on your academic writing?
- How often do you see a pattern of social networking language and spelling in the assignment and test script of students?
- Have you ever encountered an incident of using the texting short-cuts in your academic writing such as an assignment or a text?
- Do you think the ideal use of the social networking language in academic circles poses a threat to the standard academic writing structure?

## **6.2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

The findings presented in this chapter are:

- Pattern of texting language and its use in social networking sites
- Perceptions of social networking language as used in academic circles

### **6.2.1 Pattern of texting language and its use in social networking sites**

#### *6.2.1.1 Text language impact on social networking sites*

The high use of cell-phones and the use of social networking sites that has been made common around the students have amounted to the poor language use by the students. About half (51.5%) of the students who claim that their use of social networking sites have had impact on their writing language and their ability to maintain a clean shield language writing in their academic activities. See table 6.1 below. Chapter five established that there is a growing number of the students who use cell-phones to access internet while in class and this finding made it clear that more students use their social networking sites and internet during the academic lectures. These findings further illustrate the fact that there is a high use of texting language in the students. The amount of time that the students spend on their social networking sites has a direct influence in their language writing while in academic circles. Respondent number 7 and 21 points out that:

- Respondent number 7 said *“I sometime get caught when writing and write the few short-cuts in academic writing but I do correct it same time and move on”*.



- Respondent number 21 said *“Sometimes when I am writing the notes in class, I turn to use short-cuts as they simplify my writing of notes, but I am very afraid that my writing during tests could get affected”*.

The circle of fear in the use of the texting language in academic writing is growing bigger in that the students are getting used to simplifying their writing and therefore hampering their ability to write in full in the future. The grammar use and rules of the English language is also caught between a rock and a hard place in that the students’ use of the texting language violates those qualities of their English language grammar rules. Respondent number 77 and 39 elaborate that:

- Respondent number 77 said *“In my use of the social networking sites, I have realised that my skills of understanding the English language grammar rules is gone and I occasionally therefore make mistakes in my writing”*.
- Respondent number 39 said *“...because of my use of the social networking texting language, my sentence construction skills are suffering as a result”*.

This freedom of changing the texting is slowly growing with the new changes in the technology as the new smart phones of today have all the keys that you can find on a computer keyboard. Respondent number 58 further elaborate that:

- Respondent number 58 said *“the new phones have helped us so much in that I no longer need to write any short cuts in my language because all the letters are available on the key pad”*.
- Respondent number 213 said *“although I am using text language mentality, the new phones allow us to write English in full and therefore I communicate with our friends with full English language writing”*.

Although there is a room for change in the use of language within the social networking sites accounts given the application of the new smartphones, there are still pockets of incidents in which the students get caught up in the use of those short-cuts.

Table 6.1 Text language impact on social networking sites

Do you think the texting language you use on social networking sites has an impact on your academic writing?	Percentage
Yes	51.5%
No	48.5%

#### 6.2.1.2 Lecturers' perception on the students' use of social networking language in academic circles and its threat to the standard academic writing structure

The lecturers believed that the language used on social networking sites has the power to overcome the total grant writing schemes that is known in the academic area. The lecturers have mixed reaction on the perceived power of the social networking language when applied in academia. Lecturer 2 points out that the English language as is known and used in academia faces a threat near to extinction if the social networking language is not suppressed too early.

- *If this looming problem in the use of social networking or texting language constantly is not addressed very rigidly, we may have our own academic language conflagration at our hands. It's a threat that people bring to themselves and that is challenging the way we understand the writing standards of the language English in our life time.*

Although the new technologies that students use to access social networking site are increasingly in support of swift and standard writing of language, both in social encounters, the lecturers note that the problem of the threat in social networking language cannot go unnoticed. Lecturer 3 on the contrary points out that:

- *There has been a standard in understanding the language use that have been working over the years which determines the correct way of writing which is considered acceptable in the circles. It is therefore of my opinion that such standards shall prevail in this battle with the new technology language emerging out of the social networking word work.*

The lecturers however, acknowledge that the awareness of the difference between the language used in social networking sites and that used in academic areas among the students exist although remotely felt. Lecturer 4 argues that:

- *I would say that students are capable enough to know that the language written or spoken with their friends or on social networks is not the language they have to use in the academic lecture halls in academic assignments and tests.*

Therefore the lecturers agree that it becomes the responsibility of the lectures and examiners to apply punitive measures in a way to rid out the unwelcomed language use in academia. In a broad view, the lecturers believe that the education facilitators and lecturers need to be more involved and also be capable enough to apply harsher penalties where such errors or writings which are or can be deemed as outcomes of social networking writings while in academic circles.

