

**THE IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES
USAGE ON INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE
STUDENTS' ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL LIVES**

BY
OREOLUWA AREMO

A dissertation prepared in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the Degree of Masters in Journalism
and
Media Communications

Faculty of Journalism & Media Communications

Griffith College Dublin

AUGUST, 2016

DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Media Communications, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

Signed:

Dated:

ABSTRACT

This dissertation aimed to investigate the implications of social network usage on the academic and personal lives of international students. A survey was conducted among 100 international students who attend a private college [Griffith College Dublin] in Ireland and interview questions were generated from the findings of the survey. The specific objectives of this study was to find out the impact social network sites have on international college students especially in their academic and personal lives; the positive and negative impacts of social networking on international college students and to find out what other purposes international students use social network sites for. Data collected found out that to keep in contact with family and friends both in their home country and in Ireland, international students use social network sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Majority of the participants reported spending at least 1 to 12 hours per day on social network sites and also a vast majority of the participants use social network sites 7 days in a week. From the data gathered, social network sites have helped international students improve their academic lives through the creation of class groups on some social network sites and their interactions with their lecturers on social network sites. The main findings suggest international students are sometimes able to discuss in-class lectures with their classmates on social network sites, they communicate with their family and friends frequently via social network sites and are able to express themselves in a great deal on social network sites than face to face conversations in Ireland. Finally, recommendations are made on how to improve the academic and personal lives of international students via social network sites and also suggestions for future research are also discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Section	Page
Declaration	2
Abstract	3
List of Charts	6 - 7
List of Tables	8
Acknowledgements	9
Chapter one: Introduction	10 - 13
1.1 Overview	10
1.2 Brief History of Social Networking	10
1.3 Purpose of Study	11 - 13
Chapter two: Literature Review	14 - 27
2.1 Overview	14
2.2 Theoretical Framework	14 - 16
2.3 Benefits of Internationalism in Higher Education	16 - 17
2.4 The General Use of Social Network Sites	17 - 21
2.5 The Positive and Negative Impact of Social Networking on Young People	21 - 23
2.6 The Impact of Social Network Sites on College Students' Academic Lives	23 - 25
2.7 The Impact of Social Network Sites on College Students' Personal Lives	25 - 27
Chapter Three: Methodology	28 - 32
3.1 Overview	28
3.2 Research Design	28 - 29
3.3 Methods of Data Collection	29 - 30
3.4 Participants	30
3.5 Population size	31
3.6 Administration of Research Instrument	31 - 32
3.7 Ethical Issues	32
3.8 Potential Challenges	32

Chapter Four: Results and Discussions	33 - 66
4.1 Overview	33
4.2 Quantitative Data Research and Analysis	33 - 64
4.3 Qualitative Data Research and Analysis	64 - 66
Chapter Five: Conclusion	67 - 69
5.1 Overview	67
5.2 Conclusion	67 - 69
5.3 Limitations and Recommendations	69
Bibliography	70 - 74
Appendices	75 - 85

LIST OF CHARTS

Figure 1 - Gender

Figure 2 - Age

Figure 3 - Which course are you studying?

Figure 4 - Nationality

Figure 5 - Do you know about social network sites like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat?

Figure 6 - Which of the following social network sites do you use most often in Dublin? (Please pick three)

Figure 7 - On average, how many days do you use social network sites in a week?

Figure 8 - On average, how much time do you spend daily on social network sites?

Figure 9 - Do you think you are addicted to social network sites?

Figure 10 - Do social network sites have a huge impact on your academic life?

Figure 11 - Are you able to communicate with your lecturers on social network sites?

Figure 12 - Are you on any social network sites group created by your classmates?

Figure 13 - If yes, has the group helped your academic life in anyway?

Figure 14 - Are you able to share and discuss in-class lectures with your class mates on social network sites?

Figure 15 - Do you get to find out if your results are out via any social network sites?

Figure 16 - Have social network sites helped any of your assignments or essays?

Figure 17 - Have social network sites improved your academic life in any other way?

Figure 18 - Do social network sites have a huge impact on your personal life?

Figure 19 - Are you able to express yourself better on social networks than face to face conversations in Dublin?

Figure 20 - Do you get to communicate with your family and friends back home on social network sites?

Figure 21- How often is the communication with your family and friends back home on social network sites?

Figure 22 - Do you communicate with people from your country who live in Dublin on social network sites?

Figure 23 - Do you communicate with people from other countries in Dublin on social network sites?

Figure 24 - Does social networking improve your interpersonal relationship with Irish students?

Figure 25 - Does social networking improve your interpersonal relationship with students from your home country?

Figure 26 - Have you ever made friends with Irish people on social network sites?

Figure 27 - If yes, do you get to meet up with them in real life?

Figure 28 - Have you ever made friends with people from your home country on social network sites?

Figure 29 - If yes, do you get to get to meet up with them in real life?

Figure 30 - Have social network sites helped your social life in Dublin?

Figure 31 - Provision of basis for social interaction

Figure 32 - Educational impact

Figure 33 - Staying connected to family and friends in Ireland

Figure 34 - Staying connected to family and friends in your home country

Figure 35 - Improves communication skills

Figure 36 - Making of new friends in Ireland

Figure 37 - Job opportunities

Figure 38 - Learning more about someone's life story by just checking their page

Figure 39 - Provision of past and current news in Ireland

Figure 40 - Provision of past and current news in your home country

Figure 41 – Cyberbullying

Figure 42 - Exposure to inappropriate content

Figure 43 - Reduced time and attention to college work

Figure 44 - Reduced time for play and exercise

Figure 45 - Ruining of any friendship or relationship of yours

Figure 46 - Wasting of time and resources

Figure 47 - Social isolation

Figure 48 - Online depression

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 – Other ways social network sites have helped international college students' academic life

Table 2 – Other ways social network sites have helped international college students' personal life

Table 3 – Other positive impacts of social network sites

Table 4 – Other negative impacts of social network sites

Table 5 – Other purposes for using social network sites

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to my Supervisor, Barry Finnegan for his expertise, guidance and encouragement throughout this project and all the lecturers for the richness in their teaching.

To my mother, thank you for your blessings, care, love, prayers and encouragements; this dissertation is for you.

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1-Overview

In Ireland today, higher education is provided by 7 Universities, 14 Institutions of Technology and 7 College of Education. In addition to this, there are other third level institutions that provide specialist education in various fields of study, according to (Maria, 2012). It has also been reported by the Strategy Group (2011) that Ireland's higher education system has played a major role in the development of Irish society and the economy.

The Irish higher education system not only admits students living in Ireland or Irish students, but also admit students from all over the world; it has a strong international presence that has attracted a large number of international students over the years (Strategy Group, 2011). As reported by Project Atlas Ireland (2016), the total number of international student enrolment in 2015 was 27,778 with USA ranked as the highest country enrolment followed by China and France.

According to Altbach and Knight, (2007):

"the international activities of universities dramatically expanded in volume, scope, and complexity during the past two decades. These activities range from traditional study-abroad programs, allowing students to learn about other cultures, to providing access to higher education in countries where local institutions cannot meet the demand" (p. 290).

This dissertation compares international students in Ireland and social network site usage. The purpose is to investigate the implications of social network sites on international students' academic and personal lives in a foreign country and to analyse other purposes the use social network sites for.

1.2- Brief History of Social Networking

Donelan et al (2009, p. 265) state that the first social network site was launched in 1997. The social network site was SixDegrees.com, it allowed users to create profiles, list their friends and in 1998, it also created a content were users could surf the friend's list. From 2003 onward, many new social network sites were launched, and this prompted social analyst Clay Shirky (2003) to originate the term YASNS (Yet Another Social Networking Service).

Over the years, most of the newly originated social network sites took the form of profile-centric sites, trying to make a replica of the early success of Friendster (an early social network site) or target specific demographics that will have interest in the sites (Donelan, Kear, and Ramage, 2009,

p. 266). As the social media community and user-generated content grew, networking sites focused on media sharing and it became a feature on social network sites. Examples include Last.FM (music listening habits), YouTube (video sharing), and Flickr (photo sharing).

Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 211) write that social network sites are web-based services that allow individuals to:

1. Construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system.
2. Articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection.
3. View and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

In addition to this, Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 211) identify social networking uniqueness to other forms of the media because not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks.

Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 211) further explained that after joining a social network, individuals are meant to identify and interact with people they have a common goal as regards to joining the social network site. This is useful for the public sphere, as it enables people with common interest discuss the happenings in their intimate environment and all over the world.

1.3-Purpose of Research

The Irish Council of International Students (1994) defines an international student as ‘one whose normal place of residence is outside the island of Ireland but who us a resident in Ireland for the purpose of study over a shorter or longer period.’ In April 2015, it was reported that there has been a 25% increase in international students studying in Ireland since 2012 (Ireland, 2015), this is however a proof that the number of international students in Ireland is increasing.

International students, not only have to deal with the trouble associated with being college students in a foreign country, but they also have to learn to adapt to a different culture – which may include adjusting to the food, weather, living expenses and dealing with cultural shock. Besides this, they have to stay in contact with family and friends back home and also not neglect the new faces in the foreign country they are in; they have to stay in contact with family and friends back home and at the same time not neglect the new faces they come in contact with in their new found home.

In addition to the above challenges, Yakunina, Weigold, Hercegovac, and Elsayed (2013) state that “international students also experience homesickness, interpersonal isolation, and difficulty reaching out to American peers, negotiating conflicting cultural values, and coping with racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination”.

There are other academic studies [Rahman (2014), Amanda et al. (2010), Johnson et al. (2015), S and H (2014)] about social networking and its impact on young people and college students, however, further studies on the effects of social network sites can help educator who work with international students understand how social network sites influence their daily lives as a student in a foreign country and their interactions with individuals in the said country.

An academic study conducted by Rahman (2014), attempted to explain why internationally college students use social network sites, stated that "The frequency of social network sites usage and behaviour of international students, who are away from their home countries are different from the general youth of the host country".

While another research paper by Chalawadi and Dinesh (2016) revealed that the internet and social network sites can affect student's academic performance and its addiction can be positive and negative. Both studies emphasize that social network sites can have both positive and negative impacts on the lives of international college students

This dissertation is significant to the present situation of young people using social network sites to communicate with people around them and far away from them. It will also identify the positive and negative impacts social network sites have on their personal and academic lives. Emerging studies find that social network sites have been widely embraced and consumed by young people, this embrace has led to the addiction of social networks (boyd, 2014, p.57).

It is also significant because:

1. It will inform the Irish government about the state of mind of International students possess in their country and how they communicate with people within and outside the country using social network sites.
2. Colleges in Ireland will learn the importance of relating with international students using social network sites.
3. Enrolment of International students in Ireland is on the rise, as it was reported that a 25% increase in international students studying in Ireland occurred since 2012 (Ireland, 2015), this however is proof that the number of international students in Ireland is increasing.
4. Also, social networking is a growing thread and is constantly being studied. This dissertation falls into the category of studies showing the impact of social networking.
5. It could be published academically and used by future researchers who want to study international students and their social network sites usage.

Other studies in the past aimed to explain the use of internet and motives on college students, few studies have examined the implications of social network sites on the personal and academic lives of International students and some will be analysed in the second chapter of this dissertation.

Hence, the reason for focusing on International students in Ireland and not all college students in general.

The second chapter will deal with the literature surrounding the impacts – both positive and negative – of social networking sites on college students, the general uses of social network sites and two theoretical frameworks relating to this dissertation will be reviewed.

In the third chapter, I will discuss the methodology that I plan to utilize in this dissertation. I will go through every step of my planned research and explain why I think that is the right research to undertake.

I will disclose the results of this study in the fourth chapter, by analysing the quantitative data analysis and the qualitative data analysis.

The final chapter will be a conclusion of the study, practical implications, limitations and future research will be discussed.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

2.1-Overview

In this chapter, applicable literature that is related to the benefits of internationalisation in higher education, the use of social network sites, the positive and negative impact of social networking on young people and the impact of social network sites on the academic and personal lives of college students' will be reviewed.

2.2-Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the following theories:

1. Social learning theory
2. New media theory

The widely referenced model of mass effect, especially in relation to young people, is Bandura's (1986) social learning (or observational learning) theory. The basic idea is that young people cannot learn all or even much of what is needed to guide the development and behaviour from direct personal observation and experience alone. Young people have to learn much from indirect sources, including mass media.

Bandura's model posits four basic processes of social learning that occur in sequence; attention, retention, production and motivation. Attention is directed at social media/network content of potential relevance to young people's lives and personal needs and interests. Young people retain what they have learnt and add it to the stock of prior knowledge.

This theory has a general application to socializing effects of media and the adoption of various models of action. It applies to various everyday matters such as clothing, appearance, style, eating and drinking, modes of interaction and personal consumption (Bandura, 1986, p, 491).

According to this model, mass media is rarely the only source of social learning and their influence depends on other sources such as parents, friends, and teachers. There are strong collective influences on social learning. Even so, social learning theory holds that media can have direct effect on young people and their impact do not have to be mediated by personal influence.

Bryant et al. (2014) write that there are three major factors that affect the social learning theory and the factor that is relevant to this dissertation is the social network structure. This factor posits that personal relationships do not only link people in the society because "acquaintanceships

overlap different network clusters, many people become linked to each other indirectly by interconnected ties.” (Bryant et al., 2014, p. 117).

On these social network sites, people tend to share information, get feedback to the information that was shared, gain more understanding of other people’s views and influence other people’s thinking. Bryant et al. (2014) also added that there is no social network in a community that serves all purposes. “Different innovations engage different networks” (p. 118).

To prove this, Konstantinidis (2014) investigated the link between learning and the causal use of social network sites by young people and found out that Facebook is being used by the research study participants on a daily basis; the participants also reported that “the several distinctive occurrences of learning emerge through casual Facebook use” and the research finally concluded that everyday Facebook use may help in improving multiple types of learning.

Over the years, the “media” the social learning theory Bandura (1986) posits have expanded and led to what is identified as the “new media”. Editors of *The handbook of New Media* (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2002) points out the difficulties of explaining what the ‘new media’ consist of. However, they choose to define them as:

“A composite way, linking information communication technologies (ICT) with their associated social contexts, bringing together three elements: 1. Technological artifacts and devices; 2. Activities, practices and uses; and 3. Social arrangements and organizations that form around the devices and practices.” (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2002, p. 24).

McQuail (2000, p. 127) state the four main categories of ‘new media’ which are similar in some ways and are only differentiated by the type of content, use and context. They are:

1. **Interpersonal communication media:** These include the telephone that is currently widely used by individuals and the e-mail that is primarily used for work, but is now more personal.
2. **Interactive play media:** These are mostly computer based and video games. However, it involves communication with the use of similar technology and may be considered as “functional alternatives” to certain uses of media.
3. **Information search media:** These involve the use of the Internet to search for data sources and other educational materials. McQuail, however, identifies that the telephone is also a channel for recovering information are they bow radio-data services and broadcast teletext.
4. **The collective participatory media** includes the use of the Internet for exchanging and sharing ideas, experiences, information and developing active relationships. This is “computer-mediated”.

With the development of the Internet, various kinds of communities have been created for individuals with similar interest. Berger (2012) states that individuals now spend many hours online everyday creating conversations with other members of the online communities they belong in. President (2016) reports that the daily usage of social media by global internet users amounted to 106.2 minutes per day in 2015 and it was 103.2 minutes in 2014.

Statista (2016) - “a leading statistics company on the Internet that provides its users an innovation and intuitive tool for researching quantitative data statistics and related information” - also reports that the top three ranked social network sites as of April 2016 are Facebook, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. Facebook currently has 1 billion registered accounts and currently stands at 1.59 billion active users (Statista, 2016)

2.3-Benefits of Internationalisation in Higher Education

Researchers have discovered the importance and benefits of international students to the host country and the interaction between these international students and domestic students. According to Maiworm and Teichler (1996, p. 5) most experts have agreed that the “international competences are defined widely in an operational manner”. These competences are enhanced by knowledge gained in studying abroad for international students and the experiences that come with it – during and after study - will become vital.

Pandit (2007) also identifies that governments in some countries have come with different strategies for recruiting international students because they have become a “hot global commodity”. These students provide a large number of benefits not only to their home countries, but also to the host countries and also their individual lives.

For example, the former British prime minister, Tony Blair announced in 2006 that he was putting in place “package of incentives” to make Britain an even more attractive destination for international students; also, in Australia, a government agency – Australian Education International - works with universities to attract international students and to ensure that Australia is known as a “regional and world leader in education and a partner of choice for international students” Pandit (2007).

For international students, studying abroad makes them believe that their experiences in a foreign land give them a chance to appreciate other cultural identities, other students’ cultural values and beliefs during their graduate studies. During the years of studying, they create friendships and have personal interactions like doing class projects together and establishing exchange programs after they complete their graduate studies (Bista and Foster, 2016).

The contact between international and domestic students in a country is seen as a highly important factor in achieving the aforementioned aims of internalization, as studies have shown that diversity can lead to a better group performance and promote openness in individuals

(Summers and Volet, 2008, p. 347). Additionally, “multicultural work groups often display superior task performance to more homogenous groups,” (p. 358).

Besides this, Strategy Group (2011, p. 81) write that international students give “an international flavour” to Irish campuses and creates a learning environment in which Irish students benefit from the exposure to different cultures, an improved curriculum that is the product of the interaction between the Irish academics and international peers.

The study of Zerman (2014) that focused on the impacts of study abroad on international students discovers that after the study abroad programs majority of the participants became “more open-minded and tolerant” and this enables them to “accommodate people from diverse backgrounds” and for these reasons international students believe that institutions should create more international opportunities to “exchange cultures and experience different education and learning styles.”

According to Strategy Group (2011, p. 81), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) also recognises many benefits of internationalisation in higher education institutions. They include: the attraction of new talents (this may include the attraction of upcoming fashion designers, photographers in order county to Ireland to develop their skills and also impact the government), facilitation of research cooperation, the diversification of funding streams and broadening of staff experience.

There are a few studies that give detailed information in regards to international students’ and staff experience. Sovic and Blythman (2012) identify that there has been previous research study on home students’ perceptions of international students in a university in Dublin, and another research study explores the issue of international students when she did a research study on diversity.

Finally, strategy Group (2011, p. 81) reports that International education is seen as an investment in Ireland’s global relationships today, as Ireland’s economy depends on “innovation-driven industry and exports”; its vital role is to promote Ireland’s international profile, strengthening ties with Ireland’s diaspora and building up another worldwide system of impact among Irish-taught graduated class who will go about as supporters and operators of Irish interests in parts of the world.

2.4-The General Use of Social Network Sites

The early developers had long embraced internet technologies in relation to socializing with others, but for the mainstream culture, participating in the online communities was often seen as “an esoteric practice of geeks and other social outcasts” (Boyd, 2014, p.7). However, by the mid-

2000s, with the mainstreaming of internet access and the rise of social media, connecting online became a desegregated part of daily life for many people.

This is where the social form of the new media comes in. Lister et al. (2008, 140) write that we can view the new media as "a product of political, economic and social product that are of technological endeavour." The media generally does not influence the way individuals see and experience the world they live in, but are also products of this same world.

In the opinion of McQuail (2010, p, 79), the following are set of functions of the media in the communication of the society:

Information

1. Facilitating innovation, adaptation and progress.
2. Providing information about events and conditions in the society and the world.

