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Impact of Social Networks on Students' Academic Performance at the University of Greenwich Vietnam (Can Tho campus)

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ABSTRACT

Social networks (SN) are becoming a common trend in almost every aspect of the world. Significantly, SN impacts students' studying in that they use it to support their assignments and tasks. However, in Vietnam and Can Tho, there is little research about the SN impact on students' academic performance (SAP), so the authors decided to conduct this research. This project aims to research the impact of social networks on students' academic performance (SAP) at the University of Greenwich Vietnam at Can Tho campus (UoG VN CT). A questionnaire gathered the data on the social network factors that impact students' academic performance. Variables identified are purpose, frequency of usage, SN sites (SNS), and SAP. The result shows a positive relationship between SNS usage and SAP, especially Facebook, the SNS that students use most, so UoG VN CT should take advantage of it to increase SAP. Otherwise, the research also demonstrates that the frequency of SN has a negative relationship with SAP: the more hours students spend on SN, the worse SAP students get, so UoG VN CT should give some policies to limit students' SN time usage.

Keywords: social networks, student academic performance, social networks sites, social networks usage, purpose of using social networks

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, students' academic performance (SAP) and development play a crucial role in a nation's social and economic growth (Ali et al., 2009, Acena & Llanes, 2021). SAP creates great quality graduates who will be the country's leaders for the country's economy and society (Mushtaq, 2012). Moreover, social networks (SN) are used popularly because people are encouraged to limit going out due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Hussain, 2020). Besides, over the years, SN has been studied a lot. Many researchers found it has different effects on SAP. For positive effects, SN was used to increase SAP (Paul et al, 2012). For example, Maqableh et al. (2015) found that students commonly used SN to discuss with friends and lecturers for assignments. However, there are disagreements on the impact of SN on students' academic performance (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). For instance, research by Giunchiglia et al. (2018) found that students tend to use SN while studying, making them ignore their class lessons.

Unfortunately, although the impact of SN on students' academic performance has been widely researched in many countries, there is little research about the influence of SN on youth in Vietnam. Most studies in Vietnam investigate only the status of young people's SN usage (Nguyen, 2019). For instance, Le (2013) researched Vietnamese young people's SN activities. Moreover, Tran and Do (2013) also researched students' internet usage. In short, these studies only focus on youth SN usage activities.

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Based on these limitations, this research focuses on the effect of SN on students. Moreover, the novelty of this research is that it analyzes how SN impacts student academic performance. Thus, this research evaluates the effect of SN on student academic performance of students of the University of Greenwich Vietnam Can Tho campus (UoG VN CT). The main research question of this research is: "How do social networks impact students' academic performance at the University of Greenwich Vietnam on the Can Tho campus?"

This research aims to explore the impact of SN on SAP in UoG VN CT, so the SAP and SN definition, and employ the previous studies to research the effect of SN on UoG VN CT SAP deeply. SAP could be defined as a quantitative result that learners gain during the learning process (Palmer, 2013). Specifically, according to Martin (2017), academic performance is relevant to judgment test results which relate to a learner's IQ. However, other authors stated that academic performance is not only relevant to a learner's IQ but also to many other variables such as purpose in life, academic year, and openness to experience (Martin, 2017). Currently, much present research finds that SAP is measured by traditional factors (GPA and SAT) with other sub-factors such as psychological predictors (Martínez et al., 2019), self-efficacy (Hayat et al., 2020), wellness factors (Maharaj, 2018). In foreign countries, there are many SAP concepts. Specifically, in US schools, SAP was defined as students' academic success, productivity, and impulse control (DuPaul et al., 1991). Moreover, in US colleges, academic performance is based on the usual test, classroom contribution, and participation (Baker, 1999).

In Vietnam, student academic performance is also defined in many conceptions. In the past, student academic performance was the University Educational Credit (CFU), GPA, and accumulated knowledge (MOET, 2007). In the Philippines, Bañez et al. (2016) also found that academic performance influenced the passing of respondents in Licensure examination. Nowadays, academic performance is defined more widely. MOET (2018) stated that student academic performance is relevant to student knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours. Then, universities affirm the specific labour competencies after studying at the university (MOET, 2018).