## **6.2.2 Pattern of social networking language as used in academic circles**

### *6.2.2.1 Using text short-cuts in academic writing*

The use of texting language within the student circles is reaching interesting levels of impact in academic areas despite appeals by lectures. Interestingly there is a high percentage of the students who claim that they at one point experience an incident that they use text language in their writing. At 50.5%, the number of students who experienced incidents in which they used social networking language in academic writing. See table 6.2 below. This high percentage of the students using social networking sites language in their academic writing is along with the high use of social networking sites as established in chapter four and chapter five becoming a huge problem in academic statuses of students.

Although there is a high percentage of the students who have at one point experienced incidents of using social networking sites language in academic writing, there is an improving number of the students who are slowly managing to overcome to this language writing problem. About 49.5% of the students mentioned that they manage to write in full when engaged in academic writings.

Respondent number 46 and 83 points out that:

- Respondent number 46 said *“I have realised that in order to solve my problem of writing in short-cuts, I have to train myself to write in full and so far, I am very much managing”*.
- Respondent number 83 said *“my new smartphone has a quaky pad and it helps me to write all my words in full because in quaky pad, it becomes difficult to write short-cuts, so, I am used to writing in full”*.

This means that the students are slowly getting aware of the fact that the social networking sites have a huge impact in their writing and that it is in their power to write very well to stay upper in their academic circles. While the high percentage of students who reported writing short-cuts in their writing, there is an improving percentage of the students who uses various strategies to help them avoid the problem of using social networking sites language and other texting short-cuts in their writing. Respondent number 259 further outlines that:

- Respondent number 259 said *“I have tried allocating the time for doing academic writing and then social networking sites and in an event that I am studying, I go the extent of putting my phone on silent or completely off”*.

The nature of writing and using the social networking language in academic areas is increasingly becoming minimum in as far the use by the students is concerned as the students know very well the damages that texting language can have on their academic writing skills and the overall academic performance. This reveal that the students do take their time to re-read and proof read their writing before actually submitting.

Table 6.2 Using text short-cuts in academic writing

Have you ever encountered an incident of using the texting short-cuts in your academic writing such as an assignment or a text?	Percentage
Yes	50.5%
No	49.5%

### 6.2.2.2 Lecturers' perception of the use of social networking language and spellings in assignments and test scripts of students

The lecturers believe that there is still seldom evidence of the social networking language being used in academic writing however, what is left currently are just pockets of little harmless errors. In a general view, the lecturers further believe that the errors that exist commonly are those of the negligence of the students' writing which includes wrong spelling and wrong grammar. Lecturer 1 insist that although there are still events or such social networking language related seen in the writing of the students, the majority of the errors visible now are more of those negligence.

Lecturer 1 points out

- *But it is in a very negligent level of way, it is like a drop in the ocean. Furthermore, when the students communicate with me via SMS or via e-mail or even WhatsApp, they use that language and I accept that because it is the relevant platform.*

Although the spelling errors pen out to be controversial to assume an influence of social networking writing, they do not possess the utmost certainty to be classified as outcomes of social networking language. The writing styles, lecturer 2 outlines, is still negatively influence in that the students currently have the knowledge of the social networking short-cuts damages in their writing, however, still oblivious of the grammar and sentence construction problems they are facing. Lecturer 2 outlines that:

- *The problem which is still vested in the students is more of the spelling errors and grammar and also sentence construction which may or may not necessarily be as the result of their use of social networking sites.*

The lecturer 3 shares the same sentiments with lecturer 2 that the sentence construction errors may not be because of the influence of social networking sites use, however, because of genuine poor skills of writing in the part of students.

Lecturer 3 insists that:

- *I would not really put my head on the block and say there are such mistakes and that they are as a result of social networks. If someone*

*spells a certain word incorrectly, can we really say that it is because of their use of social networking sites? I am afraid not.*

The fact that the writing of the students cannot necessarily be declared as an act of deliberation or perhaps as a result of negligence serves as a problem hampering the understanding of these causes of writing errors by the students. Furthermore, the lecturers observe that the blame on the errors in the language writing, right or wrong, should be put on negligence.