Correlation

1. Explaining, interpreting and commenting on the meaning of events and information.
2. Socializing.
3. Co-ordinating separate activities.

Entertainment

1. Providing amusement, diversion and the means of relaxation.
2. Reducing social tension.

These are the general reasons why people in the society use the media. Waters and Lester (2010, p.2) defines social media as an "umbrella" that covers a group of "web-based software applications, the content generated by users of those applications and the services that make both accessible to just about anyone in a web browser." They further explain (p.2) that social media includes social networking (Facebook, Myspace), wikis (webpages for collaborations), blogs (personal online diaries), social bookmarking (Delicious, Digg), online reviews (Yelp, Epinions).

These scholars, Waters and Lester (2010, p.40) argues that everyone know what social network is and the uses of social network sites. According to them, as a general rule, social network is our friends, family, neighbours, acquaintances and "it's the fabric of our community and the common threads that connect us to the people in it." Today, however, when one hears "social network", one will think of the new media of online communities like Facebook.

Generally, young people are passionate about finding their rightful place in the society. Boyd (2014) distinctly identifies that what is different as a result of social network is that young people's

everlasting desire for social connection and autonomy in being expressed in networked publics. These networked publics, as stated by Boyd (2014, p, 65) are publics that are restructured by networked technologies.

Further explaining that the networked publics are publics both in the sense of an imagined community and both are built on and through social media and also on other emergent technologies such as: 3D displays, generation IV reactor, computer-generated imagery and so on. Boyd (2014) write that these networked publics online creates new opportunities and challenges. They are:

"Persistence, that deals with the longevity of online participants and content; visibility, the potential audience who can bear witness; spreadability; the ease with which content can be shared; and searchability which is the ability to find content" (Boyd, 2014, p.11).

Persistence enables individuals to share contents through social media, these contents allow interactions to take place over time. An example of this is when a message is sent via social network sites and isn't read immediately; the message remains there until it is read or deleted by the receiver. "Persistence means conversations conducted through social media are far from ephemeral (lasting for a very short time); they endure." (Boyd, 2014, p.11).

Sharing and accessing of contents from longer distances increases the *visibility* of any message that is shared on social network sites. Whatever information that is put up online using social network sites makes it widely accessible by anyone who uses the internet because "most systems are designed such that sharing with broader or more public audiences is the default" (Boyd, 2014, p.11-12).

Boyd (2014) is of the opinion that most social network sites are created to spread information whether through links, *reposting/reblogging or favouriting* tools that help to repost texts or images or just something as easy as coping and pasting contents from one social network sites to another. Thus, "much of what people post online is easily *spreadable* with the click of a few keystrokes" (Boyd, 2014, p. 11).

Waters and Lester (2010, p. 43 – 45) write that the things that we do on social network sites are almost the same thing that we do offline – staying connected to friends and family, professional networking, organizing, promoting, socializing – but this time with a "tech assist". This is in fact true, because way before the birth of social network sites, individuals in the society communication one way or another nevertheless. With this "tech assist" communicating is just made easier Waters and Lester (2010, p. 43 – 45) explains.

In 2015, PewResearchCenter examined the use of technology and friendship creation by teens. This research discovered that 57% of teens have met a new friend online; online gameplay and

social media are common places to meet new friends; 29% of the teens also identified that they have made more than 5 new friends online and only 20% of them have seen the online friend in person.

According to Practical Participation Offer research (2014), young people are generally using social network sites for: "creating new contacts with friends of their friends, or with people with similar interest; to keep in touch with friends and family; getting information and for informal learning; Involving in informal groups, and formal youth engagement opportunities; exploring identity, sharing content and engaging in self-expression; hanging out and consuming content including commercial and user-generated content."

In attempt to know why college students use online social networks, Johnson, Prabha, and Judith (2015) surveyed undergraduate students from selected colleges of Udupi District and the findings show that the main reasons why the college use social network sites are to stay in contact with their friends, to while away time and to maintain relationships with said friends.

Social reasons were the most important motives for using social network sites for the college students, Johnson, Prabha, and Judith (2015) reports. 61% of the college students use it because their friends have accounts too, 48% of the college students use it to keep in touch with family and friends, 81% of the college students use it to keep in touch with their friends that they don't see often and 35% use social network sites to make plans with friends they hung out with often.

Indeed, for many young people, social media is not only a tool; it is said to be a social lifeline that enables them stay connected to people they care about or love but cannot otherwise interact or have a daily conversation with in person (Boyd, 2014). Boyd emphasizes that without the various sites and services used by young people, many of them believe that their social life would significantly shrink or die if there were no social network sites.

This is proof that social media or social network sites have a huge impact on the lives of young people. Social media may seem like a peculiar place for young people to assemble, but for many young people according to Boyd (2014, p. 67), "hanging out on Facebook and Twitter is their only opportunity to gather *en masse* with friends, acquaintances, classmates, and other young people." This means that social networking sites are an easy platform for young youths to have conversations with the people in their lives.

In his academic research, Rahman (2014) discovers that Chinese international students use a popular social site in China called 'QQ' is used exclusively to keep in touch with their family and friends back home and the use of social network sites is more popular among young adults studying in a foreign country.

Finally, social network sites are used to get information / news about current and past affairs. In an attempt to find out the news media in the 21st century via Twitter, Auverset (2014) found out

that college students follow Twitter users that are professional journalists working for news organization or freelance journalists to get information about current and pass news.

2.5-The Positive and Negative Impact of Social Networking on Young People

Ten years ago, young people may have only been in touch with friends and peer-groups when hanging out at school, or meeting up in town. Now, they can keep in touch through instant messaging, social networks, online games and many other tools. About 76% of young people are growing up in a continuously connected society and are among the most productive users of social network sites (SNS), according to PEWResearch Center (2014).

Social network sites are popular for providing a platform for chatting, sharing videos, pictures and so on, but also for discussing social issues. Emerging studies by PEWResearch Center's Internet Project January Omnibus Survey (2014) found that as of January 2014, youth people between the age of 18 and 29 (76%) spend a significant portion of their daily life interacting through social networks.

Interacting through social network sites on a daily basis has led to obsession and addiction to it. In her book *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*, Boyd (2014, p. 77) writes that in 2009, a *New York Times* article, "To Deal with Obsession, Some Defriend Facebook," was published where Psychologist Kimberly Young, director of the centre for Internet, writes about addiction and social network sites.

"Addiction Recovery, describes dozens of young people she's met who tried to quit Facebook and failed woefully." 'It's just like any other addiction,' A young person had told the Psychologist. "It's hard to wean yourself" (Boyd, 2014, p. 77).

Although, young people frequently use the word 'addiction' in reference to their activities done online, media coverages [a the guardian's article 'How I quit my smartphone addiction and really started living' and Irish Times article '*Report sheds light on digital addiction among Irish children*'] young people's use of social network sites amplifies the notion that the current generation is uncontrollably hooked and addicted on new technologies and this has led some to the inability of them to fully control their lives (Boyd, 2014).

In 2016, a study that surveyed almost 1,000 students in South Korea discovered that children between the age of 11 and 12 have the tendency to get addicted to smartphones as they spend about 5.4 hours daily on them; these children are also unable to manage smartphone usage as they don't have self-control and those who have greater stress (in school or in their homes) are more likely to be addicted to new technologies like smartphones and games (Jeong et al., 2016).

Another research study conducted by Johnson, Prabha, and Judith (2015) also attempted to know why college students use online social network sites in terms of "duration and dependency". The study found out that most college students log on to social network sites for more than 30 minutes a day and many of them are fully dependent (in terms of having access to many friends at the same time, maintaining relationships with the friends and also socializing with other people) on these sites and has led to its addition.

Addiction to social network sites isn't the only the negative impact of social network sites. Ugur and Sinem, (2016) examines the connection between shame, internet addiction and social network sites usage on college. The study found out that shy individuals tend to spend more time on Facebook because of their inability to make real friends hence leading to addiction. The study also discovers that social appearance anxiety, low self-esteem, loneliness and depression can lead to the addiction of the internet and social network sites.

According to a focus group interview done by Faruk (2015) in his attempt to find out the positive and negative impact of using social network sites, prospective teachers were asked how the use of social network site has negative impact on students. Some negative impacts included: "wasting of time, distraction, cyberbullying, remaining under the thoughts of others, addiction, writing mistakes, becoming asocial, unreliable, fake characters, lack of privacy and misunderstanding of an idea by the opponent".

Wasting of time: The study discovers that students use social network sites during their leisure time. Although, they log in with the mind set of spending a short time catching up with friends and friends and in the end they "unwittingly spend too much time there" which leads to time wastage.

Distraction: It was concluded that for students who use social network sites, they are exposed to "various distracting stimuli which are pop-ups, statements, messages or announcements sent by others" during their study time of when they are in the middle of doing something important.

Remaining under the thoughts of others: The attempt to share their ideas on social network sites with other people might lead to being influenced by the thoughts of some users of these sites. The tenth focus group said that "social network sites can be harmful to individuals whose ideas and thoughts are insufficiently developed."

Writing mistakes: Chatting and texting on social network sites disturb the language people use in their daily life. For example, in a school environment, abbreviations are not acceptable and constant chatting and usage of social network sites might lead to the use of abbreviations in essays and examination papers.

Fake characters: Social network sites make individuals try to act like the people they want to be instead of how they behave in real life. "This causes individuals to do the things that they are

averse to do and don't do in their daily lives on social networks environments." Faruk (2015) writes.

Misunderstanding of an idea by the opponent: The research finds that communication via text messages on social network sites often lead to misunderstandings. Faruk (2015) write that one cannot express his or her feelings in a chat environment. "A message that needs to be serious may be interpreted as trivial by the other party and vice versa."

Donelan at el. (2009, p. 273) also discovers that privacy is another issue surrounding the use of social network sites. Researchers have investigated the likely threats to privacy associated with social networking sites; personal information can be discovered from social network sites easily. In Faruk (2015) focus group discussion, the first focus group stated: "People share every moment of their life on Facebook on Twitter if anyone wants privacy." And the second group stated: "I think there is no privacy on social network sites. I do not like that everyone uploads pictures and share thoughts about everything."

In addition to this, Gross and Acquisiti (2005) studied 4,000 Carnegie Mellon University Facebook profiles and discovered that these likely threats relating to privacy online was observable in the personal information that was included on the sites by students. The information had the 'potential ability to reconstruct users' social security numbers using information found in profiles, such as hometown and date of birth (Donelan, Kear, and Ramage, 2009, p. 273).

Nevertheless, social network sites have its benefits. Boyd (2014, p. 11) states that social network sites allow many tasks that were sometimes not possible for many young people, like making new friends, staying connected to old friends and family members, exchanging ideas and sharing pictures. 'Participation in social media offers young people deeper benefits that extend into view of community, self, and the world'

2.6-The Impact of Social Network Sites on college students' Academic Lives

For international college students, the main reason why they are in a foreign land is to receive sound education. Palfrey and Gasser (2010, p. 239) write that learning has undergone a transformation over the years; the internet is changing the way college students "gather and process information in all aspects of their lives". When a college student says "research" it is more likely to mean "google search" than a visit to the library and will rather ask an online friend for help than a reference librarian. Also, instead of buying the hard copy of a newspaper, they will get the news and other information needed online.

How do social network sites help college students? The focus group done by Faruk (2015) found out some of the positive impacts of social network sites on students' academic lives. They include:

"announcements, communications, discussion, motivation, resources, enabling restudying, self-evaluation and easy to reach."

Announcements: Faruk (2015) research study concluded that social network sites are generally used for announcements. The eight focus group identified that exam results are announced on social network sites and detailed information is provided.

Communications: Many young use social network sites as a communication tool. "Students prefer social network sites to communicate instead of calling people or sending them emails" Faruk (2015) write. The fifth focus group added: "For example, our class has 95 students and we don't know many of them. However, if we use Facebook, we can add them as friends, and then we can talk to them after a while. We can share our ideas relating to classes there more comfortably."

Motivation: The research study also concluded that people are happy when things about them are shared on social network sites; the sharing of their social work and motivation on social network sites makes students do better.

Resources: Social networking sites are rich in terms of contents Faruk (2015) further writes. The possibility of finding an information searched on social network sites is high; the seventh focus group added that: "Sometimes I don't know where my class notes are; for example, I'm looking for the notes of algebra for summer school; I can find the algebra on social network sites easily."

Enabling restudying: Finally, school materials shared on social network sites remain there forever except the material is deleted; social network sites allows students to access materials that have been uploaded all for a long period of time.

In another research study which aimed at finding the impacts of social networking sites on college students, S and H (2014) found out that 85% of college students were able to access a vast quality of materials related to the curriculum on social network sites, social network sites improved 73% of the college students' academic experience in general, while 92% of the college student use social network sites to clarify their homework and assignments.

The study also discovered that 72% of college students use social network sites to communicate with their professors, it was used by 83% of college students in terms of sharing video tutorials and finally 92% used social networking sites to find information and shared feedback with other students (S and H, 2014).

One may begin to wonder if the library is still useful in college students' academic lives. Palfrey and Gasser (2010, p. 253) clarifies this by stating that "the role of libraries is increasing, not decreasing. The job may take on different contours, but its importance is only rising as digital natives grow up saturated in the information environment of the digital age." (Palfrey and Gasser, 2010).

Notwithstanding, there were the negative impacts of the usage of social network sites on these college students. Social network sites distract 69% of students from their school work, 69% had an issue with privacy, 65% of students found it to be time-consuming and 81% of students sometimes ignore other responsibilities because of social networking S and H (2014) discovers

2.7-The Impact of Social Network Sites on college students' Personal Lives

Apart from impacting the academic lives of college students, social network sites also have a huge impact on the personal lives of students, previous studies have discovered. As stated by Boyd (2014) above, there is a relationship between identity and social networks - where individuals in a network have common singular, multiple, or overlapping identities. Thurlow et al. (2004, p.96) posits that identity is the most transparent thing in the world; identity is simply addressing the simple question 'who am I?' and "to answer this question young people consider 1. what they think about who they are, and 2. What stories they tell people about themselves."

By doing this, young people get to understand their '*personality identity*'. This, however, isn't all that matters in regards to young people thoughts about themselves, Thurlow et al. (2004, p.96) adds that what other people think about them also matters and this is called the '*social identity*' which is based on the questions 3. What others think about who they are, and 4. the stories they tell about them [either to their faces or to other people].

David Holmes make an interesting observation about "identity nowadays". In the past, people lived in communities that were strictly defined by "ethnic, religious, national and class lines", identity back then didn't seem like a big deal as people "took their identity for granted". However, nowadays young people have increasingly turned to the media to construct their identity (Thurlow et al., 2004, p.98).

International college students' identification with the foreign land they are in online, a research study by Catherine et al. (2014) discovers that international college students tend to socialize or identify with a large number of other international students who are not from their home country via social network sites. This is sometimes due to the desire to interact with other cultures, as they sometimes find it difficult to connect with students for their own countries.

College students typically believe that social network sites are vital in their lives. Greenhow and Robelia (2009, p. 69) write that in the early years of social networking, MySpace was logged in daily by students to engage in four main activities: updating their profile, interacting with changes in the society, monitoring the updates of their friend's pages and keeping contact with friends and family.

Social network sites allow international students to connect with a larger community in Australia. Saw et al. (2013) also discovers in a research study. The college students who responded to the survey identified that social network sites enable them “to keep in touch with friends overseas”, “to get information from their friends” and they use most social network sites like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Foursquare and Google plus+ because “most people around them uses it and it allows them to get in touch with more people.”

Generally, young people move between different social environments [their interaction with unrelated group of people, with people that they have common interests with, their classmates] “they manoeuvre between different contexts that they have collectively built and socially constructed” (Boyd, 2014, p.41)

This sense of context is shaped by time, setting and audience, however, is not cleanly defined. Social context is not new to the young people, but technology (which includes the creation of social networking sites) has made it easy for young people to move around the different social setting and creates “the impression that they are present in multiple places simultaneously” (Boyd, 2014, p.7)

Rahman (2014) further discovers in his research study that 94% international students use social network sites to connect with friends, 92% to connect with family and 90% to find old friends and the most important reason for using social network sites is to keep in touch with family and friends at home. In addition to this – for entertainment – 90% of them are chatting with friends via social network sites (as some of the international students tend to have no friends to have face to face conversation with), 86% uses it to watch videos and 86% to listen to music.

Some social network sites like Pandora enables its users to import their Facebook profiles to the site and share their music with their friend; LastFM is also an “important social networking elements” that has a large library to store music, videos and images, it also allows it users to connect with people with similar tastes (Harris, 2015). YouTube is another popular social network sites that international college students use to listen and watch videos Rahman (2014) discovers.

In light of the above literature review, the following research questions are proposed and will guide the data collection and analysis for this project.

The data collection and analysis is guided by the following research questions.

Research Question 1: What impact do social network sites have on international college students' academic life?

Research Question 2: What impact do social network sites have on international college students' personal life?

Research Question 3: What are the positive and negative impacts of social networking on international college students?

Research Question 4: What other purposes are international students using social network sites for?

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1-Overview

In view of what was discussed in chapter two, this chapter discusses in detail the processes the researcher went through to conduct the research, gather the data and in finding results to the implications of social network sites on international students' personal and academic lives. Seven processes will be discussed in this chapter.

3.2-Research Design

According to Kumar (2008), research design is a plan or a blue print that specifies how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analysed; it is a written plan for a study. It "embraces methodologies that are theoretically framed by critical or interpretivist social science paradigms that emphasize interpretation over measurement" Gunter (1999, p.23).

A mixed method approach was used to conduct this research in order not to limit the research. I used the survey research using questionnaires and personal interviews; questions asked during the interviews were the key findings from the questionnaires. The quantitative research according to Learning (2009) is more objective, statistics can be used to generalise findings and it is a representative of the population that is needed for a study.

Surveying is defined by Berger (2000, p.187) as a research method that is used to get information about a certain group of people that represent a larger group of people that is of interest to a research study. Wiseman and Aron (1972, p.37) further defines surveying as: "A method for collecting and analysing social data via highly structured and often very detailed interviews or questionnaire in order to obtain information from large numbers of respondents presumed to be representative of a specific population."

The questionnaire is highly relevant to this dissertation because Berger (2000, p.188) states that this type of survey is used to get information about a demographic factor such as age [Young people; 18 – 26], gender [Male and female], occupation [International college students] and to relate the information gotten to behaviours [usage of social network sites] and values [the impact social network sites has on their personal and academic lives].

Also, Hansen et al sees surveying as a method to collect data about recent opinions, information and this makes "them a useful method for finding out about individual opinions towards a whole range of topics and issues (1998, p. 225).

While Silverman is of the opinion that one of the main advantages of qualitative research is its capacity to analyse events, trends and was useful for this dissertation. Silverman describes this advantage as one of the main strengths of qualitative research because "it can use naturally

occurring data to find the sequences (how) in which participant's meaning (what) are deployed and thereby establish the character of some phenomenon" (Silverman, 2006, p.44).

The survey method through the use of questionnaire was chosen because according to Berger (2000, p.188):

1. Surveys are inexpensive.
2. Surveys can obtain current information.
3. Surveys help with obtaining a great deal of information at the same time.
4. Surveys provide quantitative and numeric data.