Nowadays, students regularly use SN for academic purposes (Mese, 2019). Therefore, currently, many authors have researched how social factors impact SAP. SN is a system that provides the community withholding, supplying, using, searching, and sharing information, including creating personal websites, forums, chat, audio, images and other similar services. And, nowadays, SN is used widely in many aspects, such as business, science, economics, psychology, and education (Knoke & Yang, 2019). SN is increasingly crucial in the COVID-19 pandemic in education because it helps students interact safely with lecturers and peers (Raaper & Brown, 2020). Therefore, over the years, there have been many studies about SN factors. The table below shows the summary of factors forming SN, and each factor will be explored in the next section.

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SN factors	Research														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Purpose of using SN	Х			Х	Х			Х		Х	Х	Х	Х		
Frequency of SN usage (usage time, addition)		Х		X	X		X	X	Х		Х	Х		Х	X
SN access device (laptop/mobile)					Х							X			
SN sites usage (Facebook/ Twitter)		Х	Х					Х							Х
awareness of SN impact						Χ						Х			
SN engagement						Х	Χ								

Note:

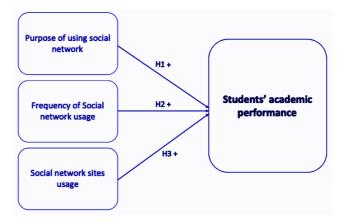
- 1. Khan (2012)
- 2. Maqableh et al (2015)
- 3. Amin et al (2016)
- 4. Bernard & Dzandza (2018)
- 5. Nguyen (2019)
- 6. Al-Menayes (2014)
- 7. Al-Menayes (2015)
- 8. Owusu-Acheaw & Larson (2015)
- 9. Giunchiglia et al (2018)
- 10. Helou & Khan (2014)
- 11. Okereke & Oghenetega (2014)
- 12. Talaue et al (2018)
- 13. Abdullahi et al (2020)
- 14. Hasnain et al (2015)
- 15. Othman et al (2017)

As shown above, SN is being widely used by students, and it tends to impact a lot on SAP in recent years (Azizi et al., 2019). The status of using SN of school age increase can lead to positive and negative sides for SAP (Mishra, 2020). Bernard & Dzandza's (2018) research also demonstrated that the SN factors (purpose of using SN and SN site usage) positively impact SAP, that students use SN as a tool to support their academic aims. It led to SAP enhancement, such as joining academic forums (31%), participating in academic interaction (28%), and downloading materials (21%). Moreover, Nguyen (2019) found that many students (80%) consider SN is a helpful tool for their academic aims, which will help improve SAP. However, some studies proved that SN could negatively impact SAP. According to Giunchiglia et al. (2018), many students (73%) use SN while studying and attending lessons more than other activities. It makes them ignore studying and leads to SAP reduction.

Previous studies about SN and SAP show little research about SN and academic performance in Vietnam. Therefore, the research's conceptual framework will focus on the impact of SN on UoG VN CT SAP.

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To check the causal model of the correlation between purpose of using SN, frequency of SN usage, and SN sites usage, the research is hypothesized as follows:

Khan (2012) explored the factor impacts on SAP which relates to SN factors. In this research, the purpose of using SN has a useful impact on SAP. These results proved that students commonly use SN through their friends' influence, and it helps them find out more information for academic aims. Then, it led to an increase in SAP. Similarly, the research of Bernard and Dzandza (2018) also demonstrated that the SN factors (purpose of using SN and SN sites usage) have a positive impact on SAP. This research proved that students use SN as a tool to support their academic aims and it led to SAP enhancement. Therefore, the hypothesis 1 is:

H1: There is a positive impact of the purpose of using SN on SAP

Maqableh et al. (2015) researched the impact of SN sites on SAP and they found it has a positive impact on SAP. This study proved that students spend much time using SN sites and they think the higher the SN sites usage, the higher the application ability of SAP. Similarly, research by Boateng & Amankwaa (2016) also showed that students know how to balance the time used for academic and other activities, moreover, this lead to effective SAP. Thus, the hypothesis 2 is:

H2: There is a positive impact of the frequency of using SN usage on SAP.