### **6.3 CONCLUSION**

This chapter looked at and explored the data analysis associated with the comparison between the use of online social networking language and standard academic language among students. The students' perceptions and the lecturers' perceptions on the use of social networking language in academia and also the impact that the social networking language have on the standard writing of the English language. The results founded in this chapter are that the students are becoming conscious of the impact that the languages they use in their social networking sites have a huge impact in their writing. Although this is the case, these findings further illustrate the fact that there is a high use of texting language by the students. The findings further illustrate that the amount of time that the students spend on their social networking sites has a direct influence in their language writing while in academic circles. The data in this chapter was presented in the form of frequency tables to illustrate this data in simple means. The chapter seven will focus on the overall summary of the findings from chapter four, five and six, and will also make the recommendations. The recommendations for future studies are discussed in length.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a conclusion of the research. A review and summary of the research literature is provided as discussed in length in chapter two. Furthermore, in chapter three, the main methods used in the study are being identified and defined in detail together with their implications. The chapter four, five and six present the processed data using tables, pie charts and bar graphs as visuals to explain the information in detail. Furthermore, chapter seven present the summary of the findings as well as study recommendations and conclusions regarding the impact of social networking use among the students at University of Limpopo.

The wide use of social networking sites in South Africa by students has become a growing problem that haunts the ability to focus and it affects the study times for the students as well as their academic English writing. This threat has been perpetuated by the wide access to the new technology which allow vast majority of applications which one of them has popularly become access to social networking sites. the students at the institutions of higher learning are therefore the easy targets to get caught up in the influence of the social networking sites because according to South African Social Media Landscape 2014 research done by World Wide Worx (2014), the students make a biggest majority users of social networking sites in South Africa.

Chapter one identified the social networking sites have a potential to cause a damage should there be an abuse in the use. It is also further elaborated that the use in some instances can cause whether negative or positive effects which will in turn affect the academic wellbeing of the students. Many studies across the globe have been done on the impact of technology to the students and have found out that it has many effects to both academic and social lifestyle of the user. Although the use of social networking sites is both applauded and criticised for breaking the communication bearers of both time and geographical regions, there can be a huge damage when the social networking sites are being used in the academic circles. The use of social networking sites is slowly becoming popular in South Africa particularly among the youth whom



most of them are still at school and therefore, these networks has become the trend by which the youth of today identify themselves.

The primary idea for this study was to identify and examine the impact of social networking sites' use on the academic performance of the students. The aim and the objectives serve as the map from which guidelines for the whole study are drawn.

The chapter two reviewed the literature on this impact of social networks sites. The emphasis was drawn on the impact to which availability of technology has, an evaluation of the procrastination outcomes as a result of the use as well as the impact to which the sites are doing to the students' English language writing as used in academic. The new development in the technology and the access that the students have has revolutionised the way in which the students communicate among themselves. The level of access to the social networking sites with the advance of the technologies that simplifies the access to those technologies makes it easy for students to access the sites. The available literature on academic procrastination was discussed in chapter two with the understanding that the use of social networking sites provides so much opportunities for the student users to procrastinate from any activity that they are involved.

The chapter three discussed the methodologies used in the study. For the complexity of the research, the study employs both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. The chapter provided the methods for interpretation of raw data for the study, the research design processes as well as the scope of the study was discussed. The study used two methods of data collection which is questionnaires distributed to the students and interview sessions held individually with the lecturers.

The chapter four, five and six present data on the availability and use of technology among the students and the impact procrastination has on students' academic performance. Additionally, the impact of social networking language on the writing skills and potential of the text language threatening the English standard writing as known was also discussed at length. The data here is based on findings from the questionnaires and the interviews. To understand the availability and use of technology, questions directly focusing on these issues were posed in the questionnaire and in the interviews and they include questions.

Chapter four discussed in length the impact of availability of technology on student academic performance. The focus of the chapter is on the value in which the technology has on the access and use of the online social networking sites by the students and how this use is influencing their academic performance. The findings in the chapter reveal that cell-phones are the most common method of accessing the internet and the social networking sites by the students. Furthermore, it is also pointed out in the chapter that Facebook and Twitter seem to be the driving force of the social networking sites which the students are commonly accustomed to. The social networking sites as the lecturers believe have the vast optimum possibility of being incorporated into the learning spectrum as it has the potential to attract extreme levels of student attention.