While the personal interview was chosen because according to Dominick and Wimmer (2002, p.182)

1. It has the most flexible means of obtaining information.
2. Face to face interviews easily leads to questioning in greater depth and details.
3. Some information can be observed by the researcher during the interview.
4. It is harder for the respondents to terminate the interview before the questions are being asked.

By using a mixed method approach, this dissertation is of the advantages of having both the qualitative and qualitative techniques with the aim of achieving both substance and conclusion to work. There are many reasons why a mixed method approach is suitable for this dissertation. "Mixed methods assists the total understanding of the research problem" (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

The phrase "total understanding" is important to comprehend the reason for using the mixed research. While survey can measure certain parts of a research question, an interview can add symbolism and words to the details and consequently add to the totality of the study.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) highlight some of the advantages of the mixed research question. They are:

1. Pictures, words and narrative can be used to add significant meaning to numbers.
2. Numbers can be used to add precision to words, pictures and narrative.
3. The strengths of an additional method can be used to overcome the weakness in another method by using both in a research study.
4. It can provide a stronger evidence for a conclusion through convergence and corroboration of findings.

3.3-Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was an unsupervised administration because the questionnaire was distributed online, however, the questionnaire was divided into six sections [Sections A – F] and the questions asked were based on the research questions of the dissertation that was stated in chapter two.

Section A: which provided the demographic data of respondents, Section B: general knowledge of social network sites, Section C: impacts of social network sites on international students' academic lives, Section D: the impacts of social networking sites on international college students' personal lives, Section E: Positive and Negative impacts of social networking and Section F: other purposes of using social network sites (See Appendix A)

Before the questionnaires drafted out and distributed, the researcher did the following:

1. Identified the research question (Which is stated in chapter two).
2. Identified how many participants that will be needed.
3. Identified how the questionnaires will be distributed.
4. Generated the questions to be asked in the questionnaire.

3.4-Participants

To achieve the aims of this dissertation, I focused on one college in Ireland – Griffith College Dublin – and was done because:

I am adapting a similar research study done by Fread (2014), who focused on a university of his research study because it is a representative sample – “ a technical term for a complete group of interest” (Berger, 1998, p.37) – of the international students in Ireland. Berger (1998, p.37) further writes that when conducting a survey research, having a focus is necessary and getting a representative sampling of the social group that is needed for the survey is crucial and answers gotten from the survey will be manageable.

Dominick and Wimmer (2002, p.37) also sees selecting a sample that is presentative to the interested social group to which the results will be generalized as “basic common sense”, this is because it relative and doable.

According to Catherine (2012), Griffith College Dublin is one of the largest independent colleges in Ireland with a large number of international student. The International Marketing Officer of the college in Dublin, Michael Galvin confirmed that there are about 1500 international students out of a total population of 7000 students across its 3 campuses in Dublin, Cork and Limerick.

3.5-Population Size

Murdock et al (1998, p. 119 - 120) express the need of a population because a reasonable population adds more credibility to any research work. In an attempt to carry out comprehensive research and obtaining a reliable result, efforts were made to collect adequate responses from 100 international college students in Griffith College from undergraduate level to postgraduate level. Whereby, out of one thousand of international students of the college, a specific number of 100 international students will be respondents of the questionnaire used for this research work.

To find out the use of social network sites by international students in America, Fread (2014) surveyed a total number of 63 international students which included 35 males and 28 females from different counties of origin at the Southern Allinios University, Edwardsville. Rahman (2014) also used a survey questionnaire to examine the usage and behavioural patterns of social network sites by international students in New Zealand and the total number of respondents was 316.

3.6-Administration of Research Instrument

To get participants for this dissertation, as a first step, I contacted campus organizations that work closely with international students in Griffith College Dublin, Including the Griffith College International Office and student union. With their assistance, emails were sent out to some of the current international students on campus and participants were asked to forward the email to their other international student friends.

Also, I shared the link to my survey on Facebook and Twitter and the purpose of the study and a brief explanation of the procedure were stated in the email. The participation was strictly voluntary.

However, in order to increase the number of participants after the second day of sending out the link to the survey, I decided to send a mail to Griff Accommodation Office to help with the distribution of the survey via email. In addition to this, I physically walked up to international students on Griffith College's campus, and gave them links to the survey. With this I was able to get adequate responses within 10 days.

For the interviews, I randomly picked four international students of Griffith College Dublin that were willing to participate in the interview out. The interviewees were interviewed via WhatsApp, email and face to face interview was also done. After asking for permission from two of the participants at the beginning of the conversation, the interviews were recorded.

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewees were told that the purpose of the study is to know the implications of the usage of social network sites on the academic and personal lives of

international students, there were no expected answers, and they were to speak on any issue they wanted to respond to. Interviewees were also told that the study would not include any of their identification like their name, and that they will be mentioned in the study as interviewee 1, interviewee 2 and so on.

3.7-Ethical Issues

As the chosen methodology of this dissertation required opinions from people, ethical issues were needed to be addressed. All ethical principles – voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, and knowing the right to redraw will be put into consideration and respected. The researcher will endeavour to follow all ethical principles and will be committed to all and the Griffith ethical research procedure will be followed.

For the questionnaire, majority of the questions were quite personal so there was a risk of inaccurate results, unanswered questions and respondent error if anonymity was not provided, therefore this lead to the questionnaire not including the names of respondents. Also, as stated above, the survey was sent via email and the completion was done at the choice of respondent; respondents were also informed that the survey was needed for this dissertation.

3.8-Potential Challenges

For every research study, potential challenges and limitations of research method are inevitable. This could occur before the research is carried out, during the research and possibly after the research. As stated by Berger (2000, p. 192, some of the limitations of survey methods in relations to this dissertation are:

1. Writing good survey questions are difficult to do.
2. People might not tell the truth, especially about personal matters.
3. Some of the respondents omitted some questions in the survey.
4. Getting an adequate amount of international college students in Griffith College Dublin needed for the research.

Chapter Four

Results and Discussions

4.1-Overview

In view of what was discussed in chapter three, this chapter discusses the results of the quantitative data analysis and the qualitative data analysis.

4.2-Quantitative Data Research and Analysis

An online survey was set up on google forms for this dissertation. The entry criteria set was that respondents should be international students at Griffith College Dublin and method of distribution were explained in details in chapter three. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix A (Survey Questionnaire).

SECTION A: Demographic Data.

Figure 1 – Gender

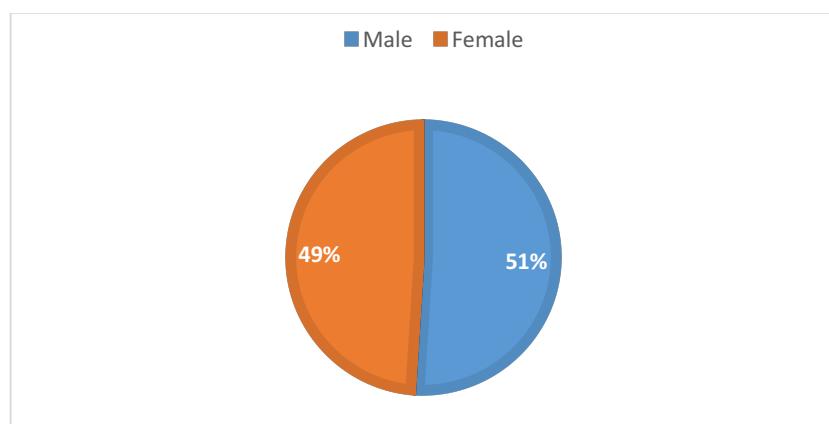
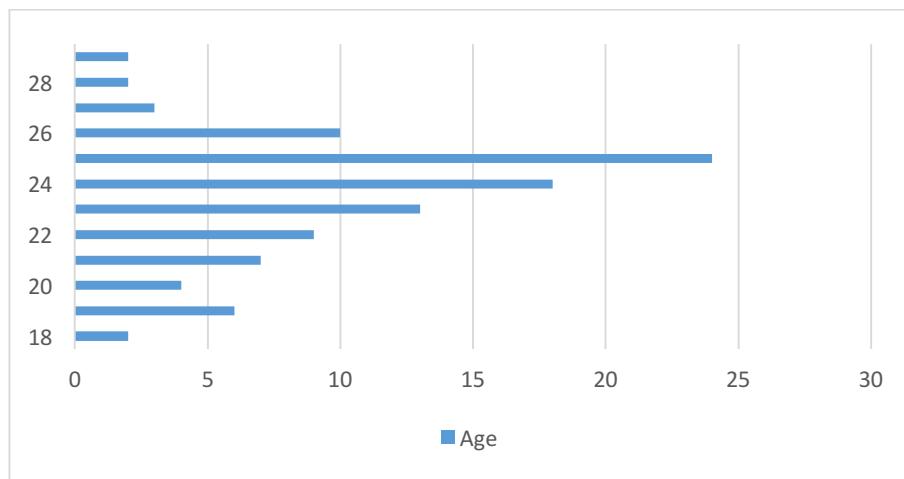
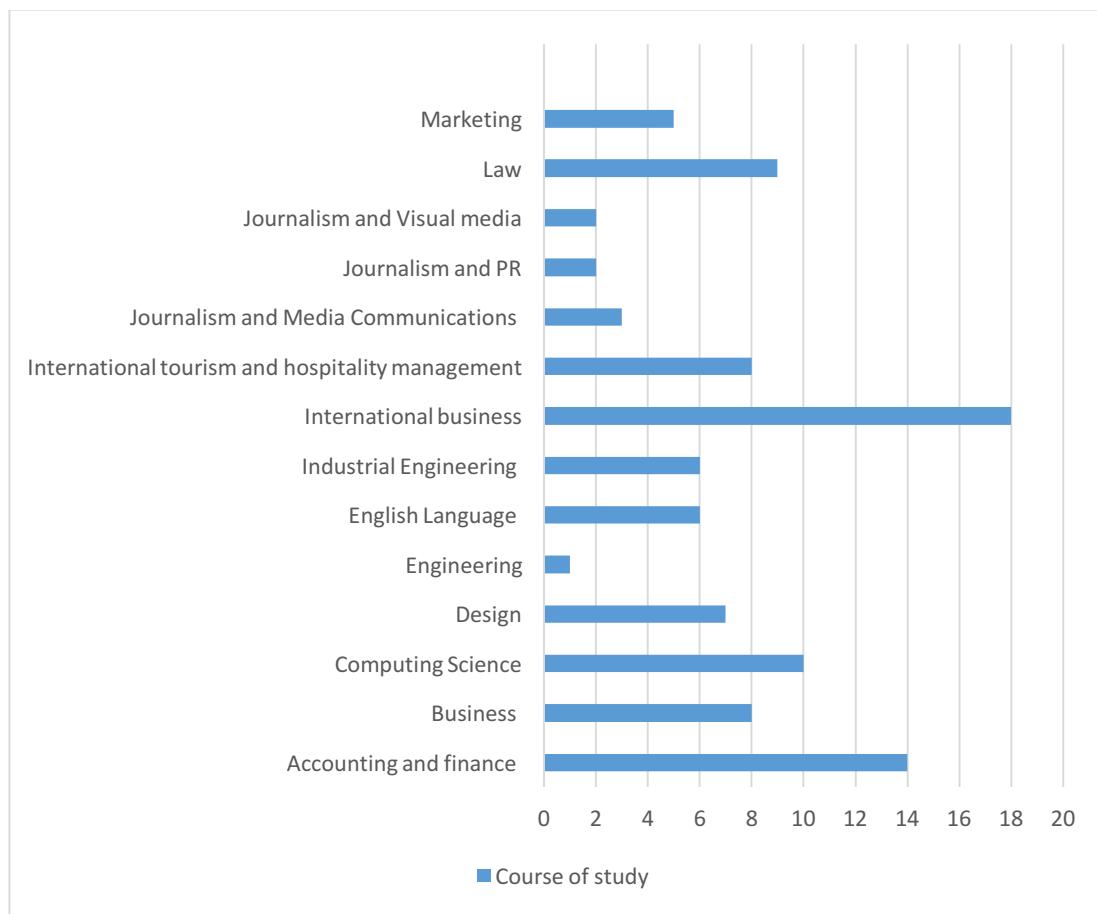


Figure 2 - Age



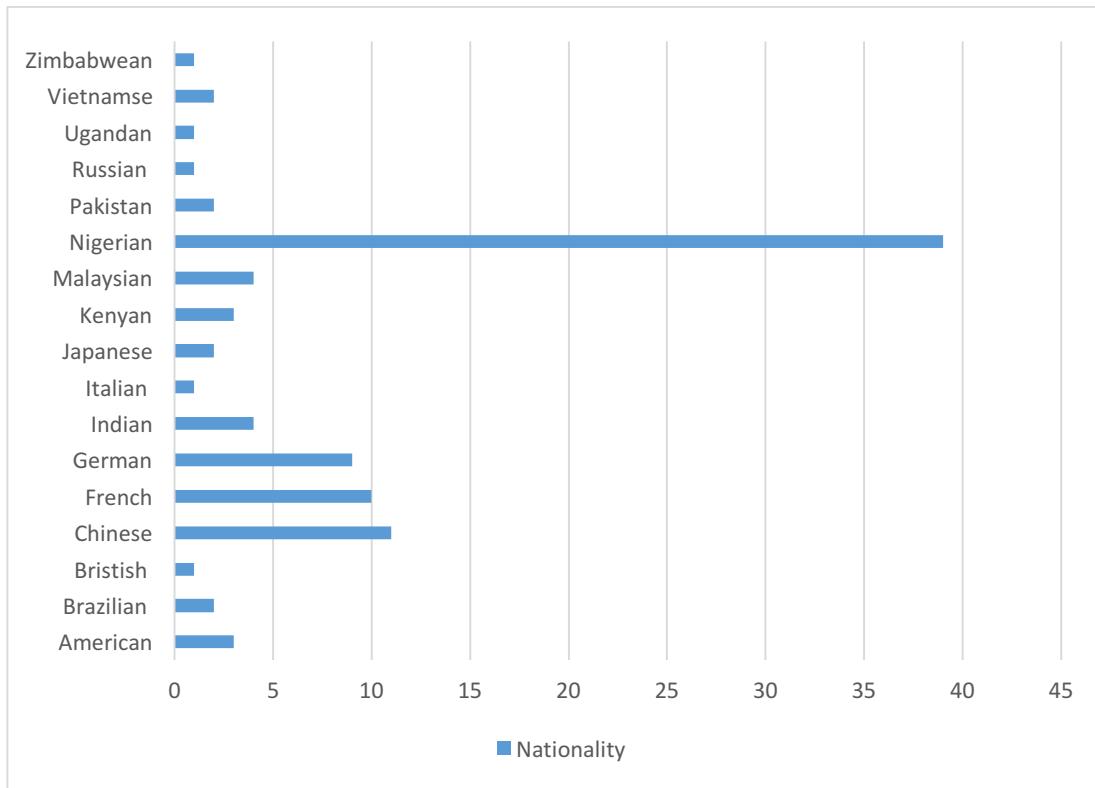
From the above figures, it can be seen that 49% of the respondents were female and 51% of the respondents were male. Respondents are between the ages of 18 and 29. This shows that majority of the respondents are male.

Figure 3 - Which course are you studying?



In regards to their course of study, majority of them are studying International business (18%), followed by Accounting and finance (14%), Computing science (10%), Law (9%), international tourism and hospitality management (8%), Business (8%), Design (7%), English language (6%), Industrial engineering (6%), Marketing (5%), Journalism and media communications (3%), Journalism and PR (2%) and Journalism and visual media (2%).

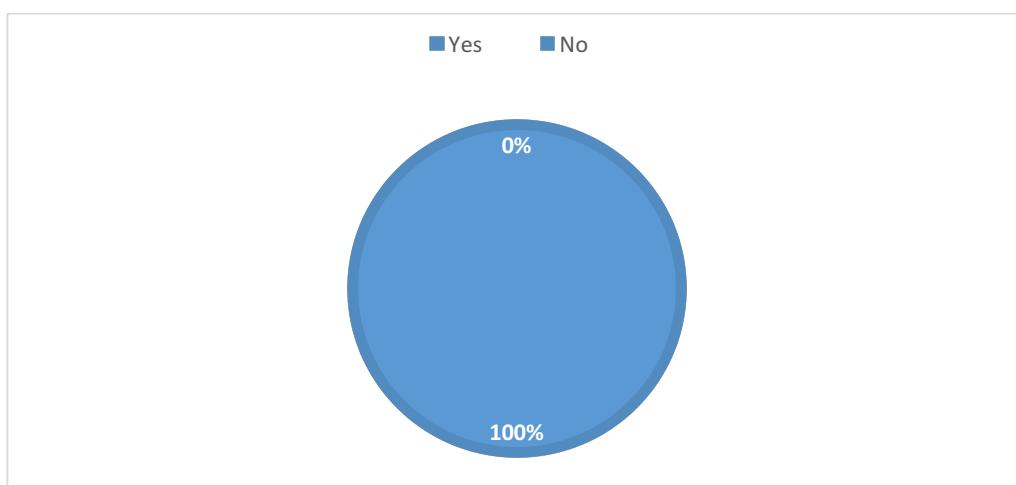
Figure 4 - Nationality



From the above figure, majority of the respondents are Nigerian (40%), followed by Chinese (11%), French (10%), German (9%), Malaysian (4%), Indian (4%), Kenyan (3%), American (3%), Brazilian (2%), Japanese (2%), Pakistan (2%), Vietnamese (2%), British (1%), Russian (1%), Ugandan (1%), Zimbabwean (1%) and Italian (1%).

SECTION B: General Knowledge of Social Network Sites

Figure 5 - Do you know about social network sites like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat?