A research of Amin et al. (2016) also stated that the SN sites factor has a positive impact on SAP. This study proved that students use SN sites not really for learning purposes, but SN sites help them relax and motivate them to do assignments. Similarly, Talaue et al. (2018) demonstrated that the more public universities provide SN access, the more quickly students exchange information, and it leads to SAP enhancement. Hence, the hypothesis 3 is:

H3: There is a positive impact of the SN sites usage on SAP.

For key constructs, the author will base on the previous studies to define the measurement. About academic performance, this research will apply the APRS scale to measure SAP. However, this research will choose some dimensions in this scale to measure

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SAP. Moreover, the authors chose a five-point Likert Scale to measure SAP (table in methodology section).

METHODOLOGY

In this project, the author used a survey to collect data. The respondents were 200 students from UoG VN CT. For the tool to collect data, the survey in Form Office 365. In the survey, the questionnaire has 14 items, divided into three main parts: the first part has three multiple-choice questions about respondents' general information such as students' course (course 7/8/9/10), majors, periods that students are in, (English, BTEC or TOP UP period), and one short-answer question about students' ID. The second part has four questions which relate to factors in key constructs: the purpose of using SN, frequency of SN usage, SN sites usage, and SAP. The first question is about the purpose of using SN. This is based on the research of Khan (2012), Bernard and Dzandza (2018), and Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015). Specifically, respondents were asked whether they use SN for academic aims or other aims. The next questions are about the frequency of SN usage. It were based on the research of Khan (2012), Magableh et al. (2019), Al-Menayes (2015), and Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015). In particular, respondents were inquired about the time (minutes) per day they spend on SN and the time (minutes) per day they spend on SN for academic aims. The next question is about SN sites usage: there is one multiple-choice question for respondents to choose the SN sites that they use most. It is based on the studies of Magableh et al. (2015), Amin et al. (2016), and Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015). Specifically, this research choose Facebook and Zalo because they are the most-used SN sites in Vietnam (Data Portal, 2021) The final part has six questions on a five-point Likert scale about SAP. They are based on the research of DuPaul et al. (1991), Bernard and Dzandza (2018), and Al-Menayes (2015). Specifically, they study gathered data on students' evaluation of the negative and positive impact of SN on SAP.

Regarding sampling methods, according to Altmann (1974), there are some sampling methods such as random sampling, convenient sampling, and snowball sampling. However, this project used snowball sampling to select participants. The strength of this method is that it helps save time and it is easy to conduct rather than random and convenient sampling. Particularly, the survey was created on Office 365. The researchers posted the link to the form on their Facebook timeline to attract their friends in UoG VN CT as respondents. Furthermore, the form was sent to the researchers' friends through Facebook Messenger, then the researchers asked them to send the survey to their friends who are also in UoG VN CT to do it.

To indicate the significant variable for research, these variables are shown by regression formula: $Y=a+b_1 X_1+b_2 X_2+\cdots+b_n X_n$ where Y is dependent variable and X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_n are independent variables (Lewis-Beck & Skalaban, 1990). Based on the conceptual framework, the formula is:

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Where:

X_1: Purpose of using SN X_2: Frequency of SN usage X_3: SN sites

Y: SAP

However, due to the data's skewness, three hypotheses and SAP are separated into subgroups: the frequency of SN usage factor was divided into the low frequency of SN usage $(X_2.1)$, medium frequency of SN usage $(X_2.2)$, and time using SN $(X_2.3)$. Similarly, in the research, the SAP (D) variables were also divided into low and other SAP (high and average) (table 5). Therefore, the main formula for the research is:

$$Y=a+b_1X_1+b_2.1X_2.1+b_2.2X_2.2+b_2.3X_2.3+b_3X_3+b_4D$$

Specifically, the measurement for these variables is:

