

# FACTS OF FACEBOOK USAGE AMONG STUDENTS OF CAN THO UNIVERSITY

## THỰC TRẠNG SỬ DỤNG MẠNG XÃ HỘI FACEBOOK CỦA SINH VIÊN TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC CẦN THƠ

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**Abstract** - The survey on "Facts of Facebook usage among Can Tho University students" is carried out to have a closer look at Facebook usage among students of Can Tho University and how much time they spend on the social network at the expense of time for studying. Based on that, the authors put forward suggestions to use Facebook effectively while at the same time to reduce its negative impacts. The study takes surveys on students who attend regular courses at Can Tho University. In total, there are 412 students engaging in the study. The results have found out that most students use Facebook during class time, accounting for 77.3%. The study also shows that Facebook somehow affects study performance of students as without Facebook, 82.1% of students spend their free time on study while with using Facebook, the ratio goes down to 56.6%. However, most students suggest that with proper usage, Facebook does have its positive impacts as it is a good channel to share information about extra activities of their class or faculty. Also in the study, the authors propose some ways for students to take full advantages of Facebook.

**Key words** - Facebook; social network; student; usage; Can Tho University

### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, social network or virtual social network is generic terms for sites that are used to connect users with similar backgrounds and interests (Weinberg, 2009). Social network helps bring people together, connect friends, share information or images anytime and anywhere. According to Mai and Tuan (2014), Facebook has been the most popular social network to students in recent years, which can be seen at any corners of universities. Facebook's impacts on students' life are visible as it has become the important part in daily life of young generation. The purposes of using Facebook and how much time young people spend on Facebook are different from one person to another. But it is clear that most of Facebook users among the young are students and many of them think the social network is quite important to their life. And they often use social network to connect and make friends, to share their personal photos and to express their feelings or opinions.

Social network is a good way to relax of many people. But as it is too easy to join the network and then get addicted to the so-called virtual world, which would have negative impacts on users, especially students and their study.

One of the most used social network by students is Facebook and it is often used to share documents and materials as well as to connect to each other. Apart from its positive impacts, students tend to overuse Facebook at the expense of time for studying. Within the scope of the study,

**Tóm tắt** - Nghiên cứu nêu lên thực trạng sử dụng và ảnh hưởng của Facebook đến thời gian học tập của sinh viên nhằm đề xuất các giải pháp giúp sinh viên sử dụng Facebook một cách có hiệu quả trong học tập. Nghiên cứu này tập trung vào đối tượng sinh viên học chính qui tại Trường Đại học Cần Thơ với cỡ mẫu là 412 sinh viên. Kết quả cho thấy tỉ lệ lớn sinh viên truy cập Facebook ngay trong giờ học (chiếm 77,3%). Kết quả nghiên cứu cũng đã phản ánh kết quả học tập của sinh viên khi tham gia Facebook, trước khi sử dụng Facebook sinh viên dành thời gian cho việc học chiếm tỷ lệ 82,1%, sau khi sử dụng Facebook thì số lượng này chỉ còn 56,6%. Tuy nhiên, mạng xã hội Facebook cũng được sinh viên thừa nhận mang lại nhiều thông tin hữu tin hỗ trợ trong học tập, các hoạt động ngoại khóa rèn luyện kỹ năng mềm nếu biết sử dụng đúng cách. Từ kết quả nghiên cứu, một số giải pháp được đề xuất giúp cho sinh viên sử dụng Facebook có hiệu quả hơn trong học tập.

**Từ khóa** - Facebook; mạng xã hội; sinh viên; sử dụng; Trường Đại học Cần Thơ

the authors take a closer look at facts of social network usage among students of Can Tho University then propose some ways to use Facebook effectively, especially for better study performance.

### 2. Research methods

#### 2.1. Collecting data method

The study uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods to assess Facebook usage among students of Can Tho University.

- Qualitative research method: Secondary data is collected from summary reports, annual reports of Can Tho University in 2014.

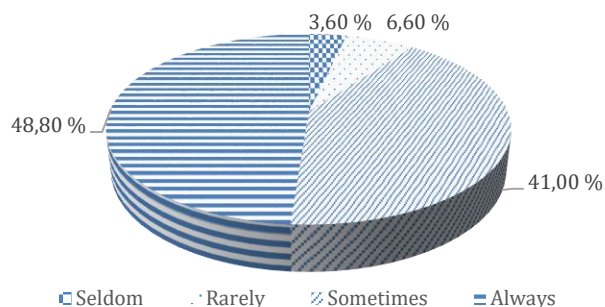
- Quantitative research method: 412 regular students of Can Tho University who all use Facebook are selected by non-probability sampling method and are required to answer a questionnaire. Besides, in-depth surveys, group discussions with lecturers, representatives of class (faculty, university Youth Union Committees and members of Student Associations) are carried out in order to collect opinions about the impacts of using Facebook on students' study performance. All of the acquired data is used to analyze facts of Facebook usage among students of Can Tho University.