**Figure 6 - Which of the following social network sites do you use most often in Dublin?
(Please pick three)**

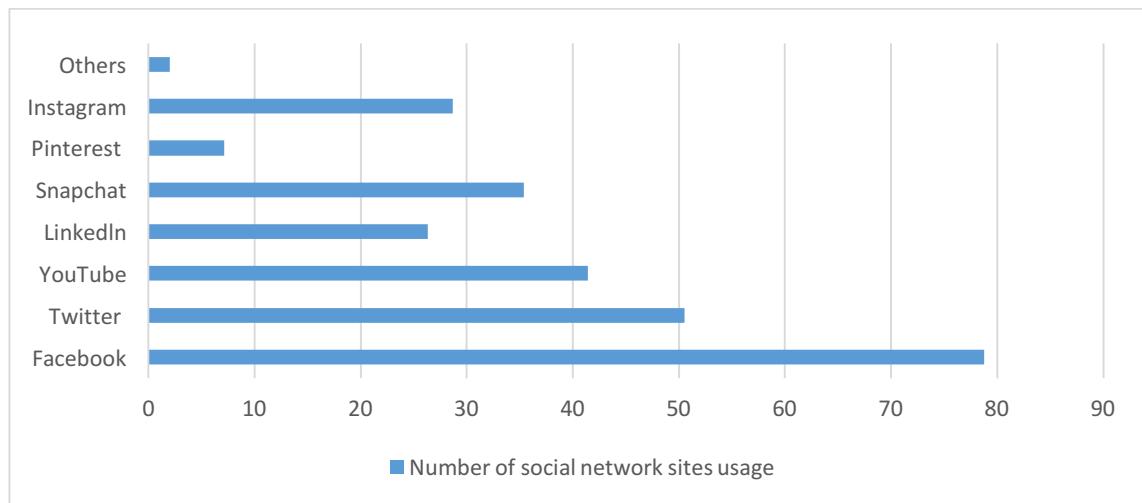
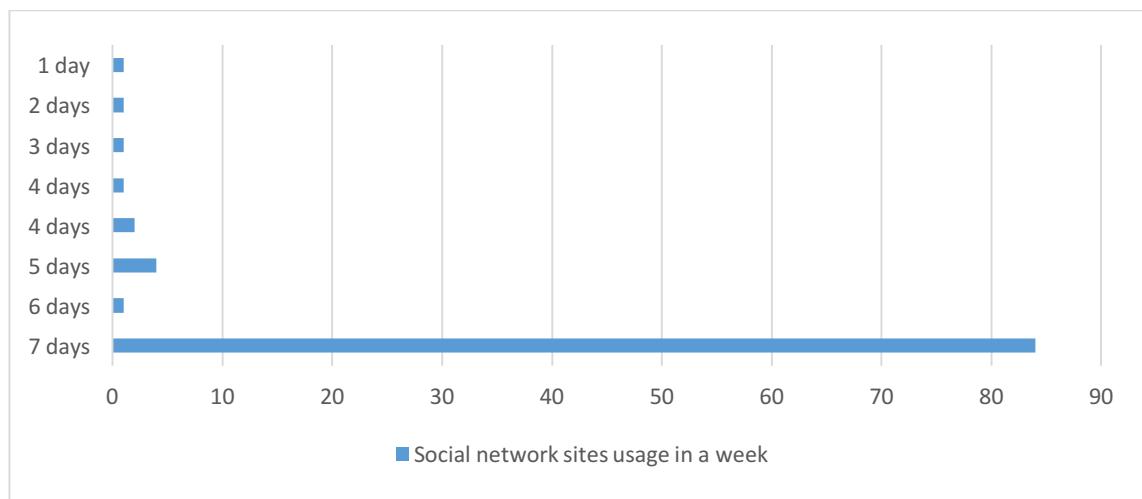


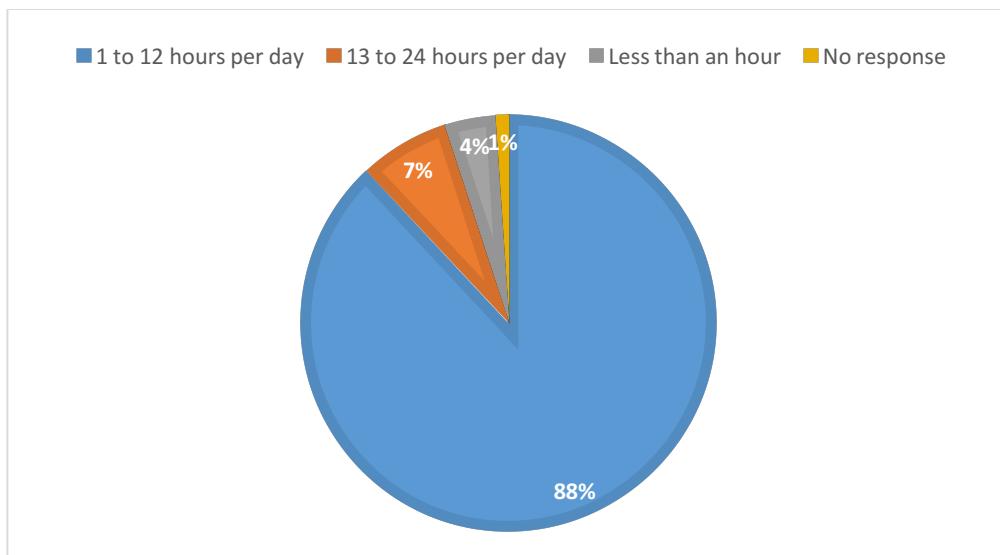
Figure 5 shows that all the respondents know about social network sites like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and figure 6 shows that the top three most used social network sites by international students are Facebook (78.8%), Twitter (50.5%) and Instagram (41.4%).

Figure 7 - On average, how many days do you use social network sites in a week?



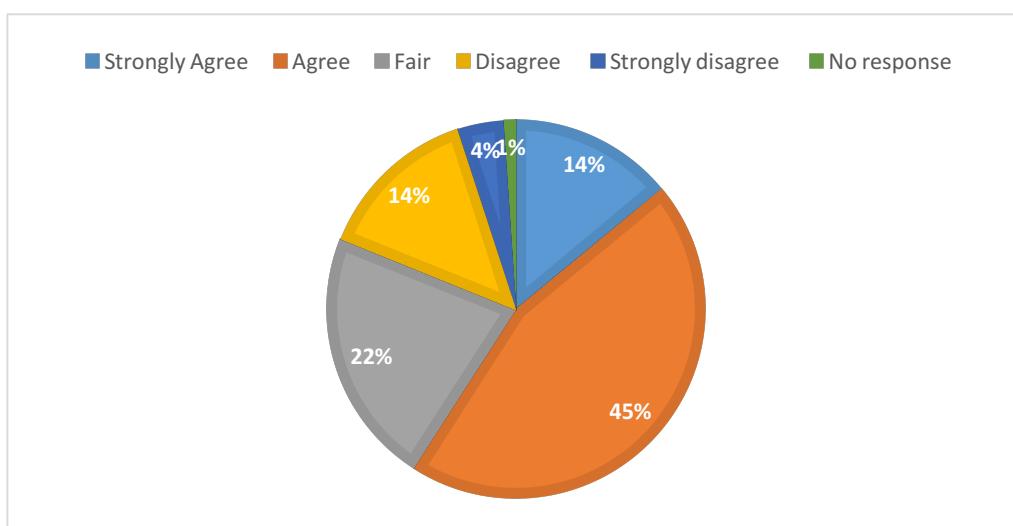
Majority of the respondents (85%) identify that they use social network sites 7 days in a week, followed by (4%) 5 days in a week, (2%) 4 days in a week, (1%) 6 days a week, (1%) 2 days a week, (1%) 3 days a week and (1%) uses social network sites only once in a week. This demonstrates that majority of international college students use social network sites 7 days in a week.

Figure 8 - On average, how much time do you spend daily on social network sites?



From the above figure, majority of the respondents (88%) identify that they use social network sites 1 to 12 hours per day, followed by (7%) who use social network sites 13 – 24 hours per day and (4%) of the respondents use social network sites less than an hour in a day. This demonstrates that a vast majority of international college students use social network sites 1 to 12 hours per day.

Figure 9 - Do you think you are addicted to social network sites?



Finally, for this section, (45%) of the respondents agree to being addicted to social network sites, followed by (14%) who strongly agree to being addicted, (22%) believe that they are fairly addicted to social network sites, (14%) of the respondents disagree to being addicted to social network sites and (4%) strongly disagree. This indicates that a vast majority of international college students agree to be addicted to social network sites.

SECTION C: Impacts of Social Network Sites on International Students' Academic Lives

This section answers the research question one of this dissertation, which is "what impact does social network sites have on international college students' academic life?"

From the figure below, 32% of the respondents agree that social network sites have a huge impact in their academic lives, 28% fairly agree, 13% strongly agree, while 13% disagree and 3% strongly disagree. This indicates that a vast majority of international college students believe that social network sites have a huge impact in their academic lives.

Figure 10. Do social network sites have a huge impact on your academic life?

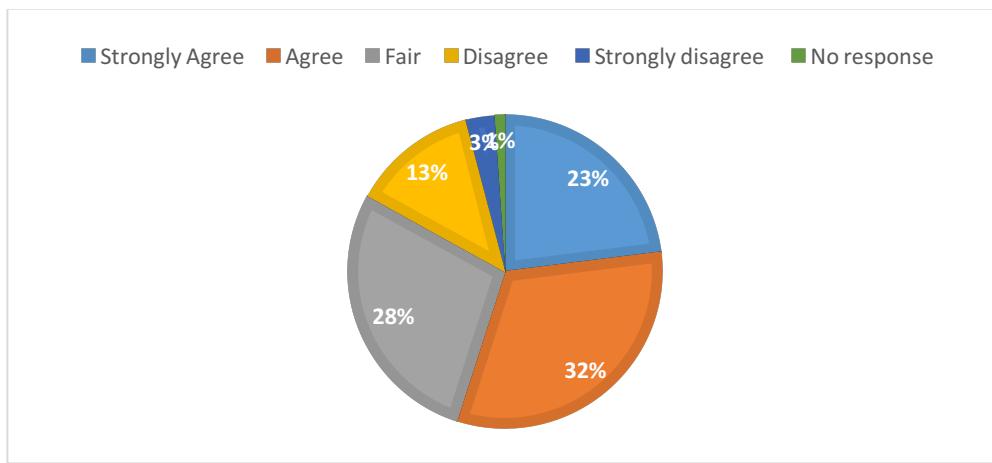
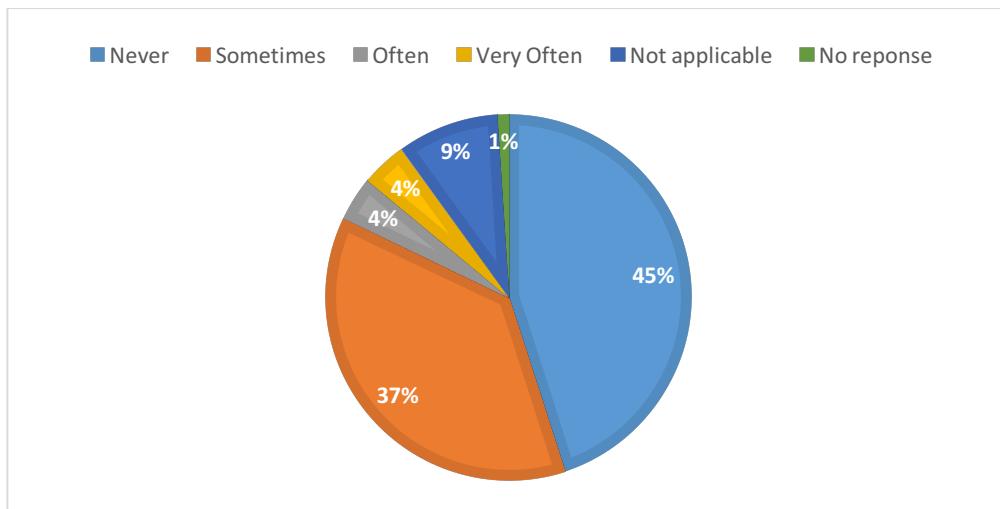


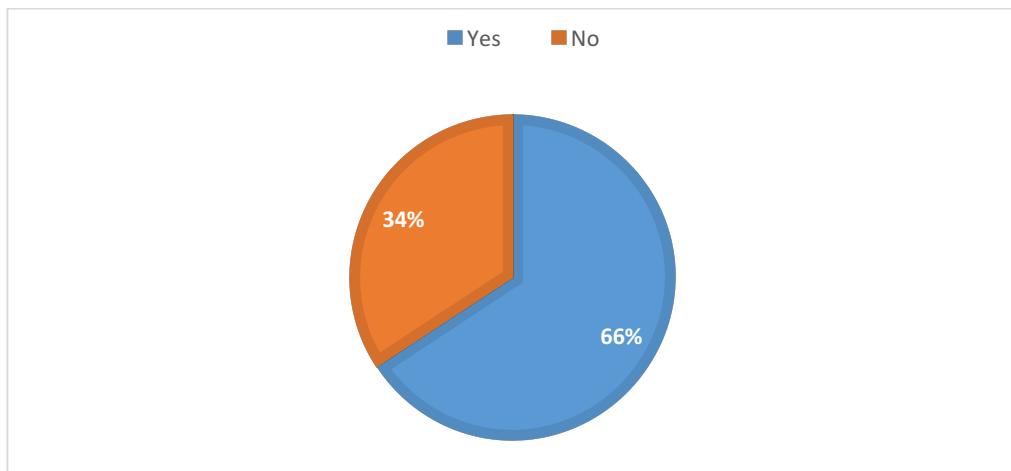
Figure 11 - Are you able to communicate with your lecturers on social network sites?



In regards to using social network sites as a communication tool, figure 11 shows that 45% of the respondents identify that they never communicate with their lecturers on social network sites, followed by 37% of the respondents sometimes use social network sites to communicate with their lecturers, 4% of the respondent often use social network sites to communicate with their lectures, 4% very often and 9% of the respondent identify that the question is not applicable.

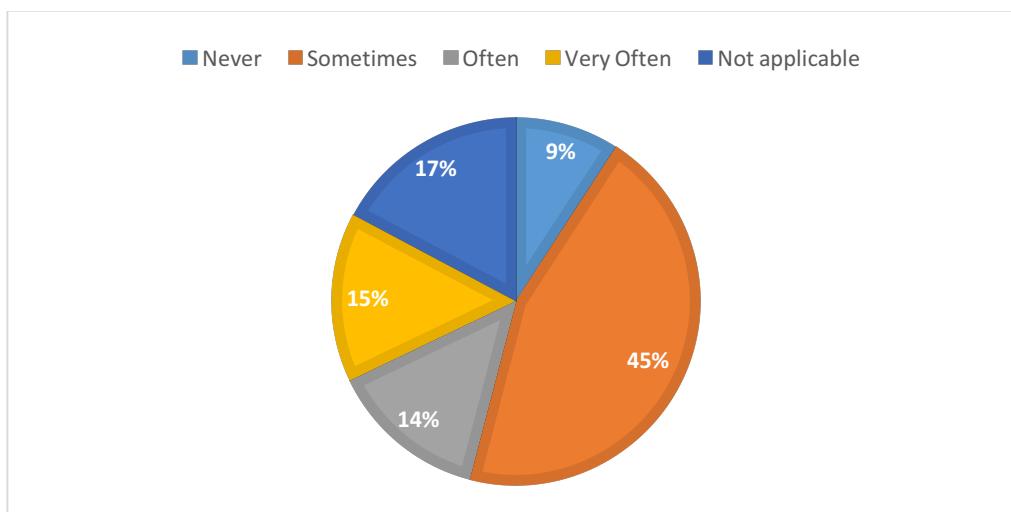
This indicates that social network sites are used as a communication tool by a vast majority of international college students.

Figure 12 - Are you on any social network sites group created by your classmates?



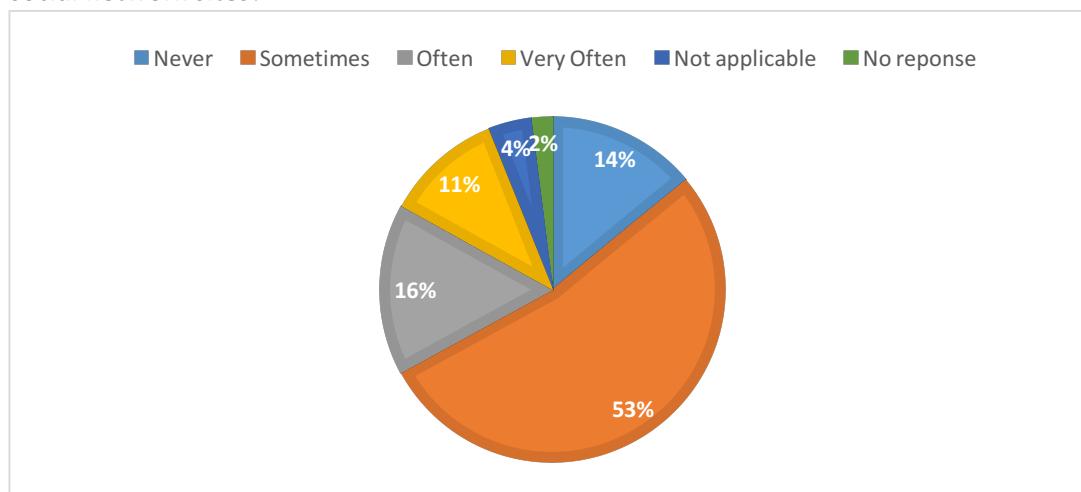
From the above figure, 66% of the respondents identify that they are members of any academic group created by their classmates on social network sites, while 34% of the respondents identify that they are not members of any academic group on social network sites. This reveals that academic groups are created on social networking sites by college students.

Figure 13 - If yes, has the group helped your academic life in anyway?



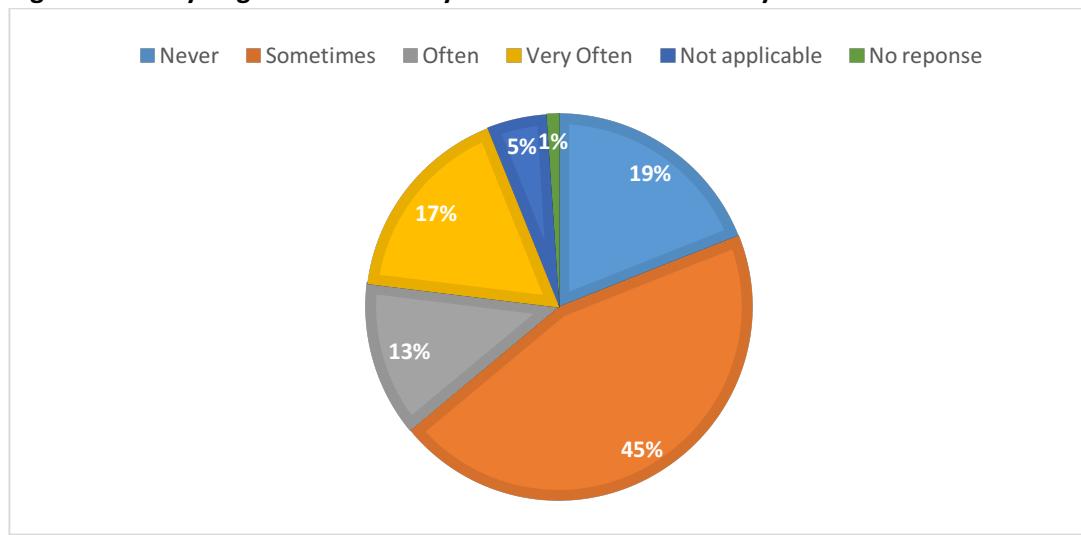
The follow up question of the above question was to know if the group created has helped their academic life in anyway. Majority of the respondents (45%) identifies that the group sometimes help their academic lives while a small group of 9% identifies that the group has never helped their academic lives.

Figure 14 - Are you able to share and discuss in-class lectures with your class mates on social network sites?