Variable	Meaning	Measurement
X_1	The main purpose of using	$X_1 = 0$: using SN for academic aims
	SN	$X_1 = 1$: using SN for other aims
$X_{2.1}$	Low frequency	$X_{2.1}$ = 1: Using from 1 hour to 3 hour
		$X_{2.1}$ = 0: Using above 3 hours
$X_{2.2}$	High frequency	$X_{2.2}$ =1: Using from 3 to 6 hours
		$X_{2.2}$ =0: Using under 3 hours and above 6 hours
$X_{2.3}$	Time of using SN	$X_{2.3}$: will be measured by amount of time
		(minutes)
X_3	SN sites student use the	X_3 =1: using Facebook the most
	most	X_3 =0: using Zalo the most
		X_3 =2: Using other sites
D	Level of SAP	D=1: low SAP level
		D=0: other SAP level

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sample Description

In UoG VN CT, up to now, there are four courses that represent freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior students. They all belong to six majors: business administration, event management, marketing management, communication management, information technology (IT), and graphic design. They are divided into two main majors: business majors and other majors. Moreover, students must go through three stages of learning: English period which students must study through English levels to have a good foundation for the next subjects, BTEC period which students study subjects in related disciplines to help students have a foundation for the advanced stage, and TOP UP period which students must study subjects related to a particular major (Greenwich, 2022).

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Table 1 *UOG VN CT students' course, major and period*

Student's course	Frequency (student)	Percent (%)
Overall	200	100.0
Course 7	33	16.5
Course 8	41	20.5
Course 9	72	36.0
Course 10	54	27.0
Students' major		
Overall	200	100.0
Business major	108	46.0
Other majors	92	54.0
Students' period		
Overall	200	100.0
English period	59	29.5
BTEC period	107	53.5
TOP-UP period	34	17.0

(Source: the author's analysis from the survey, 2022)

As shown in Table 1, generally, course 7 accounted for 16.5% students (33 students), course 8 accounted for 20.5% (41 students), course 9 accounted for 36% (72 students), and course 10 accounted for 27% (54 students). Furthermore, there are 108 students (54.0%) from IT and graphic design and 92 students (46.0%) from management majors, hence the total of 200 students who accomplished the survey.

Purpose of using SN

In general, 55.0% of students use SN for entertainment purposes and 45% of students use SN for academic purposes. This table shows that UoG VN CT students prefer to use SN for entertainment purposes rather than use SN for academic purposes. The reason for this is that students tend to spend more time using SN for entertainment during the lockdown due to COVID-19. Bullard (2020) stated that many students (66%) use SN for chatting and interacting in communities during the lockdown period because they worry about being far away from friends and family. Moreover, the author asked 10 UoG VN CT students why they prefer to use SN for entertainment rather than academic purposes. Many respondents stated that they have to study online, so they have more time than study offline and they spend almost all their time chatting with their friends and lovers due to the lockdown. Therefore, students prefer to use SN for entertainment rather than academic purposes due to the COVID-19 epidemic situation.

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Table 2Purpose of using SN of UoG VN CT students

Purposes	Number of students	Percent (%)
Using SN for academic purposes (discussion, updating materials)	90	45.0
Using SN for entertainment purposes (killing time, communication, playing games)	110	55.0
Total	200	100.0

(Source: the author's analysis from survey, 2022)

Frequency of using SN

On average, students in UoG VN CT spend nearly three hours (169.4 minutes) using SN. According to Hunt et al. (2018), the acceptable time for a day of SN usage is 30 minutes. If people use SN for more than 30 minutes, it can lead to many psychological problems. According to many studies (i.e., Acar & Polonsky, 2007; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011), the time students use SN has increased since 2009, which can lead to students' mental health problems. In addition, in the COVID-19 situation, the more minutes students spend on SN, the more stress, anxiety, and loneliness students get (Elmer et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the table shows that many students (62%) tend to use SN for one to three hours. On average, each student in this range uses 139 minutes (more than two hours) for SN. Therefore, it is clear that many UoG VN CT students are using SN excessively, and it can lead to their mental health problems.