#### 2.2. Data analysis method

The data is processed by Excel, SPSS 16.0 for descriptive and comparative statistics.

### 3. Research results and discussions

#### 3.1. Frequency of Facebook usage among students



**Figure 1.** Frequency of Facebook usage among Can Tho University students (Source: Survey on 412 students of Can Tho University using Facebook)

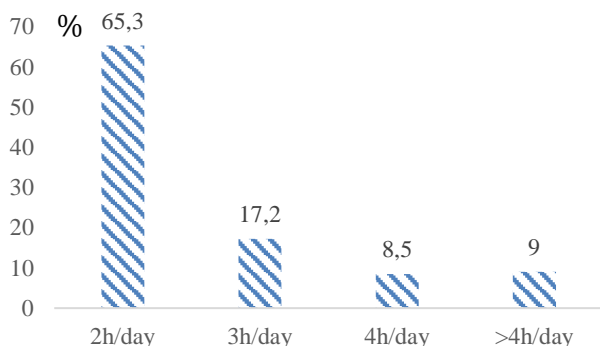
Also in the research, Likert scale 4-point is used to measure facebook usage frequency of students with 1 = rarely, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes and 4 = usually. The results show that students who use Facebook with high frequency daily make up the biggest proportion (48.8%); 41% of them use Facebook sometimes a day, and 3.6% rarely use. These figures mean that most of students used Facebook with high frequency and this would lead to less study time, especially time for self-study.

However, the fact is that Facebook is mostly used to relax, to exchange study materials and to update information of faculty's extra activities, so this social network does have its positive impacts.

According to surveys with representatives of class (faculty, university Youth Union Committees and members of Student Associations) most of class (faculty, university Youth Union Committees and Student Associations) use Facebook to post their news and activities. Therefore, students are required to sign up an account and check Facebook regularly to be updated.

#### 3.2. Time spent on Facebook of students

According to Figure 2, 65.3% of students use Facebook less than 2 hours a day; the number of students who use Facebook up to 3 hours per day makes up 17.2% and only 8.5% students spend about 4 hour a day for Facebook. These figures show that students do not waste too much time on Facebook; they use Facebook when having free time. And for most of the time, Facebook is used to talk to friends and to update relevant information.

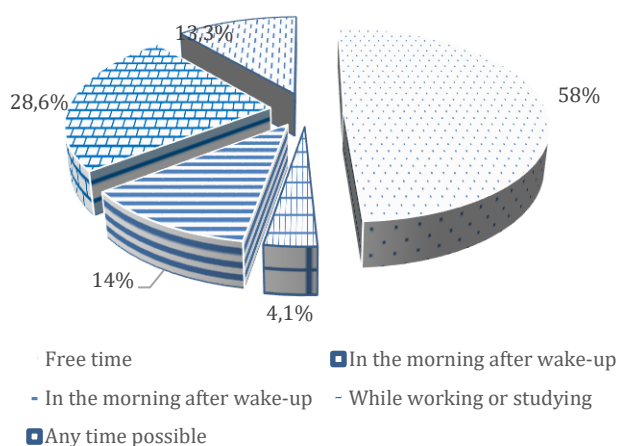


**Figure 2.** Time spent on Facebook of students (Source: Survey on 412 students of Can Tho University using Facebook)

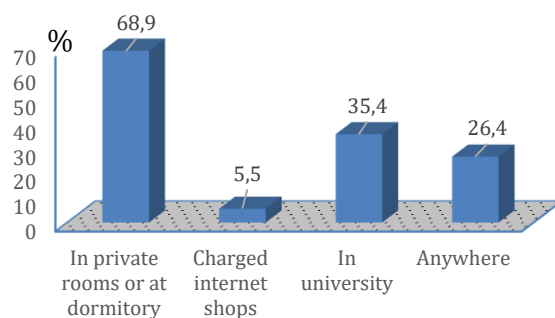
Still some of them spend too much time on Facebook, more than 4 hours a day at the expense of time for studying, both lecture time and self-study. Even worse, these students might gradually dip into 'virtual world' and stay disconnected to classmates and other usefull activities outside class organized by their class or faculty. These activites are useful and often help them improve soft skills.