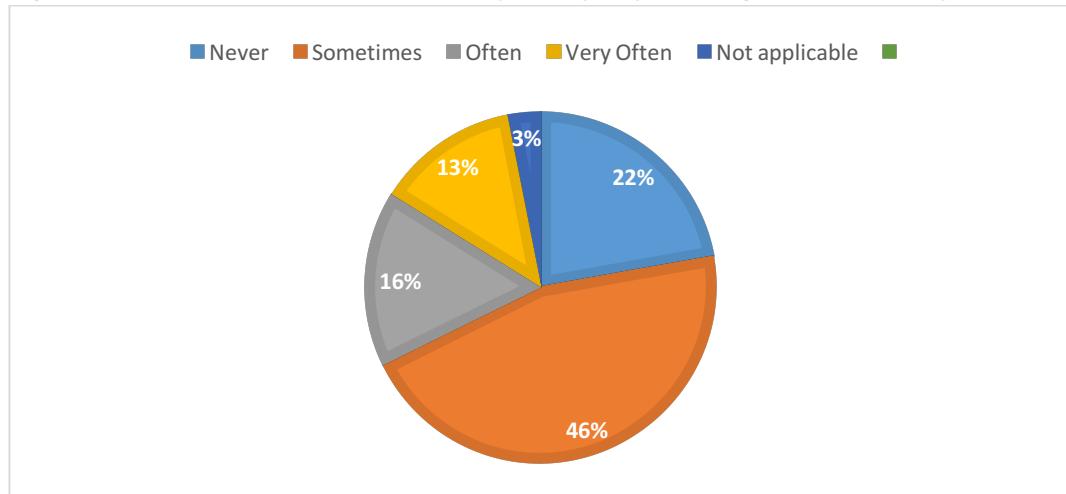
Majority of the respondents (53%) are sometimes able to share and discuss lectures taught in class with the classmates on social network sites the above figure shows and a relatively low number (14%) claim that they never get to have academic discussions with their classmates on social network sites.

Figure 15 - Do you get to find out if your results are out via any social network sites?



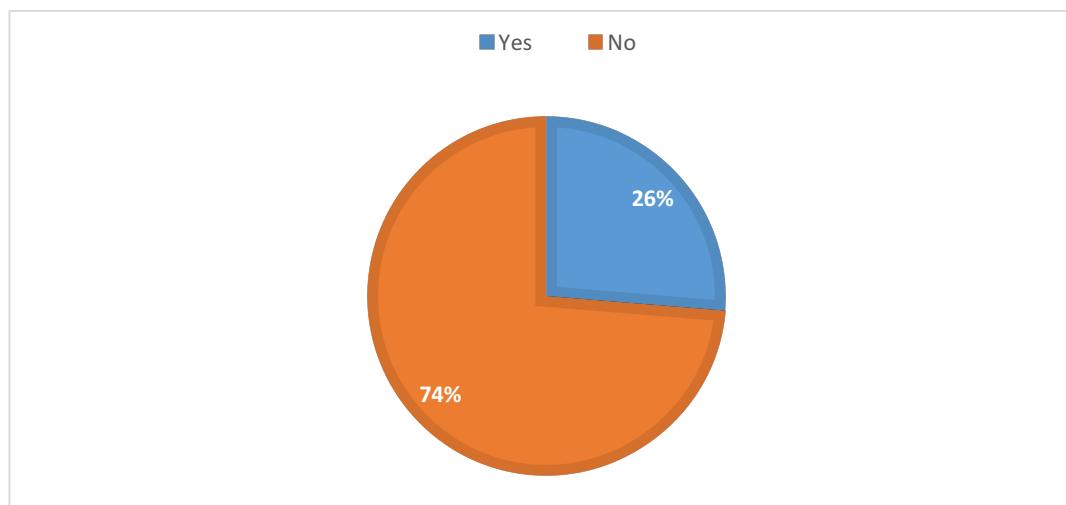
Majority of the respondents (45%), as shown in the figure above sometimes find out that their results for a semester are released via social network sites, while 19% of the respondents identified that they never find out about released results via social network sites.

Figure 16 - Have social network sites helped any of your assignments or essays?



From the figure shown above, 46% of the respondents identify that social network sites help them with their assignments or essays sometimes, while 22% identify that social network sites have never helped their assignments or essays. This implies that social network sites sometime help majority of the respondents with their college assessments.

Figure 17 - Have social network sites improved your academic life in any other way?



Finally, for this section, majority (74%), as shown in the above figure 17 claim that social network sites have not improved their academic lives in other ways apart from the ways asked in the survey, while respondents 26% who identify that social network sites have helped their academic lives in other ways were given an opportunity to write them out. Comments are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Other ways social network sites have helped international college students' academic life

Comments
“It has helped me in my academic research.”
“I was able to find interviewees for my dissertation through a Facebook status and through tweets.”
“Getting information faster.”
“By getting first-hand information that might be applicable to my academics.”
“Newspaper.”
“Sometimes I see news on social media before actual news sources.”
“I can easily have discussions with people in my field all over the world.”
“It always helps with quicker and easier ways to solve my health issues.”
“There are plenty of you tube tutorial videos, those videos are very helpful in most of the things which we are doing in college. For example: Java programming tutorial videos, business communication, Sql etc. etc.”
“Lecture Timetables.”
“Some of the trending topics have served as case studies for courses involving online PR and in some cases PR disaster management.”
“Access to mass data and information available all over the world, such as global news and events happening all around the world.”
“Getting random facts that relate to my course of study.”
“It helps keep track of academic events, tutorials and projects.”
“It's given me access to unlimited resources to gain more academic knowledge.”

"Keeps me on track with assignments and AOC topics."
"I'll like to keep that private, it's a personal thing."
"Provides me with different methods for approaching essays."
"Helped improve my outlook on things and vocabulary."

The majority of the comments above state that social network sites have helped international college students' "academic research". Social network sites have also made some of the respondents to connect with other professionals like themselves and also YouTube tutorial videos have been helpful with college work.

SECTION D: Impacts of Social Network Sites on Your Personal Life

This section answers the research question one of this dissertation, which is "what impact does social network sites have on international college students' personal life?"

From the figure below, 43% of the respondents strongly agree that social network sites have a huge impact in their personal lives, 36% agree, 14% fairly agree, while 4% disagree and 2% strongly disagree. This demonstrates that social networking sites have a huge impact in majority of the respondents' personal lives.

Figure 18 - Do social network sites have a huge impact on your personal life?

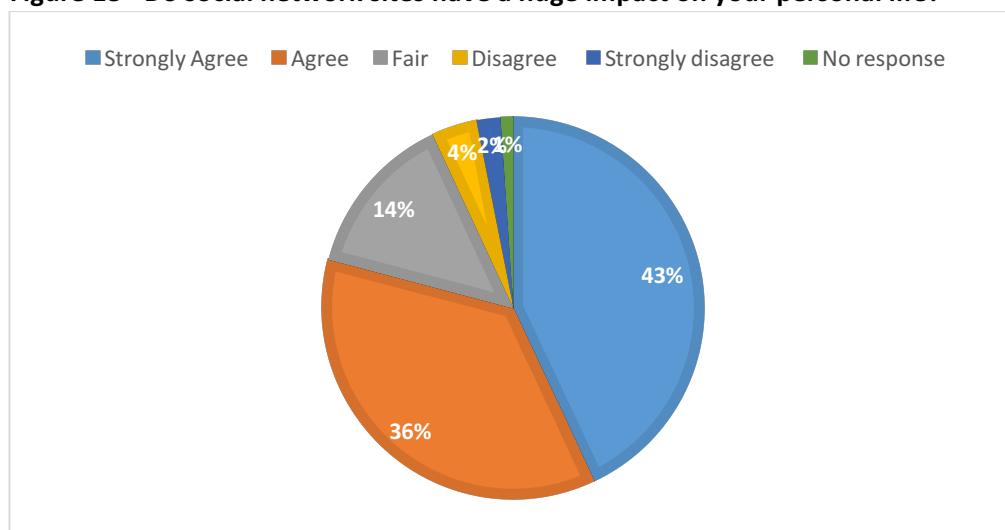
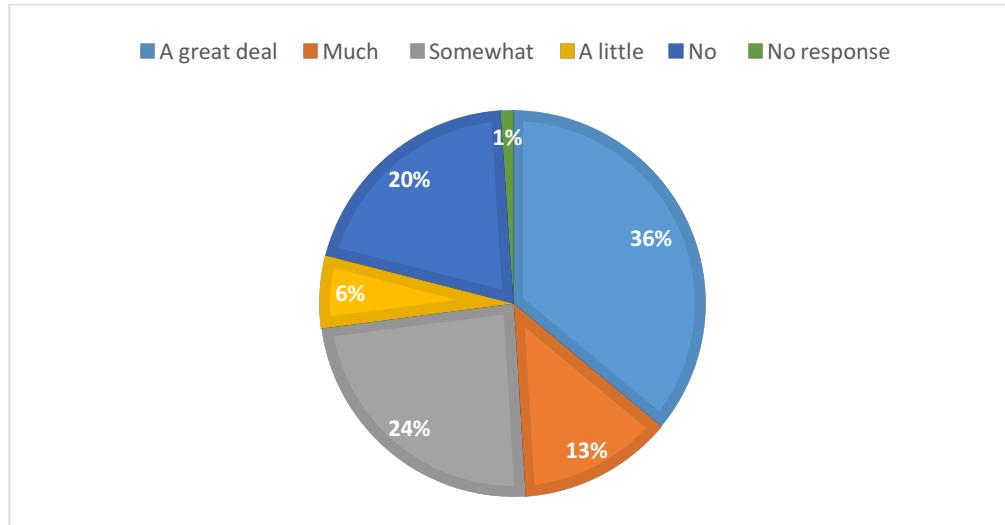
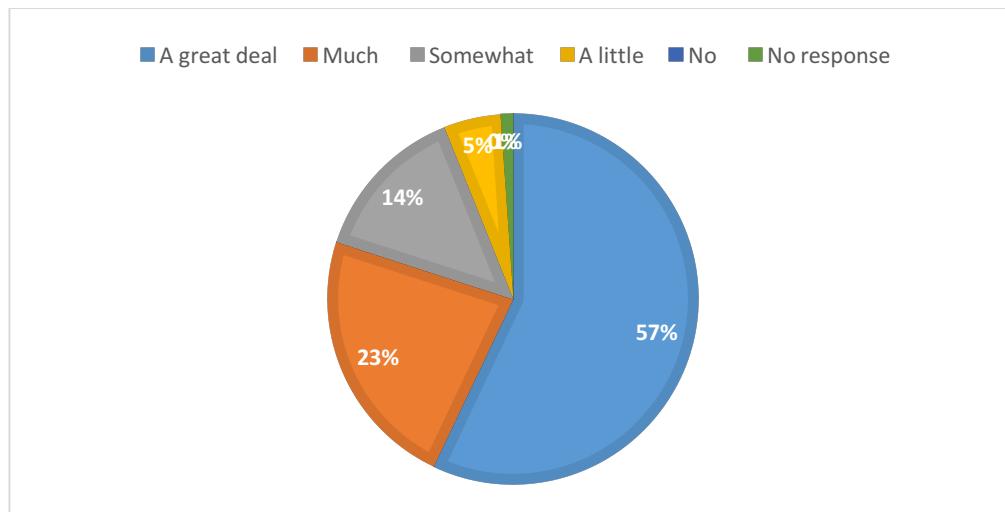


Figure 19 - Are you able to express yourself better on social networks than face to face conversations in Dublin?



From the figure above, 36% of the respondents believe that they are able to express themselves better on social network sites than when having face to face communication, while 20.2% believe they are not able to. This demonstrates that majority of the respondents communicate better on social network sites than in real life.

Figure 20 - Do you get to communicate with your family and friends back home on social network sites?



From the figure above, 57.6% of the respondents communicate with their family and friends back home on social network sites in a great deal, while 0% of the respondents are not able to. This demonstrates that majority of the respondents communicate with their family and friends a great deal on social network sites while in Ireland.

In addition to this, 50% of the respondents identify that they communicate with their family and friends back home via social network sites very frequently, 40% picked frequently, 5% picked rarely and 5% picked very rarely. This demonstrates that majority of the respondents communicate with their family and friends in their home country very frequently.

Figure 21- How often is the communication with your family and friends back home on social network sites?

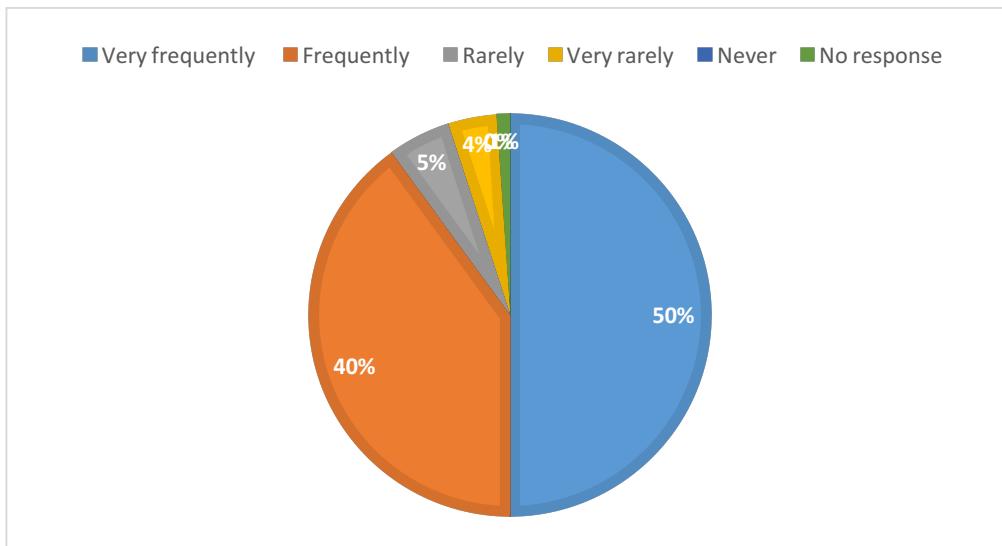
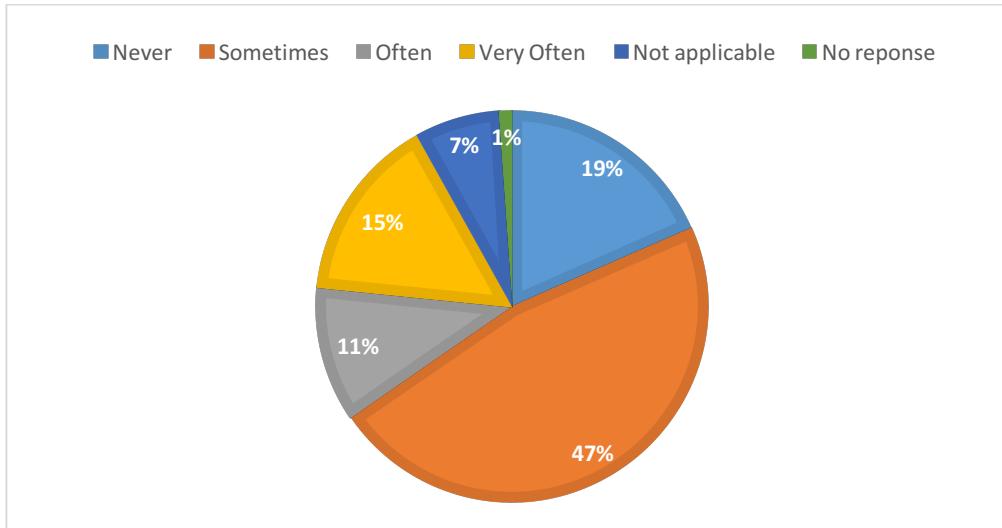
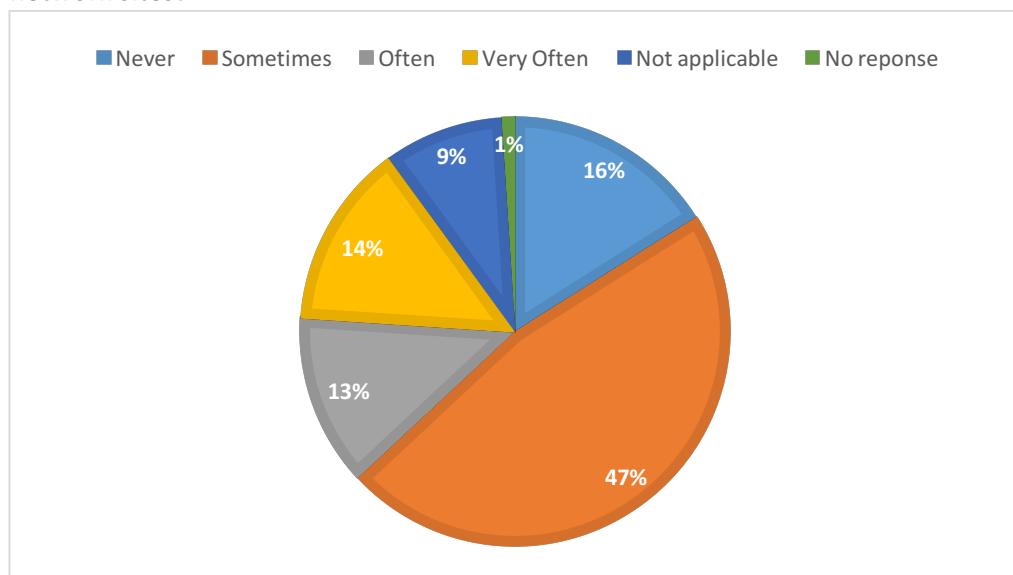


Figure 22 - Do you communicate with people from your country who live in Dublin on social network sites?



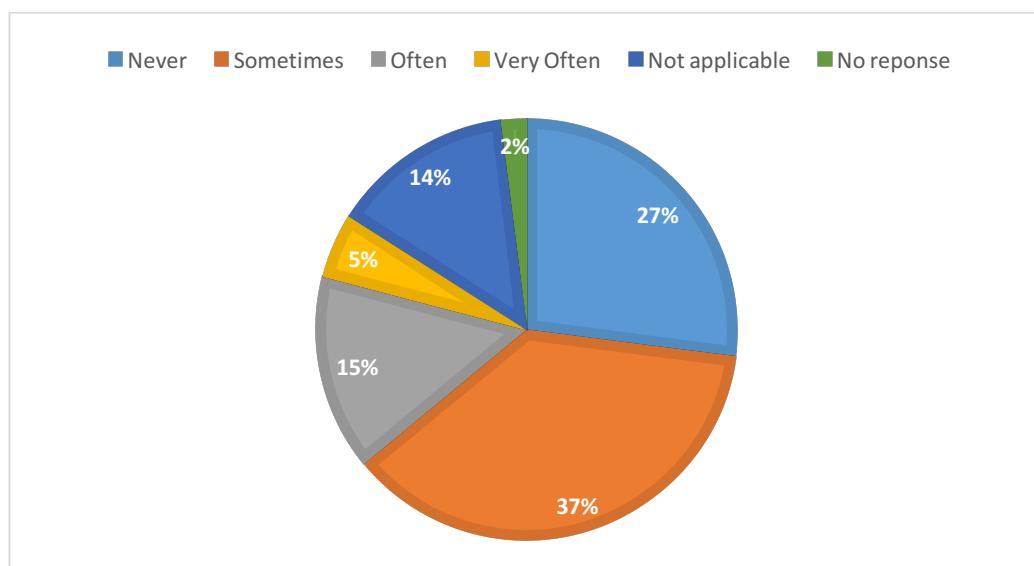
47% of the respondents identify that they sometimes communicate with people from their home countries who live in Dublin via social network sites, 18% picked never, 11.2% picked often 15.3% picked very often and 7% picked not applicable. This demonstrates that majority of the respondents sometimes communicate with people from their home countries who live in Dublin via social network sites.

Figure 23 - Do you communicate with people from other countries in Dublin on social network sites?