Table 3 *SN using time of UoG VN CT students*

	Number of students	Percent (%)	Mean (minutes)
Under 1 hour	33	16.5	50.8
From 1 to 3 hours	124	62.0	139.4
From 3 to 6 hours	36	18.0	318.3
Above 6 hours	7	3.5	494.3
Total	200	100.0	169.4

A study by Abi-Jaoude et al. (2020) stated that the more hours students spend on SN for academic activities, the more mental health enhancement they gain. However, teens tend to use more time on SN which does not include school work and it led to their distraction from their studies (CNN Health, 2019). Similarly, UoG VN CT students spend nearly 3 hours per day on average using SN, but they only spend 1 hour 40 minutes on average using SN for academic activities. Particularly, many students (50%) at UoG VN CT tend to use SN for academic aims in under 1 hour. According to the interview, some students (4/10) stated that they spend under one hour using SN for academic purposes to discuss the lessons and assignments with classmates and lecturers during the lockdown period and they

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agree that the time will be less if they study offline. Thus, UoG VN CT students spend little time using SN for academic aims, and it can impact their concentration on study.

Table 3.1SN using time for the academic purpose of UoG VN CT students

	Number of students	Percent (%)	Mean (minutes)
Under 1 hour	101	50.5	40.0
From 1 to 3 hours	81	40.5	127.5
From 3 to 6 hours	16	8.0	289.4
Above 6 hours	2	1.0	510.1
Total	200	100.0	100.1

(Source: the author's analysis from survey, 2022)

Table 3.2 shows that business students spend a lot of time on SN (177.9 minutes), but they also spend plenty of time on SN for academic purposes (102.8 minutes). On the contrary, although students of other majors use SN for the main purpose of studying, the time used for learning is little (96.9 minutes). Therefore, it demonstrates that UoG VN CT business students use SN for entertainment but can still spend a lot of time on SN for studying. Moreover, students in other majors use the main purpose for academic purposes but they spend a little time on SN for academics.

Table 3.2 *Time spend on SN and students' majors*

		Time spend on SN (minutes)	Time spend on SN for academic (minutes)
Business majors	Mean	177.9	102.8
	Std. Deviation	126.1	89.1
Other majors	Mean	159.4	96.9
	Std. Deviation	92.0	83.3
Total	Mean	169.4	100.1
	Std. Deviation	111.8	86.3

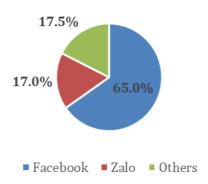
In general, 65% of students use Facebook most when they access SN. Moreover, 17% of students use Zalo most, a famous Vietnamese platform which 80% of smartphone users in Vietnam have installed (Duong et al., 2021). Furthermore, the rest of the students, when asked about platforms other than Facebook and Zalo, tend to use WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram. The figure shows that many students use Facebook in college or higher education. Many studies (i.e., Ractham & Firpo, 2011; Cuesta et al., 2016) also found that Facebook is one of the SN sites that college students use for both academic and entertainment purposes. In UoG VN CT, many students (131/200) also use Facebook for both academic and entertainment aims.

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SNS usage

Figure 1
SN sites that UoG VN CT students use mos



(Source: the author's analysis from survey, 2022)

Student Academic Performance (SAP)

In general, many UoG VN CT students (62%) have low SAP, 8% of students have average SAP and 30% of students have high SAP. This also shows that the number of UoG VN CT students who get low SAP is high. According to Mushtaq and Khan (2012), there are many factors that impact SAP such as communication, learning equipment, proper guidance, and family pressure. In UoG VN CT, the reason that a few students get high SAP is UoG VN CT's facilities.

Table 4
SAP of UoG VN CT students hobbies

SAP	Number of students	Percent (%)
Low SAP	124	62.0
Average SAP	16	8.0
High SAP	60	30.0
Total	200	100.0

(Source: the author's analysis from survey, 2022)

The study of Mushtaq and Khan (2012) showed that students will be motivated to study if their university/college has modern, innovative facilities. Similarly, UoG VN CT was just opened in 2018, so facilities are still inadequate for students. Particularly, 7/10 of students in the interview agree that UoG VN CT does not have an official campus, so many facilities for students are lacking. Then, it makes them feel more disadvantaged than other international universities and they are not motivated to learn better. Thus, poor facilities can be the prominent reason that many UoG VN CT students just gain low SAP.