The study points out that the students face a life time of potential distraction from their use of social networking sites and new social media technology at their disposal. The students and the lecturers mutually agree that the easy access to the technology is an escapable predicament directly influencing the sharp increase in the use of social networking sites among students. The study also point that the fact that each and every year, new technology is being developed and the attitude of the students to keep up with the latest technology is widening. However, it must be made clear that there is nothing wrong with the new developments of technology if they are used appropriately under supervision in academic activities. There are also many chances for the enrichment of the writing skills in which the students can be able to write full words through the new quaky keyboard in the mobile devices and thereby instils technology skills further among students.

Students today are characterised by the position of their cell-phones in their hands each and every hour of their day. The study also reveals that the students still have lenient measures applied by the lecturers when coming to the technology use during class. Additionally, this benefit the students to be technologically savvy and be enable them to browse the internet through out and still be able to concentrate in class, as students perceive in chapter four and five. This technology savviness can have many benefits to the society broadly. The technology savviness if encouraged can play huge role as a tool to combat digital divide. Another element revealed in the study is that the students have many platforms for communication in which the students can be able to forge a community circle with their friends online and discuss a wide range of

social topics no matter their distance from one another. This not only defies the need for face-to-face conversations but also steps into a future of virtual relationships stronger than those that exist and centred on physical contact. This idea describes the future in which the world is looking into with changes in the cost of education for both students and education system.

In the future, the cost of being educated or the cost of acquiring proper education will not be based on the books one can buy however on the cutting edge technology an individual can buy and keep up with new developments. These developments will also define the nature of learning by means of virtual learning as mainstream tools of learning from basic to higher education and training.

The study found that cell-phones are primarily the technological means by which the students use to access the social networking sites. This is influenced by the affordability of the cell-phones among the student community. Furthermore, the study also found that students are confident in their use of the internet. Students today are constantly searching for information on the internet while in class and this is the activity many students and lecturers alike find distracting and offensive.

The lecturers blame easy access to technological appliances such as cell-phones and laptops by the student for the high number of social media use. The lecturers also note that peer pressure is another factor influencing the use of social networking sites among students. This influence, right or wrong is drawing influence to the use of these sites among students, be in class or in their private places. These findings point that students are becoming more common with the social networking sites to the extent that these social networking sites use define the students' youth.

The study also finds that students use social networking sites while studying. This activity is perpetuated by the fact that students also visit social networking sites more than once in a single hour which means that there is a high potential for social networking sites addiction among students. This may appear merely as a wild accusation however the popularity of the social networking sites among students reveal a pattern more than the actual use. Furthermore, the students also value their membership on these social networking sites. Although many researchers agree that the English language is facing many challenges of poor writing skills from the new generation of students, the study found that traces of writing perceived as texting

language are actually spelling errors. The study also found that the students are becoming fully aware of the impact the text language potentially has on their writing skills and as a solution, many students reported using the QWERTY keypad which allows them to write words and sentences in full.

Many researchers point that social networking sites are shaping the process of learning and understanding language in the student community today. The language change that is seen and perceived as text language is actually generational changes that new users brought to simplify their communication relations with their friends. In addition, face to face conversations are becoming more irrelevant with the flourish of the social networking sites us among the youth.

The study agrees with Raine's (2012) findings that the technology use is more popular in the use of the young adults and that cell-phones are becoming the source of communication platform in which the youth use amongst themselves. In this study, students mention that they have at one point used their cell-phones to find information on the internet during class and eventually accessed their social networking accounts. This finding is remotely in agreement with the findings made by McCoy (2013) that these digital devices can be used for educational purposes. This young adults in the primary fore front of digital technology and social networking sites use are similarly profiled to the findings made by Prensky (2010) that the digital natives are defined by the technologies such as computers they grew up using. Unlike the findings made by Gurung and Routledge (2014) that the technology users are taking risks to use the social networking sites in class the student participants in the study mentioned that they are aware of the activities involved in their use of social networking in class and it happens spontaneously with their search of information online.

The study is also in contradiction with findings with the findings made by Lloyd et al (2007) that those students using technology for academic related work seem to be producing satisfactory results. The students failed to point out what value their use of cell-phones during class is although they mentioned that they subsequently end up login on their social networking sites accounts. Furthermore, the students mentioned that they have at one point have spent time on their social networking sites which has interfered with their study patterns. The study is also in agreement with Mehmood and

Taswir (2013) that technological availability and easy access to new technologies is the main cause of social networking sites use and eventually student procrastination.