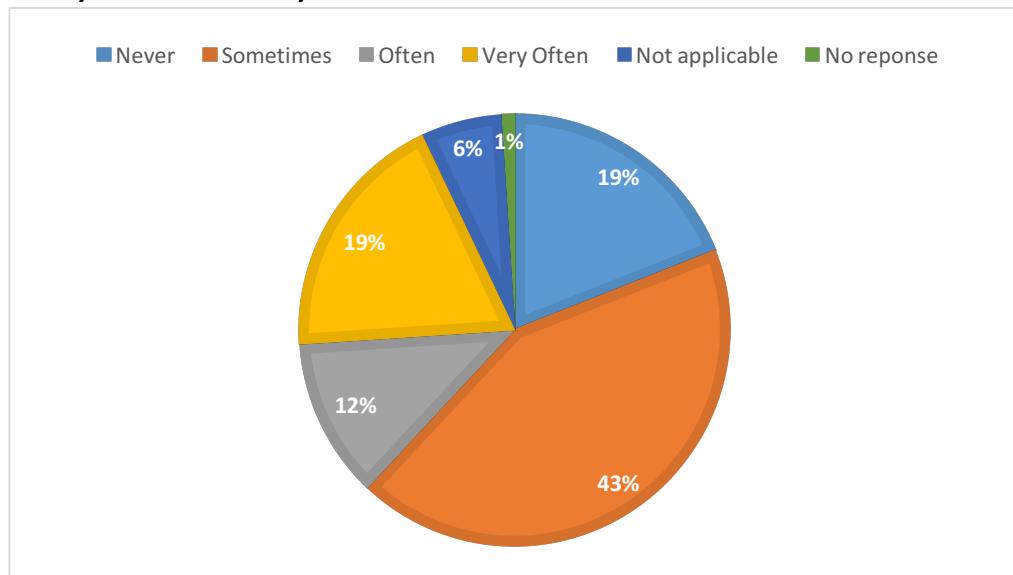
47% of the respondents identify that they sometimes communicate with people from other countries who live in Dublin via social network sites, 16% picked never, 13% picked often 14% picked very often and 9% picked not applicable. This demonstrates that majority of the respondents sometimes communicate with people from other countries who live in Dublin via social network sites.

Figure 24 - Does social networking improve your interpersonal relationship with Irish students?



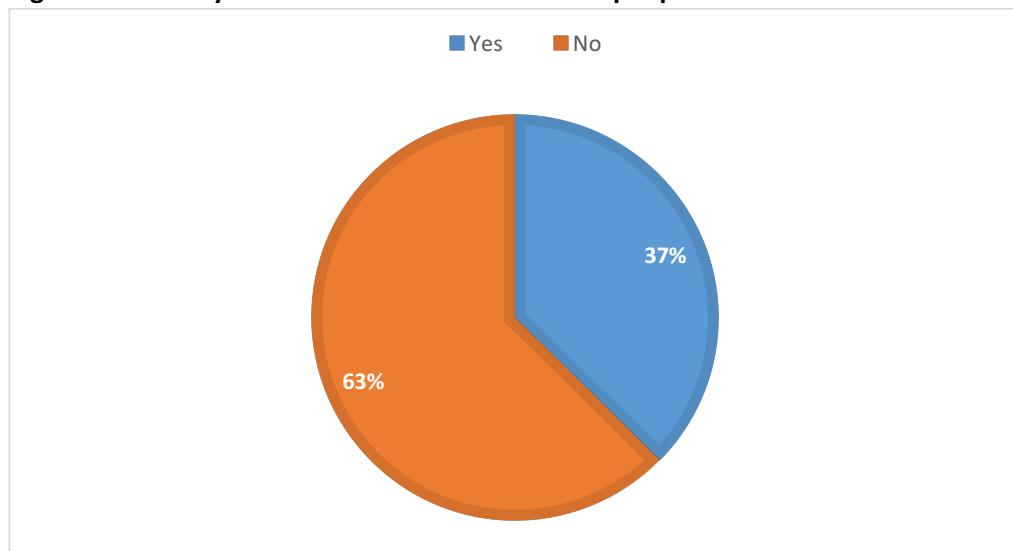
In regards to improving interpersonal relationships with Irish students, 37% of the respondents believe that social network sites sometimes help, 27% picked never, 15% picked often, 14% picked not applicable and relatively low percentage of 5 picked very often. This implies that social networks have sometimes improved majority of the respondents' interpersonal relationship with Irish students.

Figure 25 - Does social networking improve your interpersonal relationship with students from your home country?



In regards to improving interpersonal relationships with students from their home countries, 43% of the respondents believe that social network sites sometimes help, 19% picked never, 12% picked often, 6% picked not applicable and 19% picked very often. This implies that social networks sometimes improve majority of the respondents' interpersonal relationship with students from their home countries.

Figure 26 - Have you ever made friends with Irish people on social network sites?



The above figure shows that majority of the respondents (63%) have not made friends with Irish people on social network sites and a percentage of 37 of the respondents have.

While the below figure shows that 30% of the respondents who make friends with Irish people on social network sites never meet them in real life, 9% often meet them in real life, 6% picked very often and 5% picked sometimes. This implies that majority of the respondents who make friends with Irish people on social networking sites never meet them in real life.

Figure 27 - If yes, do you get to get to meet up with them in real life?

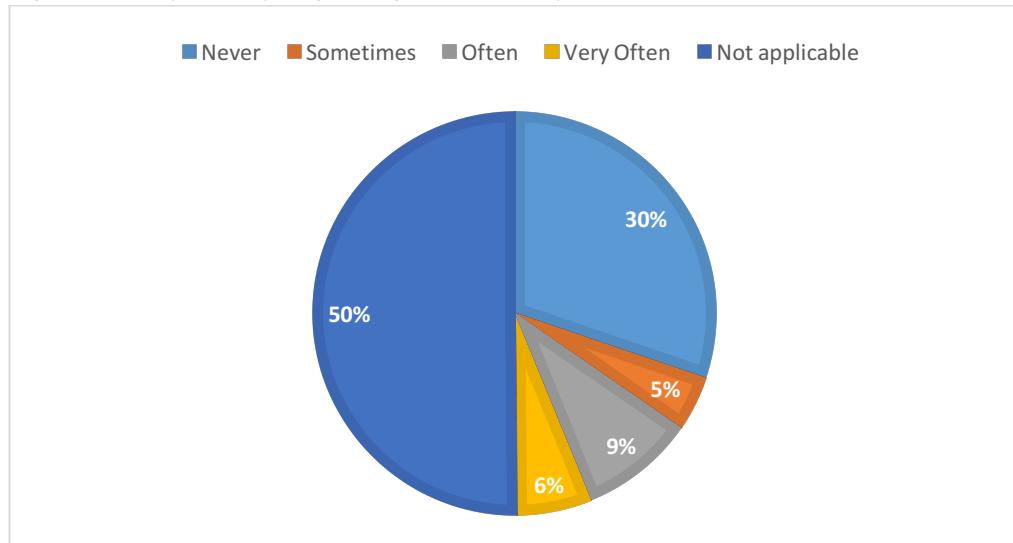
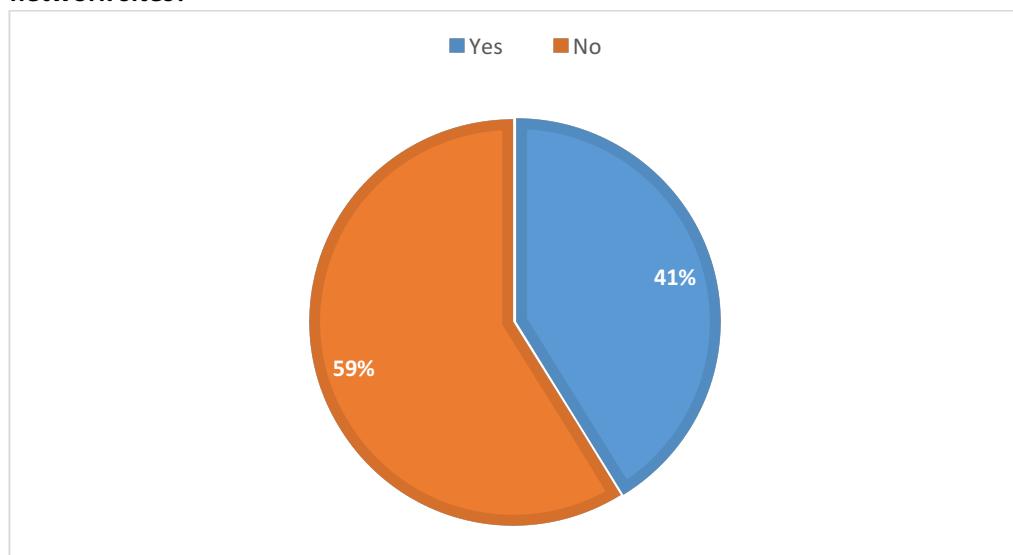


Figure 28 - Have you ever made friends with people from your home country on social network sites?



The above figure shows that majority of the respondents (59%) have not made friends with people from their home country on social network sites and a percentage of 41 of the respondents have.

While the below figure shows that 51% of the respondents who make friends with people from their home country on social network sites sometimes meet them in real life, 18% often meet them in real life, 15% picked very often and 13% never meet them in real life. This implies that majority of the respondents who make friends with people from their home country on social networking sites sometimes them in real life.

Figure 29 - If yes, do you get to get to meet up with them in real life?

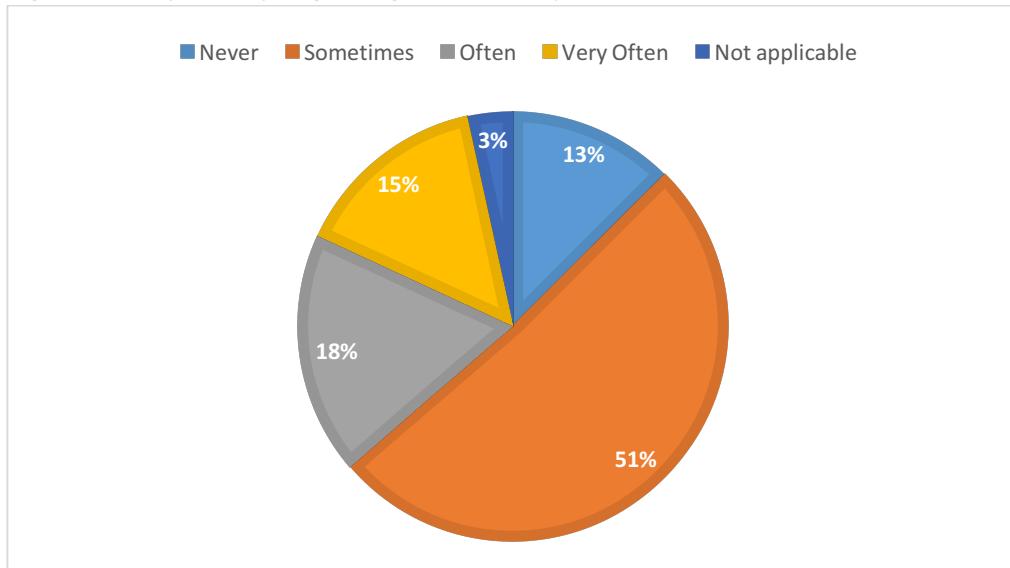
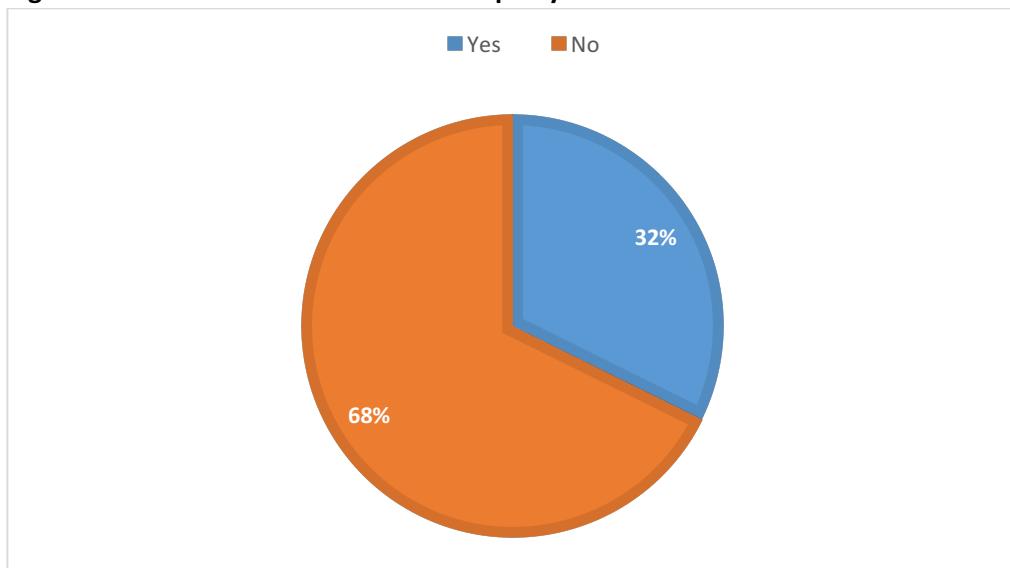


Figure 30 - Have social network sites helped your social life in Dublin?



Finally, for this section, majority (68%) of the respondents, as shown in the above figure 30 claim that social network sites have not improved their personal lives in other ways apart from the ways asked in the survey, while respondents 32% identify that social network sites have helped their personal lives in other ways were given an opportunity to write them out. Comments are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Other ways social network sites have helped international college students' personal life

Comments
"I get to plan hangouts with my friends."

	"Go out"
	"I get updates"
	"Ads for nights out..."
	"Events"
	"Communication on where to meet up to hang out."
	"I get updates on social events in Dublin."
	"Helps locate awesome places and restaurants."
	"I am more active and friendly."
	"I have come to Dublin from a very different culture and not that much but a little I came to know about social life in Ireland via Facebook."
	"Get closer to the Irish and their culture."
	"I met Germans in Dublin."
	"Having discussions over recent political issues, grab a beer down at a bar when available."
	"Talking"
	"To improve my English."
	"Meet new people"
	"I get information about shows on Facebook"

"I get social updates."
"Helped me meet more people living in Dublin than I knew when I just got here."
"Made me aware of functions and social activities I like."
"I get to hang out with friends at different places and have fun / quality times."
"Helped me meet professionals in my field of study"
"Entertainment"

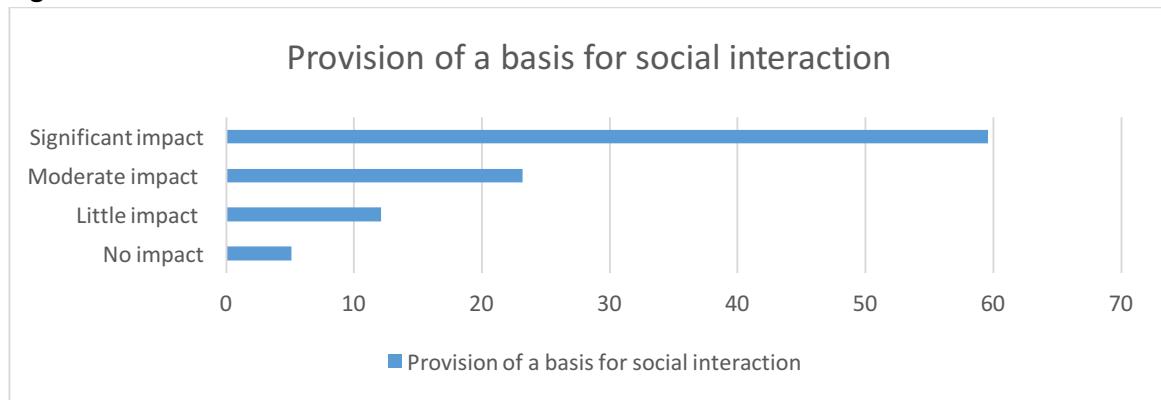
From the above comments, social network sites help international college students improve their social life by updating them on social events in Dublin and in locating places and restaurants in Dublin to visit. Also, social network sites help in informing respondents about the Irish culture and other cultures; some of the respondents also identify that they use social network sites to made friends and also find romantic dates.

SECTION E: Positive and Negative Impact of Social Networking

This section answers the research question one of this dissertation, which is " What are the positive and negative impacts of social networking on international college students?"

a. Positive Impacts

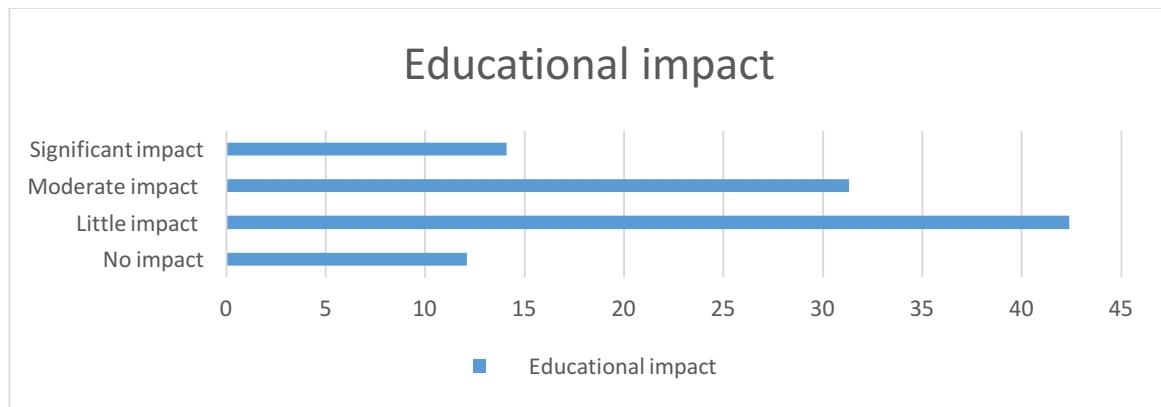
Figure 31 - Provision of basis for social interaction



In terms of providing social interaction, 59.6% of the respondents believe that social network sites have a significant impact in their lives, 23.2% picked moderate impact, 12.1% picked little impact,

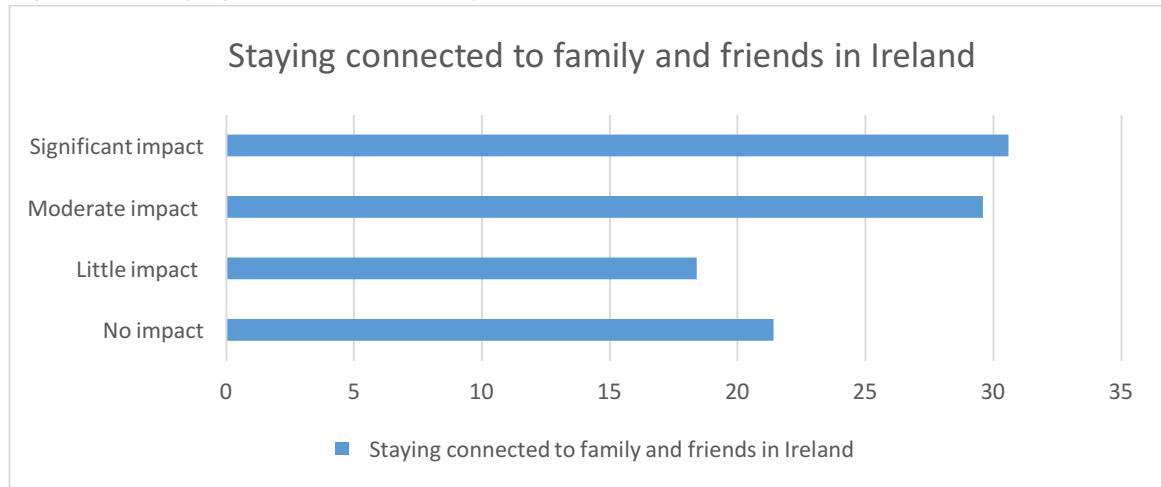
and relatively low percentage of 5.1 picked no impact. This implies that social networks have a significant impact on the provision of basis Social interaction on majority of the respondents.