#### 3.3. When and where students used Facebook

- *When to use Facebook:* As for Figure 3, most of students often use Facebook during free time, accounting for 58% while 28.6% among them still use Facebook while on duty or during study time, both class and self-study time. Using Facebook just to relax while studying would make students pay less attention to studying and then lead to poor study performance.



**Figure 3.** When to use Facebook of students (Source: Survey on 412 students of Can Tho University using Facebook)



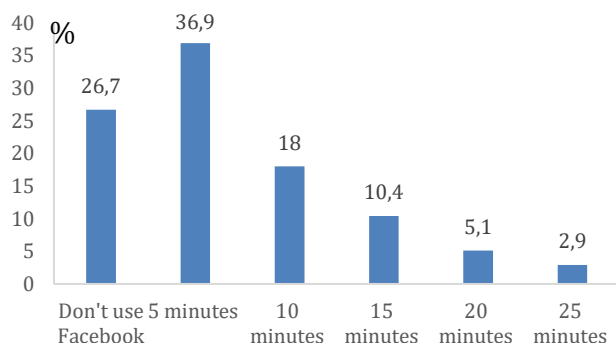
**Figure 4.** Location of Facebook used by students (Source: Survey on 412 students of Can Tho University using Facebook)

- *Where to use Facebook:* Fig. 4 shows that students use Facebook most of the time in their rooms (boarding houses or rooms in university dormitory) making up 68.9%. 35.4% of them use Facebook inside the university areas and 5.5% use at charged internet shops. It is a fact that, nowadays students can easily have access to Facebook everywhere via laptops, smart phones, tablets, accounting for 26.4%. Self-study time would be much affected for those who often use Facebook at home. Even worse, these students easily get addicted to Facebook and then neglect their study. However, on the other hand, unlimited access to Facebook would also help students have timely update on schedules of exams, group study or extra activities.

### 3.4. Using Facebook during class hours and its impacts

- Facts of using Facebook during class hours among students

Figure 5 shows that, only 26.7% of students do not use Facebook during class hours; 36.9% among them spend around 5 minutes for Facebook. The ratios of 10, 15 and 25 minutes are 18%, 10.4% and 2.9% respectively. In general, Facebook does not take much time of students during class hours, but more or less, it would distract their attention to studying while in class.



**Figure 5. Time spent on Facebook during class of students**  
(Source: Survey on 412 students of Can Tho University using Facebook)

- Facebook usage by subjects

It is also a fact that, time spent on Facebook of students depended on which subject class they were in. Studying result showed during easy subject class, students tended to use Facebook more than difficult ones, accounting for 28.2%. The ratio of students using Facebook during class of subjects failed in the first take of exam was 3.9%, the same as of subjects they chose to re-take to have better results. Surprisingly, it was as high as 46.6% of students uses Facebook during class regardless of the subject. (Note: failed in the first take of exam means students were given F then they have to take the subject again)

### 3.5. Facebook's impacts on study time and performance of students

- Impacts on time spent on study of students

Table 1 below shows that without Facebook students spend most of their time on study, as high as 82.1%. However, once they use Facebook, the ratio decreases to 56.6% only. It means that students tend to spend less time on study after they sign up a Facebook account. The ratios reflect the fact that students waste too much of their time on Facebook and other social networks just to relax at the expense of study.

**Table 1. Time for study of students with and without Facebook**

Time for self-study	With Facebook		Without Facebook	
	Students	Ratio	Students	Ratio
3-4 hours/day	338	82.1%	233	56.6%
1-2 hours/day	74	17.9%	179	43.4%
Total	412	100	412	100

(Source: Survey on 412 students of Can Tho University using Facebook)

However, these figures merely disclose Facebook's direct impacts on study time, especially time for self-study while they are at their rooms. Therefore, the study also analyzes how Facebook affect study indirectly and positively as a convenient tool to share information between classmates. The research has found out that more students join extra activities after they use Facebook. Before signing up for Facebook, only about 38.1% of them regularly participate in these activities. The ratio goes up to 44.9% after students use Facebook. It can be explained that by using Facebook, students would stay more connected to their friends, easily update relevant news and photos as well as be invited to these events more frequently.

- Facebook's impacts on students' study performance

By comparing students' scores before and after using Facebook we could see that actually the study results are not affected much after students have used Facebook. According to Table 2 below, 13.1% of students say that their study performances improve after they use Facebook while 26 among 412 surveyed students tell us their study results go down. However, the students explain that better or worse study results depend on many other factors apart from using Facebook only.