The study is also in agreement with Birchmeier et al (2011) conclusions that social networking sites allow the students to create their own meaning and their own understanding of their social lives through their use of social networking sites. Aziz et al (2013) makes a valid point that there is more potential use of the social networking sites, be it from the educational purposes or the non-academic purposes which can benefit the student users. This study establishes that cell-phones are the commonly used method to access social networking sites among the students. The study further establishes grounds which are parallel with Plester et al (2009) study that there are many benefits that can be unlocked when the social networking sites use is exposed to children at their younger age. The study's limitations are related to Junco and Cotton (2011) study that there are limited methods in measuring use of technology among students.

The chapter further reveals that the students are more confident in their use of the social networking sites. This is emphasized by the fact that there are many students who made e-mail notifications which enables the students to be notified whenever there is a new activity on their social networking sites. This chapter further elaborates that while the lecturers fear the potential impact of the social networking sites on the language writing abilities of the students, the lecturers believe that what is actually known as text language is simply a collection of spelling errors. There are also researcher's recommendations to various stakeholders which include institutions of higher learning such as universities, the South African government and the future media researchers.

## **7.2 DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE RESPONDENTS**

### **7.2.1 Gender**

A total number of two hundred and ninety seven (297) participants were involved in the study and about 158 were females while males were 139. It is often difficult to find an equal representation of gender because of uneven number of participation. See table 7.1 below. Despite this finding, in attention to the findings made in chapter four,

five and six, it can be pointed that the female gender is by any means the most users of the cell-phones and social networking sites.

Table 7.1 The Gender of the students

The students' gender	Percentage
Male	46.8%
Female	53.2%

### 7.2.2 Age

The age group of between 16-20 years old is actually the highest in the study with a 40.7% high while the lowest is the age group of 35+ which has a 5.4% participation in the study. See table 7.2 below. This finding complements findings made by many scholars Aziz et al (2013) and Crystal (2008) that most users of social networking sites and consumers of the current technological applications and gadgets.

Table 7.2 The Age groups of the students

Age groups of the students	percentage
16-20	40.7
21-25	34.7
26-30	13.5
30-35	5.7
35+	5.4%

### 7.2.3 Levels of study

Interestingly, the most participants of the study are third year students and the least users are the fourth level students. The second level students are in majority too in the use, following steadily short by 0.3% behind. See table 7.3 below. The possible explanation is that the third year students found new freedoms of being final year students and also the fact that they have reduced classes which means that they have an increased time for use of their technology gadgets.

Table 7.3 The students' level of study

Students' level of study	Percentage
First year	23.6%
Second year	29%
Third year	29.3%
Fourth year	6.1%
Masters	12.1%

### 7.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

- The social networking site Facebook appears to be the most popular social networking site among the students.
- Students use cell-phones more often to access their social networking sites because of their convenience and Laptop/desktop computer are least used technological means for students to access their social networking sites.
- More students access their social networking sites while attending class with more students visiting their social networking sites more than five times per day.
- Students have active social networking e-mail notification that informs/updates the users of any activity on their social networking sites' accounts.
- The lecturers perceive that the current level of constant availability of technology among students leads to a definitive proof that the extensive of such a use of the technology has a negative impact, although remotely, positive results emerge.
- Many students are confident in using the internet to access and retrieve information.
- Easy access to modern technology and modernised cell-phones make it simple for students to access/log in into their social networking sites more often.
- Many students use their social networking sites even when they are studying (which some find as a means of communicating with other fellow students while others find their use as means of refreshing).
- These visits to the social networking sites are not random; rather, they occur regularly in everyday of their lives, thus hinting behaviours of addiction.

- The lecturers point at peer pressure as the primary cause of students' accessing social networking sites regularly because they want to fit-in with the rest of their peers.
- The web search engine Google is accessed more often to search for information while in class and ultimately leading to students accessing social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter and therefore, the ability of the students to search for information from the search engine, Google, paves way to the use of these social networking sites.
- The popularity of the idea of social networking is becoming a norm amongst the students.
- Students are commonly finding their membership of their social networking sites and their use of the sites as important and therefore a priority to their social orientations/ associations
- The students' language writing skills are slowly diminishing due to their access and use of social networking sites and this decrease in correct grammar and spelling writing, in the lecturers' view, has a potential to threaten the existence of English language writing in future.
- Text language in the quality of writing of students still exist however, very remote and therefore manageable by the students and the lecturers believe that most of what is being mistaken for text language, is actually pockets of harmless spelling errors.
- Although there is an extensive use of social networking sites by the students, majority of students do not experience any late handing of academic activities as a result of access and use of social networking sites.
- Many students pointed out having using the internet while in class as aid to search information about topics that are being discussed.
- The lecturers believe access and use of social networking sites has in many ways shaped the way in which the youth communicate and interact amongst one another.