Figure 32 - Educational impact



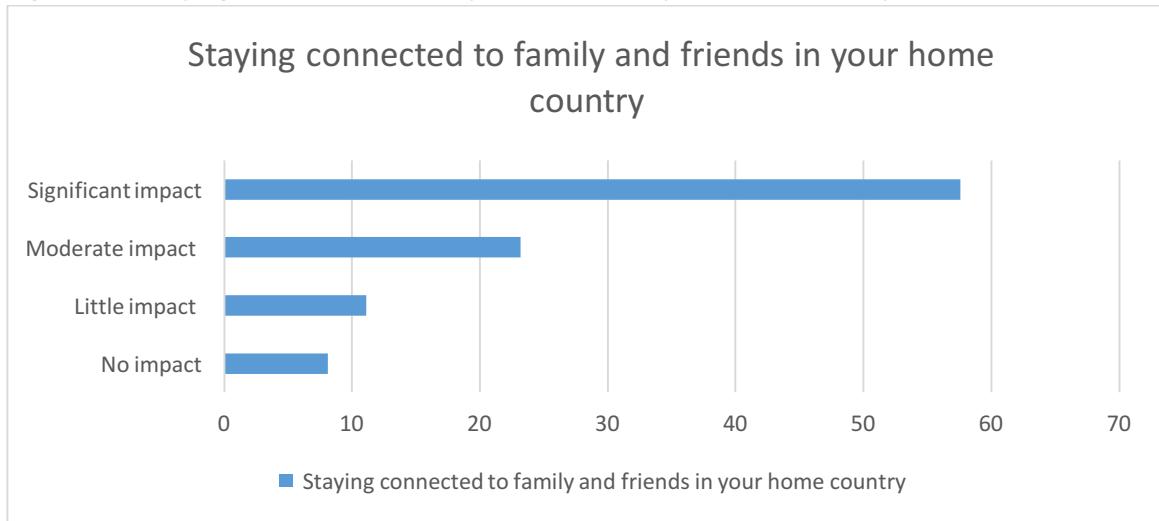
From the table above, it is clear that majority (42.4%) of the international students who responded to the survey believe that social network sites have little impact in their educational lives, while 31.3% agree to the educational impact being “moderate”, 14.1% agree to the impact being “significant” and a low percentage of 12.1% picked no impact.

Figure 33 - Staying connected to family and friends in Ireland



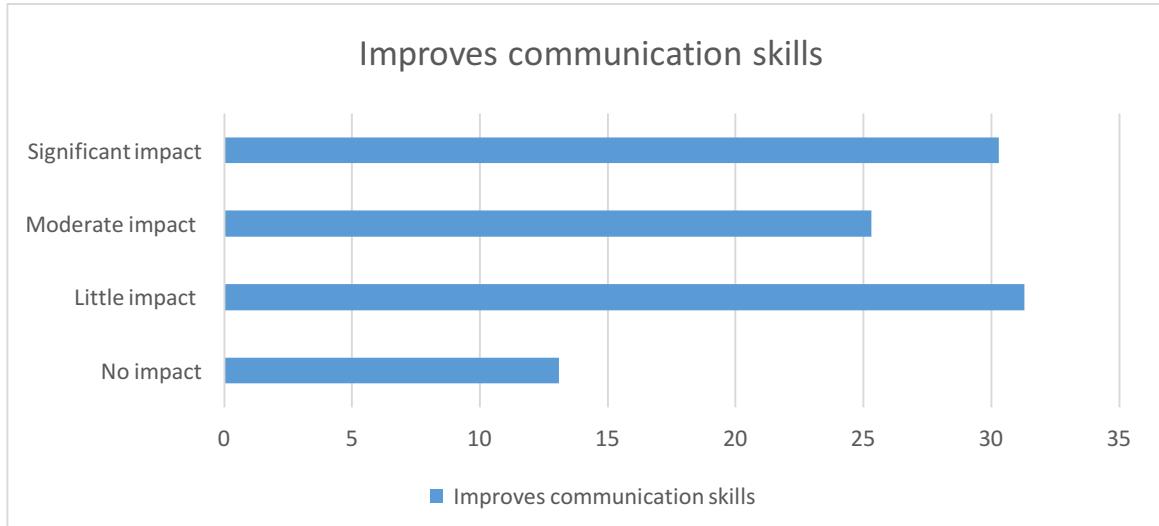
From the above figure, 30.6% of the respondents believe that social network sites have a significant impact in their lives, 29.6% picked moderate impact, 18.4% picked little impact, and 21.4% picked no impact. This demonstrates that social networks have a significant impact in staying connected to family and friends in Ireland on majority of the respondents.

Figure 34 - Staying connected to family and friends in your home country



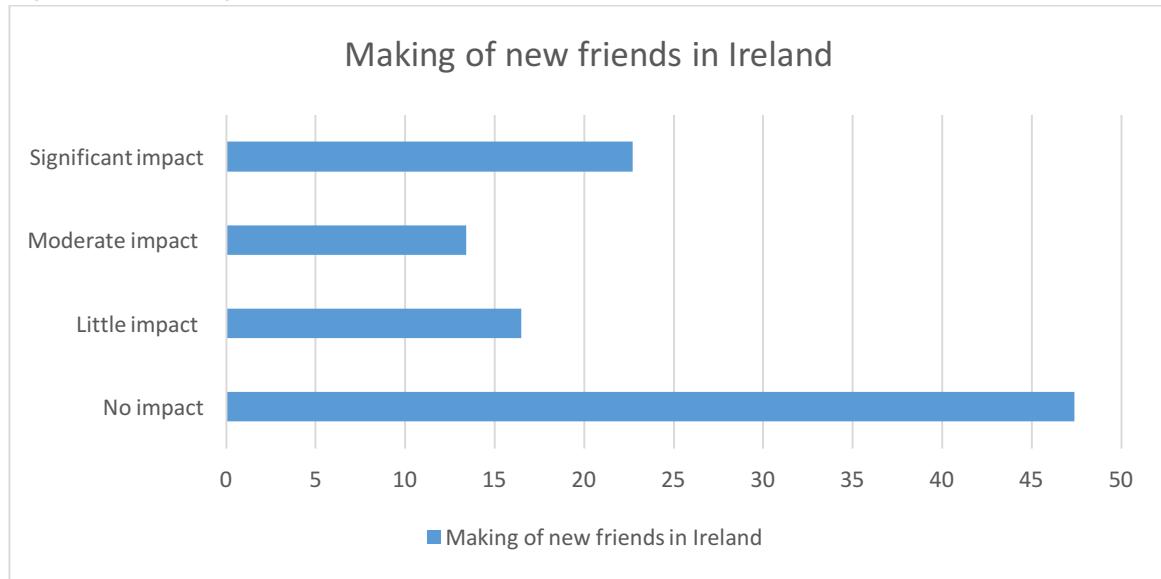
From the above figure, 57.6% of the respondents believe that social network sites have a significant impact in their lives, 23.2% picked moderate impact, 11.1% picked little impact, and a relatively low percentage of 8.1% picked no impact. This demonstrates that social networks have a significant impact in staying connected to family and friends in their home country on majority of the respondents.

Figure 35 - Improves communication skills



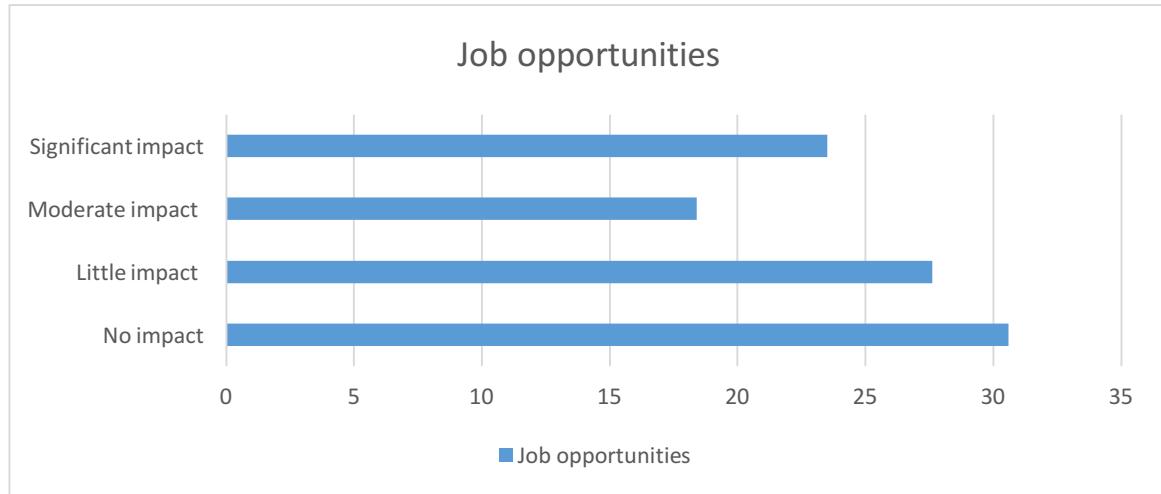
In regards to improving communication skills, majority (31.3%) of the respondent identify that social network sites have little impact in their lives, while a close percentage of 30.3% identify that it has a significant impact, 25.3% picked moderate impact and 13.1% of the respondent picked no impact. This demonstrates that social networking sites have little impact on majority of the respondent.

Figure 36 - Making of new friends in Ireland



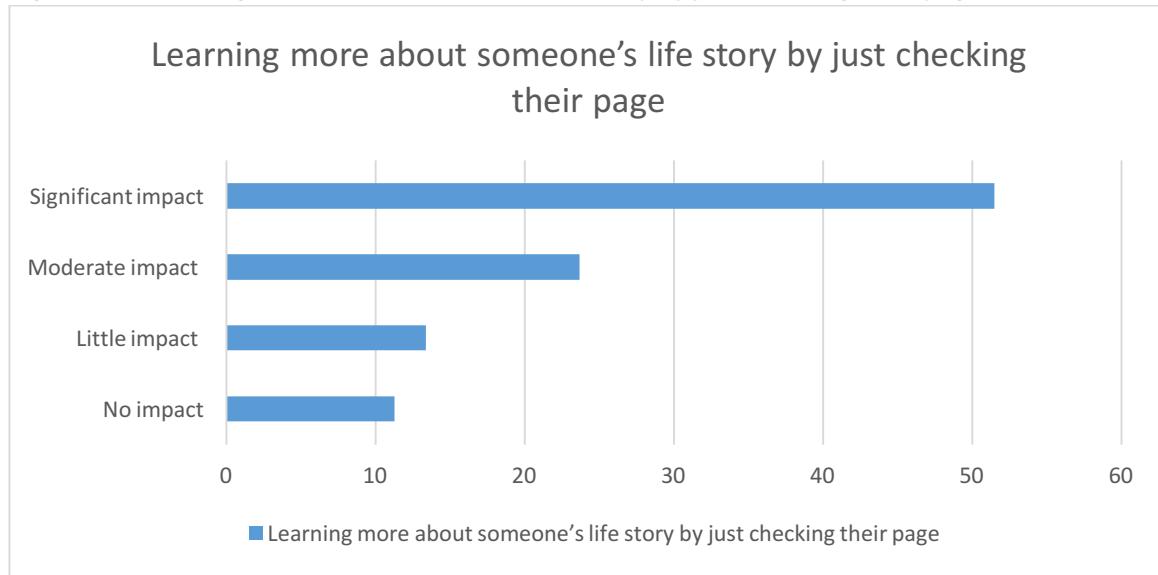
From the above figure, it can be seen that social network sites have no impact in terms of making new friends in Ireland in the vast majority of the respondents (47.4%) lives. However, 22.7% of the respondents believe that it has a significant impact, 13.4% respondents picked moderate impact and 16.4% of the respondents picked little impact.

Figure 37 - Job opportunities



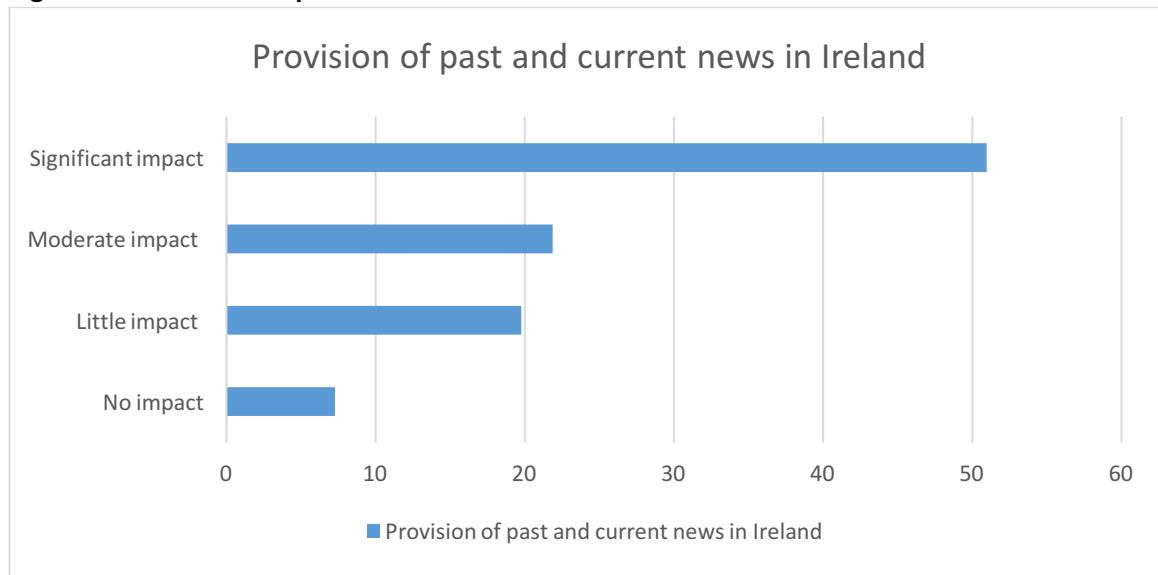
From the above figure, 23.5% of the respondents believe that social network sites have a significant impact in their lives, 18.4% picked moderate impact, 27.6% picked little impact, and 30.6% picked no impact. This demonstrates that social networks have no impact in getting job opportunities in Ireland on majority of the respondents.

Figure 38 - Learning more about someone's life story by just checking their page



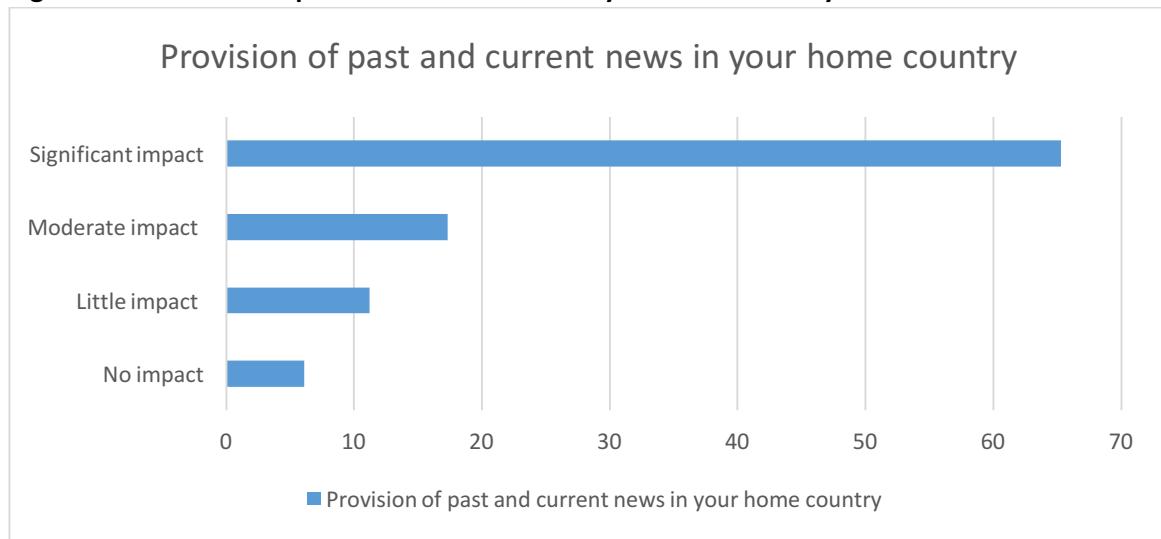
From the above figure, 51.5% of the respondents believe that social network sites have a significant impact in their lives, 23.7% picked moderate impact, 13.4% picked little impact, and 11.3% picked no impact. This demonstrates that social networks have a significant impact on majority of the respondents in regards to knowing more about someone's life.

Figure 39 - Provision of past and current news in Ireland



From the above figure, it can be seen that social network sites have significant impact in terms of getting old and current news in Ireland in the vast majority of the respondents (51%), 21.9% of the respondents believe that it has a moderate impact, while 19.8% picked little impact and 7.3% of the respondents picked no impact.

Figure 40 - Provision of past and current news in your home country



Finally, for this sub-section, it can be seen from the above figure that social network sites have significant impact in terms of getting old and current news in the home country of the vast majority of the respondents (65.3%), 17.3% of the respondents believe that it has a moderate impact, while 11.3% picked little impact and 6% of the respondents picked no impact.