**Table 2. Comparison of study results before and after students using Facebook**

On study result	After using Facebook	
	Quantity	Ratio %
Stabilized	332	80.6
Improved	54	13.1
Down	26	6.3
Total	412	100

Source: Survey on 412 students of Can Tho University using Facebook

### 3.6. Facebook's positive impacts on study

The survey results among 412 students show that as high as 78.6% of students start using Facebook to search for learning materials which are shared by their classmates and lecturers. There are many different reasons why students use Facebook but the main reason is to support study. During in-depth group surveys with students within this study, we are told by most of them that Facebook is a good and easy way for them to look for learning materials shared not only by their classmates or their friends in the faculty or university but also by students from other universities. Therefore, by using Facebook, students could easily find learning materials they need and also exchange their learning tips with others. For better study results, students tend to set up groups to study together and in many of the cases, Facebook is a good place for online group discussions or to share or update time and locations of group study, accounting for 56.5% of students.

Group discussion via Facebook has both advantages and disadvantages. One of the disadvantages is that students could not discuss complicated study topics via Facebook. But on the other hand, online study group via Facebook helps save time and members could have timely updates. For the purposes of information sharing, members' opinions collection or duty assignment, using online

groups via Facebook is more convenient. Also, absent members could grasp all information about the discussion easily by reading through. Besides, Facebook is also a channel to share or update news on activities of the Youth Union and Students Associations to students (45.1%).

### 3.7. Suggestions to use Facebook effectively

Social network itself is not a bad thing as it depends on users and how they use social network. For students they should know how to take full advantages of social network, especially in study. Students should be fully aware of bad impacts of social network to avoid them. Besides, for each social network, there are different measures to avoid negative impacts.

Based on the surveys among students, the authors summarize four ways to reduce negative impacts of social network proposed by students themselves.

**Table 3.** Ways to reduce negative impacts of social network to study

Measures	Number of students who agree	Ratio (%)
Stopping using	7	1.5
Using when needed	177	37
Limiting time on social network	55	11.5
Applying suitable solutions	240	50.1

*Source: Survey on 412 students of Can Tho University using Facebook*

From Table 3, we could once again affirm that, students of Can Tho University fully understand negative impacts that social network might create; therefore, they know they have to apply suitable measures (50.1%) to avoid the bad impacts instead of stopping using social network (1.5% only).

Apart from the four above suggestions, there are opinions that students should only access Facebook page of their class or faculty to update relevant news (71.7%), to join clubs to exchange information and to develop soft skills (54.4%). Besides, surveyed students also suggest that each Faculty should have its own Facebook page to connect students and lecturers together so that students could have timely supports from lecturers in study and in private issues as well (41.5%). 38.2% of students agree not to join bad and black pages that could negatively affect their study.

- During discussion with students of the research group, they propose some ways to take the advantages of Facebook use among Can Tho University's students:

- ✓ Do not waste too much time on social network and

do not use it during class hours.

- ✓ Have careful thoughts of the purposes before signing up for a social network. Social network should be mainly used to share study materials and information.
- ✓ Remember that not all information posted on social network is true and positive.

Use Facebook to create study groups to discuss with classmates and study together.

## 4. Conclusions

The study has found that, Facebook does have its positive impacts as it is mostly used to look for learning materials shared by their lectures and friends (accounting for 78.6%). Also, 56.5% students join their private groups on Facebook to study together and 45.1% of them use Facebook to inform others of extra activities of their class and faculty. As Facebook is the main channel used by class and faculty leaders to post relevant information, by using Facebook, students could have timely updates. Then they have more chances to join social activities organized by the faculty, accounting for 70.6%.

However, negative impacts of Facebook are clear, especially on study performance of students. Up to 73.3% of students often use Facebook during lecture time with different frequencies. In addition, too much time-spent on Facebook would lead to less time on self-studying.

The study also puts forward some suggestions to help students use Facebook effectively, namely identifying their purposes of using Facebook before signing up and cutting down time for Facebook before exams.

**Acknowledgements:** Our special thanks would go to students, members of Youth Union Committees and Student Associations of different levels at Can Tho University for participating in our surveys. Also we would like to express our sincere thanks to our colleagues at Can Tho University for supporting us in this university-level study.

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*(The Board of Editors received the paper on 15/9/2017, its review was completed on 14/3/2018)*