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Relationship between SN and SAP

In Table 5, the R square is concerned. R square shows the relevance of the research model to the meaning of factors and explains the percentage of that dependent (Lewis-Beck & Skalaban, 1990). R square in this table is 0.89, so the linear regression model statistically fits the variable at 89%.

Table 5 *Model Summary and coefficients table of SN factors*

Model	Value		
R square	0.89		
Adjusted R square	0.89		
Variable	В	Sig.	
Constant	1.123	0.000	
Purpose of using SN (X_1)	0.064	0.242	
Frequency of SN usage (X_2)	- 0.001	0.043	
Low frequency of SN usage $(X_{2.1})$	- 0.138	0.102	
Medium frequency of SN usage $(X_{2,2})$	-0.040	0.535	
Time using SN $(X_{2.3})$	0.000	0.343	
SN network sites usage (X_3)	0.244	0.000	
Low SAP (D)	-1.949	0.000	

(Source: the author's analysis from survey, 2022)

After considering the relevance of the factors to research, the relation of SN factors and SAP will be shown through the coefficients table. According to Bring (1994), the factors, as well as the hypothesis, need to be considered as significant or non-significant and if sig. (coefficients table) is lower than α (α , in this case, is 5% as well as α =0.05) then the variable is useful as well as this variable has contributed to the relationship between SN and SAP.

As shown above, there are seven factors which include three main hypotheses of the research, SAP factor. Moreover, due to the data's skewness, three hypotheses and SAP are separated into subgroups: the frequency of SN usage factor will be divided into the low frequency of SN usage, medium frequency of SN usage, and time using SN; the SAP will be low SAP because it takes the highest percentage in SAP.

Based on the regression formula above and comparing with α , the final formula of this research is:

$$Y = 1.123 + 0.001X_2^{***} + 0.138X_{2.1}^{*} + 0.244X_3^{****} + 1.949X_D^{****}$$

In this formula, the main factor has the non-significant relationship between SN and SAP – frequency of SN usage. However, it is reliable because it was analysed as having conflicts with the time spent using SN for learning purposes. Students can use SN for learning purposes but they may not spend much time studying.

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CONCLUSIONS

This research was implemented to examine the impact of SN on SAP at UoG VN CT. Regarding the relationship between SN factors and SAP, hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were tested. As a result, the frequency of using SN (H2) and SNS (H3) has a significant impact on SAP. Specifically, the frequency of using SN has a negative impact on SAP (B=-0.001): 62% of students use SN for one to three hours, while 50% of students use SN for only under one hour for academic purposes. The main reason can be the COVID-19 impact that makes students increase using SN for more hours, but they tend to use more time on SN, which does not include school work, and it leads to their distraction from their studies (CNN Health, 2019). Furthermore, SN sites have a positive impact on SAP (B=0.244): 65% of students use Facebook most when they access SN, and they believe that Facebook is one of the SN sites that should be used to help increase SAP. Based on these impacts, the suggestion should focus on increasing Facebook features for academic purposes and reducing the frequency of using SN on campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion, UoG VN CT should take advantage of SN sites. According to figure 4, Facebook is a platform that UoG VN CT students use most because they feel it has both academic and entertainment functions. Thus, UoG VN CT should use Facebook for student and lecturer discussion, confessions about studying problems, and studying clubs. Moreover, UoG VN CT can celebrate regular mini-games about majors' knowledge through Facebook quizzes and polls to attract the student to use Facebook for academic aims. Moreover, UoG VN CT should give some policies to limit students' SN time usage, increase more extra-curricular activities, require students to verify their purpose of using SN before accessing UoG VN CT's WIFI, and extend certain time using WIFI to avoid surfing SN sites for entertainment.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

Before answering the survey, the respondents were duly informed about the project, including the researchers' names. Moreover, only with the participants' permission did the researchers send the survey form. Furthermore, all data from the survey are used for research purposes only and are completely confidential.

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