#### **7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study had various limitations which limited the study to expand more and cover a wide area of focus like anticipated by the researcher. There were time constrained which limited the study to be conducted in a matter of four weeks. Although most of the time was given to the participants so that they can fill out the questionnaire at their own convenience, there is a largely need of time that was displayed throughout the attitudes of the respondents. This therefore means that had the student participants as well as the lectures involved in the interview received more time during the conduct of the study, there might have been different results yielded in the study.

The quality of the sample may also limit the scope of the study. Because of time and budgetary reasons, the sample could have increased to cover many students as well as many lectures across the university. This is because the study involves every lecturer and every student in the university and had there been any large sample, more data could have collected and could have yielded unimaginable findings.

Furthermore, the study was limited by time to expand to other universities and even colleges. This is because the attitudes of the students in their relationship of the use of social networking sites is not necessarily confined to the students at the university, rather, every students who is at the institution of higher learning. Additionally, had the study extended to the other universities nearby or covered a wide area of Limpopo province, more data could have been collected. It is therefore for this fact that the study's conclusion might not be objective enough to make general conclusions which can affect policy making in the Limpopo province.

Objectivity in the study will always come to a question. This is because the pilot study was done by the researcher alone without any third part researching team being involved. Furthermore, this means that unavoidable subjectivity could have compromised the pilot study's objectivity in general. However measures were put in place to avoid any subjective influence from the researcher by not explaining what every question of the questionnaire or the interview questions rather explaining the aim of the research only. While this method has loopholes in the total understanding of the questions, the participants had the researcher to clarify them hand to hand.

There were also various negative perceptions by the lecturers who were involved in the interviews. There were many lecturers who refused to get involved in the study, some questioning the integrity of the study while some cautioned having no clue about the activities of the social networking sites. It is this cloak of lack of understanding of the social networking sites that some of the participants were questioning the validity of the study and those methods of collecting data and as a result, this limited the research interviews to be conducted on only four (4) participants which is a little less than anticipated.

## **7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

As an added measure in the discussion and contemplation of the various standpoints and revelations in the exploration of the impact of social networking sites use on academic performance of students, it is important to remarkably highlight that there is no means of solving the subject matter at once or immediately. As such, the following recommendations are not thorough however; valuable improvement can be generated from them. The recommendations are fixed at various institutions and these are: tertiary institutions such as universities, South African government and media researchers.

### **7.5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS TO TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS (E.G. UNIVERSITIES)**

#### **7.5.1.1 Incorporation of social networking sites into learning**

This also presents an opportunity for the advancement in both lecturing and learning in the sense that platform can be developed to enable the lecturers to actually reach the students' at the most convenient time of the students.

#### **7.5.1.2 Institution based lectures on proper use of social networking sites**

There has to be forums from the CAE (Centre for Academic Excellence) to lecture the students on the use and the outcomes that awaits for them when they use these social networking sites beyond the acceptable measures. Additionally, the department of psychology can assist by formulating therapy and other related psychological clinics that can help those students who accept that their use has reached the level of addiction and wants to cut off that addiction. A clinical trial of the methods to help the students be aware of the dangers of their social networking sites use.

### **7.5.1.3 Invention and introduction of cell-phone compatible online learning infrastructure**

The research shows that the students spend more time on their cell-phones and accessing social networking sites. Therefore, the ICT department of the university have to look into the invention of a new mobile platform with a series of formats that can be accessed on cell-phones and these includes the conversion of the online university library portal to be easily accessible on mobile phones and the commonly used educational management system known as Blackboard.Learn. This will not only benefit the students by allowing high access and use of the library but also allow students to be fully participative in academic activities at their convenience. The students common use of cell-phones for many activities including the social networking sites and thus, the introduction of mobile compatible academic softwares will maximise the access to academic activities and also allow the students to still keep up with events on their social networking sites.

### **7.5.1.4 Invention of a cell-phone application that allow student and lecturer interactions**

The ICT department can also create a social networking like software platform which will allow the students to voice feedback and their understanding of various phenomenon and activities given in class. The students will have their own student numbers and names as their identities and post questions and comments on various academic topics and activities issued by the lecturer and the lecturer will have an opportunity to respond to the questions and also interact with the students in their discussions. These platforms, having being compatible with the students' cell-phones will therefore allow the students to interact with the lecturers and to seek any clarity on the points that they did not understand while they were in class. Furthermore, this also allow students to curb any shyness that an individual student might have had and failed to ask any question in class.

## **7.5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS TO SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT**

### **7.5.2.1 Introduction of centres to assist the social networking sites users**

The researcher recommends that in future rehabilitation centres for the individuals dealing with abuse of social networking sites needs to be established. These centres will assist with free social networking clinics so that the users can understand the use in terms of the benefits out of use and the dangers thereof.

### **7.5.2.2 Using social networking sites to bridge digital divide**

An increase in the use of social networking sites nationwide can be used as a platform to eradicate digital divide. This could be achieved by installing Wi-Fi hotspots in rural areas. Furthermore, with the whole nation capable of accessing information on the internet, the government can actually be able to reach every citizen through social networking tools and internet.

### **7.5.2.3 Introduction of a new legislation**

In an anticipation to minimise the use of social networking sites while in class, the institution of higher learning can apply to ICASA (independent Communication Association of South Africa) to install signal jammers in the classes and active during lecture hours. This will therefore enable full participation by the students during the lecture sessions. Although the findings and conclusions documents on Government Gazette No. 24123, Notice 3266 of November 2002 restricts the use of signal jamming devices by any entity other than National Security Cluster Departments, legislature exceptions can be made for a new policy which allows the use of the signal jamming devices in lecture halls specifically during the occasions of class sessions and tests and even examinations. However, because the students at university are adults each lecturer/ or university should develop a guideline for appropriate use of technology during class in a way that does not disturb class.

## **7.5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEDIA RESEARCHERS**

The researcher recommends that future studies need to look intensively into this use and explore it deeper into the outcomes that can result of the use of social networking sites on a national stage. Furthermore, the inclusivity of the study is very important in that there is a need for the focus of the study to be made nationwide to include

participants from all the universities in South Africa. The topic was rather too broad to be tackled by one study and therefore requires more unpacking, with more interest and focus being given to the negative site of the social networking sites and then another study perhaps looking at the positive sites of the social networking sites use among students.

#### **7.5.3.1 Each objective deserves its own study because of its broad nature and value**

The study did not cluster the students according to their culture and language. The study generalised the results by viewing the students as just students rather than viewing the cultural influences in the behaviours of the students in relation to their use of the social networking sites. Different results can be achieved when the students are clustered according to the languages they speak and the culture from which they belong.

#### **7.5.3.2 Creation of focus clusters for critical criticism of value**

The study involved the undergraduates and post-graduate students in the same study structures and classified them as students without creating any rigorous criticism of the difference in their use of social networking sites across the levels of study. The same study can be conducted which focuses on the difference in use of social networking sites between the undergraduate and post-graduate students at the case study value of a certain university.

#### **7.5.3.3 Different age group of the study**

The age target group of the study as from 16 years old without limits as they were from teenager into the late age, however, a study can be conducted looking into the use of social networking sites on the younger demographic that uses cell-phones and internet as communication tools. Different results can yield from such a study.

## 7.6 CONCLUSION

The research object to study the impact of social networking sites among the students of University of Limpopo, looking more on how constant availability of technology has an impact on academic performance of students and also on how procrastination is influenced by continuous use of social networking sites. Furthermore, the study looks at comparing how social networking language is related to the academic language in academic writing. The study serves as an addition to the South African literature on the mainstream use of social networking sites and in addition to a global collection of literature on social networking sites use among students.

The study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods and for data collection, questionnaire and face-to-face interview methods were used. The study focused on the theory of reasoned action, the dystopian approach to technological determinism and also the uses and gratification theory. The study found that to some extent, the students are very much aware of procrastination costs involved in their use of social networking sites and also found that the students are duly aware that their academic language writing is in danger if they continue to write short-cuts on their social networking sites.

Therefore it can be concluded that although it is not known whether these students use cell-phones purposefully for social networking sites, however, it can be said definitively that the exposure that the technology has on the students and the access to these new technologies the students have is very dangerous. Subsequently, this can lead to a bigger impact into the academic abilities and academic performance of these students. The social networking sites have changed how the students interact and communicate amongst one another. The mobility and the quick access to the sites is what is important while the students point out that although the use is vested, the students are savvy enough to know the impact that the sites have to their academic performance.

Moreover, the final conclusion of the study is that although the social networking sites has many negative effects resulting from use, there are many opportunities that these social networking sites holds in as far as being used in the academia. The study noted that social networking sites can be used as effective channels to cement the relationship between the students and their lecturers while the use of cell-phones, under supervision, while in class, the access to information can equip the students with lesson notes beyond what is being lectured in class.

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## ANNEXURES

### ANNEXURES A: QUESTIONNAIRE

You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire. Its purpose is purely academic and has nothing to do with our current social or political landscape. Your contribution will be kept confidential. Thank you in advance.

Topic: Technological Distractions: The Impact of Social Networking Use on Academic Performance of Students at University of Limpopo

Section A: Questions
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Which social networking websites are you currently a member of?

Facebook	
Twitter	
Google plus	
Other: specify	

Have you ever accessed a social networking website on your cell phone?

Yes	
No	

How often do you access your social networking sites on these platforms?

	Regularly	Occasionally	Never
Cell phone			
Tablet			
Desktop/ Laptop Computer			

How confident are you about using the internet to get any information?

Very confident	
Somewhat confident	
Not confident	
I don't know how to use the internet	

Do you have any settings activated so that information from a social networking site can contact you through your e-mail address?

Yes	
No	

How often do you visit a social networking website?

More than 5 times a day	
Once in a day	
Once in a week	
Once in a month	
Never	

Have you ever been late handing in an assignment because you spent time on a social networking site instead of doing homework?

Yes	
No	

Have you ever checked your social networking sites in class during a lecture?

Yes	
No	

How often do you do this?

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Do you check social networking sites while studying?

Yes	
No	

How often?

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How often has spending time on a social networking website interfered with your ability to study or complete assignments?

Several times	
More than one time	
Just one time	
Never	

How important to you is your membership(s) on social networking website(s)?

Very important	
Least important	
Not important	

Do you think your use of social networking has an impact on your academic performance?

Yes	
No	

If yes, how?

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Have you ever used internet while attending a lecture?

Yes	
No	

If yes, for which purpose

Google search	
Social networking e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.	
Other: Specify	

Do you think the texting language you use on social networking sites has an impact on your academic writing?

Yes	
No	

If yes, elaborate:

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Have you ever encountered an incident of using the texting short-cuts in your academic writing such as an assignment or a text?

Yes	
No	

If No, how did u manage?

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Do you think your use of these social networking sites is a result of constant availability of technology at your reach?

Yes	
No	

Thank you very much for your time.

Section B: Demographics

Gender

Male	
Female	

Age group

16-20	
21-25	
26-30	
30-35	
35+	

Level of study

First level	
Second level	
Third level	
Fourth level (honours)	
Masters level	

## **ANNEXURES B: FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

To the lecturers in the Department of Media, Communications & Information Studies and selected lecturers in the School of Social Sciences

1. Do you think the use of social networking has a direct impact on the students' academic performance?
2. Would you say the constant availability of the social networking access and advancement in technology have an impact on academic performance?
3. Have you ever experienced a situation where a student used a cell-phone presumably for social networking access during the class period?
4. In your professional understanding, what are the psychological factors which contribute to the use of social networking sites by the students?
5. Have online social networking sites contributed to the academic well-being of the students ever since their inception?
6. How often do you see a pattern of social networking language and spelling in the assignments and test scripts of students?
7. Do you think the ideal use of the social networking language in academic circles poses a threat to standard academic writing structure?
8. With the popularity of the social networking sites amongst the youth circles, what do you think needs to be done?

## ANNEXURES C: LETTER FROM RESEARCH EDITOR



**University of Limpopo**  
School of Molecular and Life Sciences  
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa  
Tel: (015) 268 3778, Email:mkateko.ngobeni@ul.ac.za

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that the Master of Arts research entitled 'Technological distractions: the impact of social networking use on the academic performance of students at the university of Limpopo' by Koma TS Student Number: 200908397' has been proofread and edited, and that I am satisfied with both its current academic and technical layouts.

Yours truly

Ms M.M Ngobeni (English Lecturer)

School of Molecular and Life Sciences