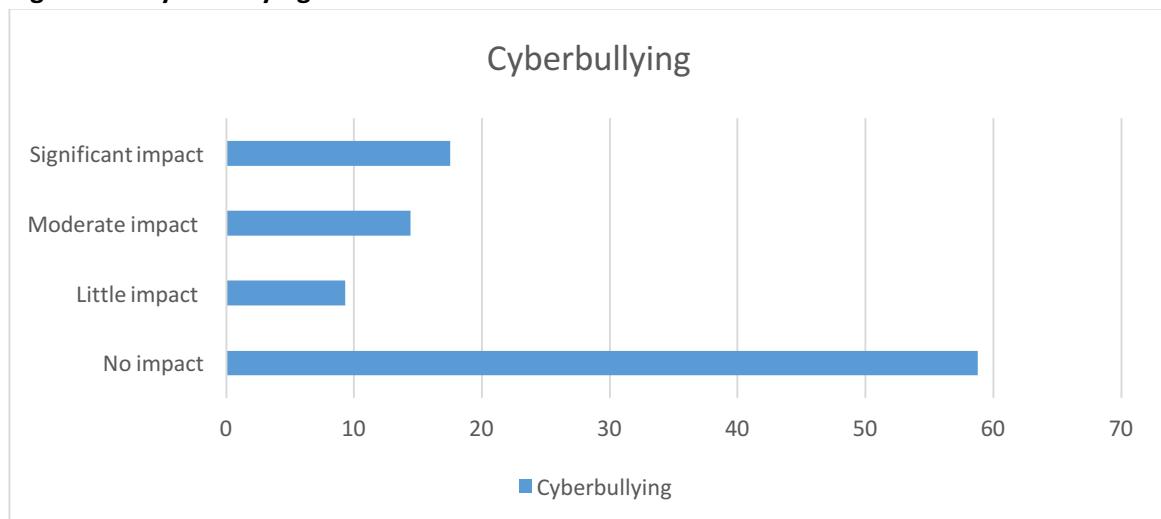
Respondents were also given an opportunity to write out other positive impacts of social network sites in their lives and there was only one response and is it shown in Table 3 below

Table 3 – Other positive impacts of social network sites

Comment
"Keeping me to date with everything"

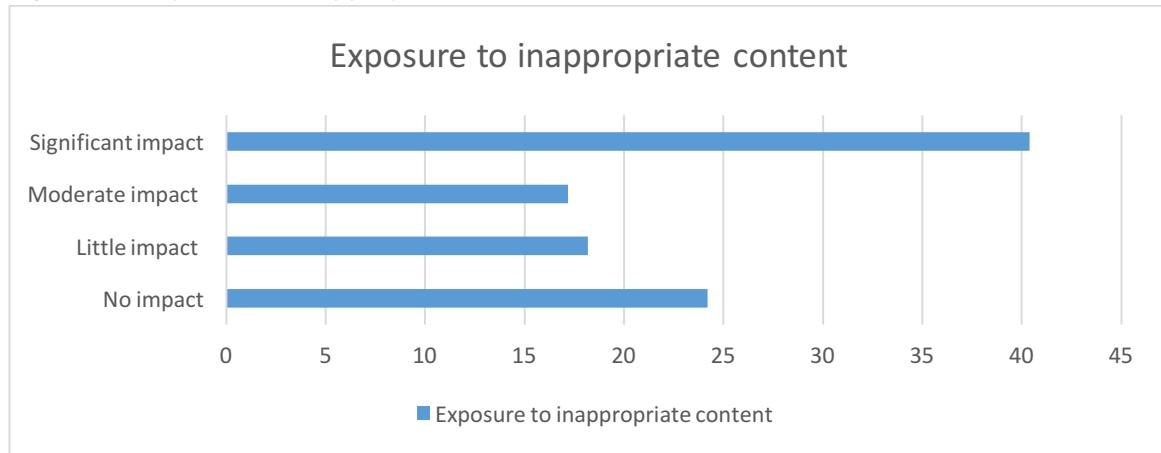
b. Negative Impacts

Figure 41 - Cyberbullying



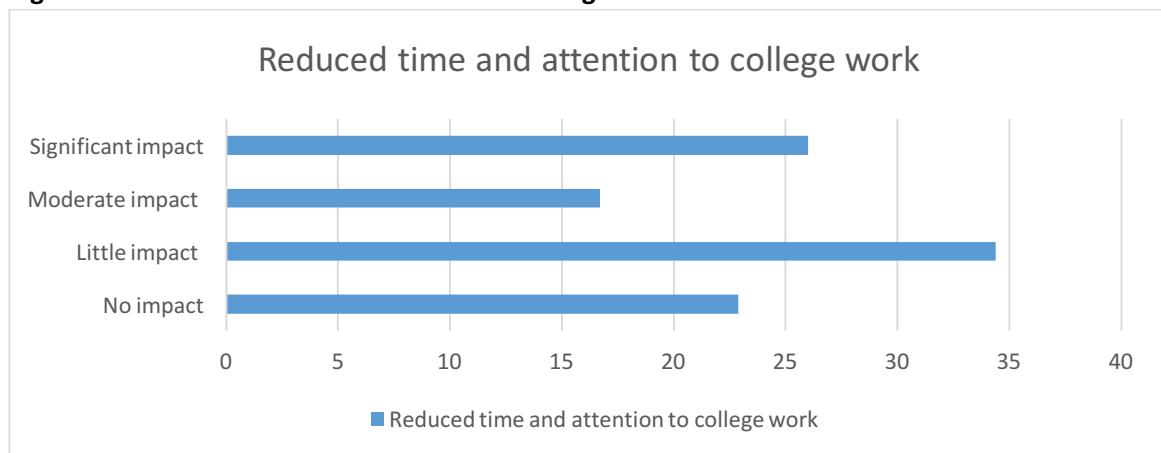
From the above figure, it can be seen that social network sites have no impact in terms of cyberbullying in the vast majority of the respondents (58.8%), 14.4% of the respondents believe that it has a moderate impact, while 9.3% picked little impact and 17.5% of the respondents picked significant impact.

Figure 42 - Exposure to inappropriate content



In regards to being exposed to inappropriate contents on social network sites, majority of the respondents (40.4%) admit to it having a significant impact in their lives, 17.2% of the respondents picked moderate impact, 18.2% picked little impact and 24.2% picked no impact.

Figure 43 - Reduced time and attention to college work



From the above figure, it can be seen that social network sites have little impact in terms of reduction of time and attention to college work in the lives of vast majority of the respondents (34.4%), 16.3% of the respondents believe that it has a moderate impact, while 22.9% picked little impact and 26% of the respondents picked significant impact.

From the below figure, it can be seen that social network sites have little impact in terms of reduction of time for play and exercise in the vast majority of the respondents (31.6%), 30.6% of

the respondents believe that it has a no impact, while 16.3% picked moderate impact and 21.4% of the respondents picked significant impact.

Figure 44 - Reduced time for play and exercise

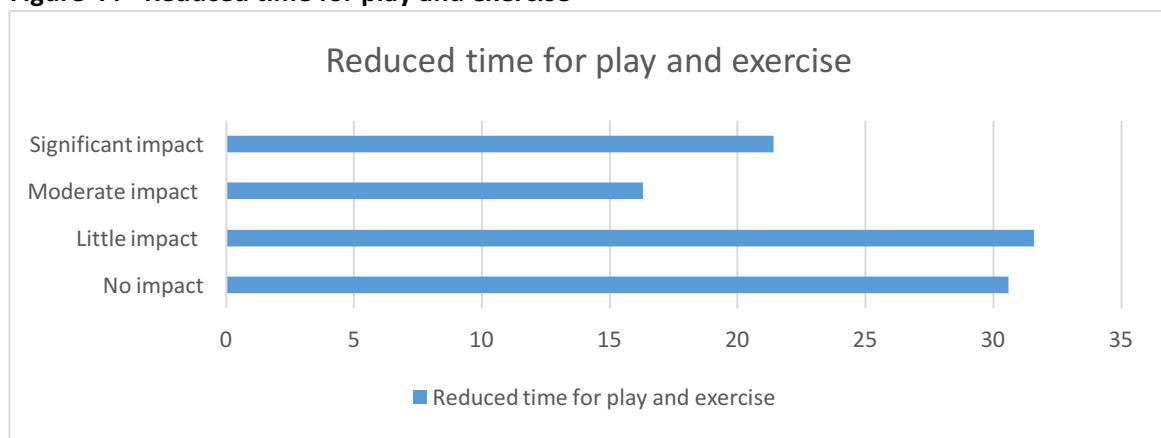
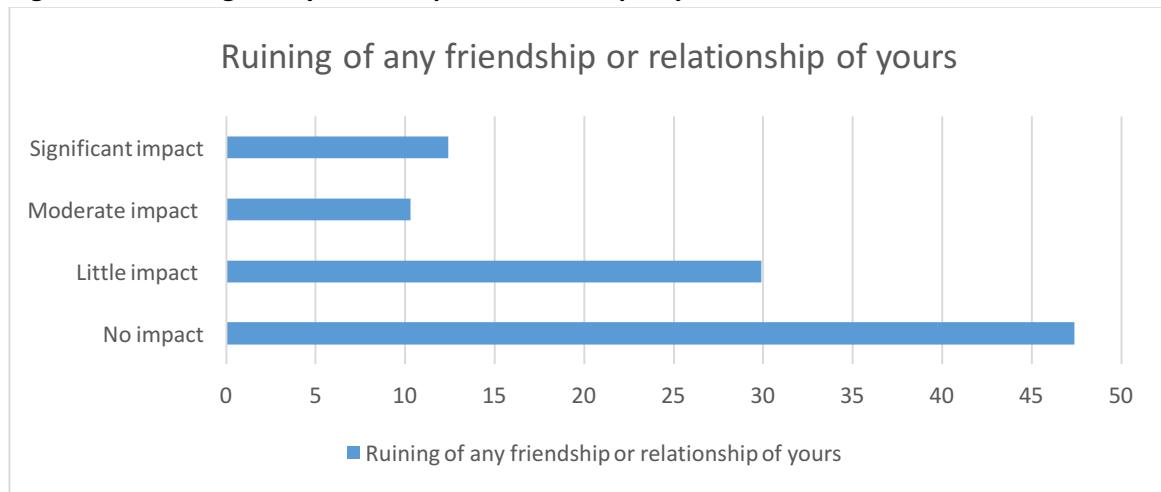
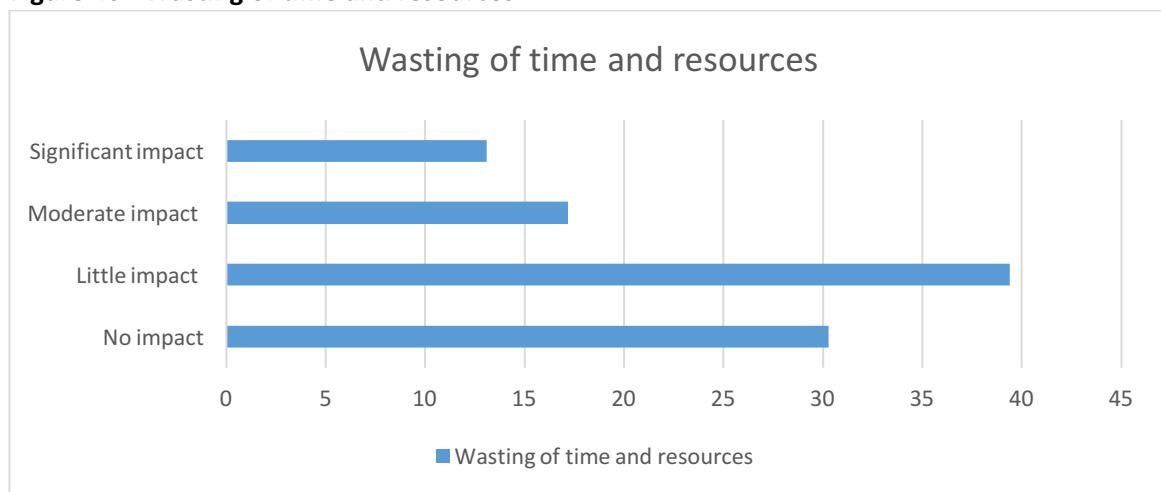


Figure 45 - Ruining of any friendship or relationship of yours



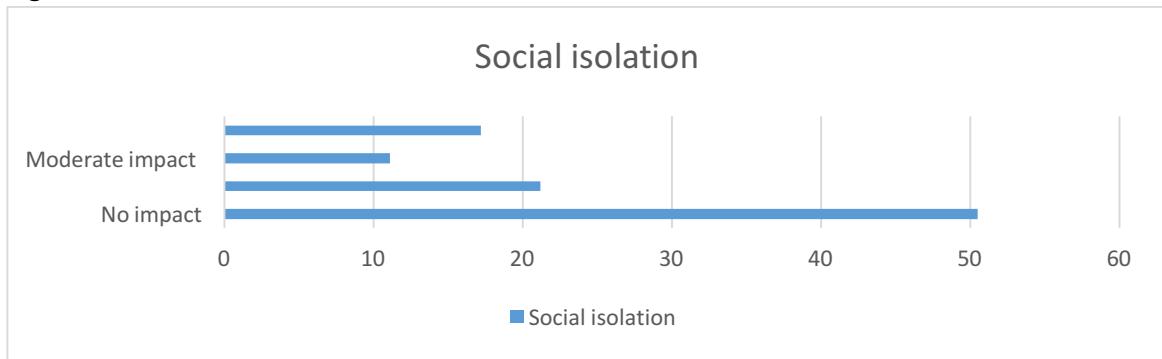
In regards to relationships being ruined because of social network sites, majority of the respondents (47.4%) admit to it having no impact in their lives, 29.9% of the respondents picked little impact, 12.4% picked significant impact and 10.3% picked moderate impact.

Figure 46 - Wasting of time and resources



Pertaining to time and resources wastage due to social network sites, majority of the respondents (39.4%) admit to it having a little impact in their lives, 30.3% of the respondents picked no impact, 17.2% picked moderate impact and 13.1% picked no impact.

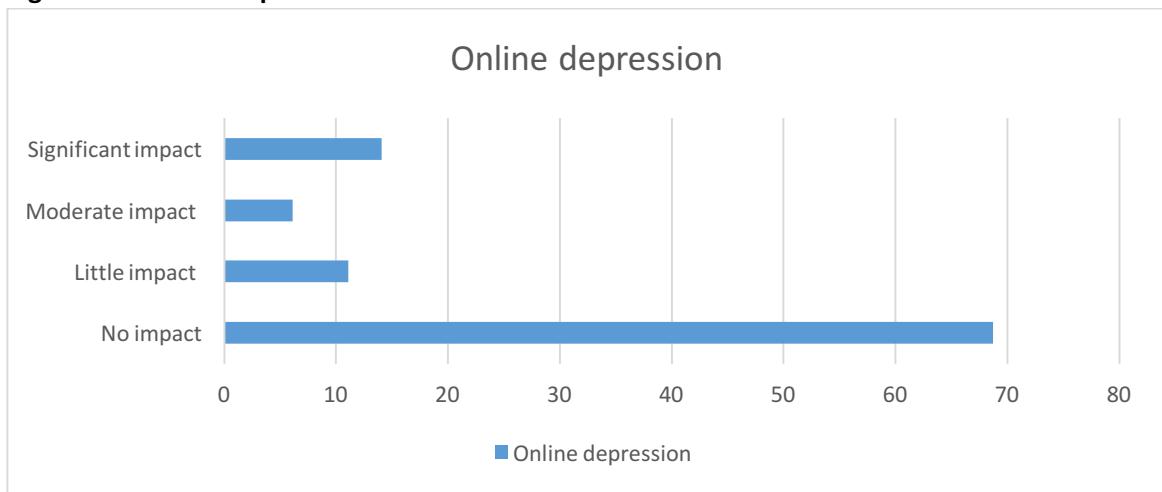
Figure 47 - Social isolation



The above figure shows that majority of the respondents (50.5%) admit to social network sites having no impact in their lives in regards to social isolation, 21.2% of the respondents picked little impact, 17.2% picked significant impact and 11.1% picked moderate impact.

Finally, for this section, majority of the respondents (68.7%) admit to social network sites having no impact in their lives in regards to being online depressed, 14.1% of the respondents picked significant impact, 11.1% picked little impact and 6.1% picked moderate impact.

Figure 48 - Online depression



Respondents were also given an opportunity to write out other positive impacts of social network sites in their lives and there was only one response and it is shown in Table 4 below

Table 4 – Other negative impacts of social network sites

Comment
“None”

Section F: Other Reasons for Using Social Network Sites

This section answers the research question four of this dissertation, which is “What other purposes are international students using social network sites for?”. Respondents were given an opportunity to write other purposes they use social network sites for and the all the responses are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5 – Other purposes for using social network sites

Comments
“I listen to music on YouTube and watch movies too on YouTube.”
“Information, entertainment and making new friends.”
“Keeping in touch with other bloggers, promoting my blog, finding out about events.”
“Music, Movies.”
“Boredom, meet new people, entertainment”
“Sports, News, Concert Infos”
“Entertainment, dating and to improve my English.”
“Find entertaining content, share opinions, fill up spare time.”
“Sports, sports, sports”
“Staying updated”
“News, follow friends, chill”

"I watch videos; I look for girlfriends too on social network sites."
"Videos, news"
"1. To check soccer transfers 2. To discover new music 3. To discover photography ideas and concept"
"To help improve my brand, to keep up with news, to link up with people who share same business ideas with me"
"For Networking, to know current trends in my field of study"
"Networking, work and surveys"
"I interact with other people in my line of profession on social network sites like Twitter"
"To listen to music, to watch movies and get sport updates"
"1. Helps with research assignments 2. Helps with making new friends 3. It practically makes life better"
"I use social network site to promote my business"
"For Business deals and relationships, Marketing and exposure"
"Making new friend/ finding a partner/ entertaining"
"YouTube: Im listening to music on YouTube. Facebook Messenger: Mostly people are using and I text them via messenger and also Viber. LinkedIn: Employers can search my page and contact me via this website. A friend of mine got a job in GOOGLE and they contacted her via LinkedIn"
"Keeping in touch, research and keeping up to date with happenings around the world"
"Keep up with fashion trends Laugh Have something to talk about with friends"
"I get live sport updates and interact with other law students like myself"
"To watch videos on YouTube"

"Helps to know what is going on in the world Get other people's views on political issues. To pass time"
"News and article Reading, Topic Discussions, Sharing hobbies"
A. To stay updated with trends and gist. B. To stalk people and see what my friends are up to. C. To be able to interact with my family.
"I watch videos on YouTube and get live sport updates on Twitter"
"I watch and listen to music on YouTube"
"Business Friendship News"
"Reading gossip, entertainment, to cure boredom"
"Communication, news, and interaction"
"Can't think of any besides school work, and talking to friends that are far away."
"To find what's trending in fashion and beauty"
"Entertainment"
"Online Dating"
"Learning about other cultures"
"Evangelism, Study, Communication"
"I watch videos on YouTube"
"Get sport updates"
"Networking with people in my profession"
"Networking Getting News Gossip"

“YouTube - I watch and listen to music”
“Blogging”
“Research, entertainment and information”
“Sport updates on twitter, sport bants and discussion on twitter.”
“Social awareness and advertisements of new developments. Establishing new relationships. Learning about global events and happenings.”
“Shopping for gadgets, discovering other cultures and business ideas”
“News around the world gists/gossips happening in my country. Football updates.”
“Music, traveling and shopping”
“Stalking, distractions and relaxing”
“Get information, interact and entertainment”

This open-ended question asked international students to write out other reasons why they use social network sites. Though the data was limited to writing out just three purposes, some common themes were observed.

From the comments above, some of the international students identified that they use social network sites as a form of entertainment and relaxation, by listening to music on YouTube and watching videos, getting sport updates on Twitter. For example:

“Sports, sports, sports”

“To check soccer transfers”

“I listen to music on YouTube and watch movies too on YouTube.”

“YouTube: I’m listening to music on YouTube”

Also interesting was the fact that some international students use social network sites to promote their businesses and blogs. For example:

“I use social network site to promote my business”

"Keeping in touch with other bloggers, promoting my blog, finding out about events."

"To help improve my brand, to keep up with news, to link up with people who share same business ideas with me"

Another interesting finding from the above comments is that some international students use social network sites to stalk their friends and family back home, which is understandable because as stated by Yakunina, Weigold, Hercegovac, and Elsayed (2013) in the chapter two of this dissertation, international students experience homesickness and this may lead them to stalk their family and friends back home to "feel in touch" with what is happening in their lives. For example:

"Stalking, distractions and relaxing"

"To stalk people and see what my friends are up to."

4.3-Qualitative Data Research and Analysis

Exploration of the study's survey findings through the collection and analysis of qualitative interview data. The interviewees {international students who attend Griffith College Dublin} were asked 4 questions [which is listed out in Appendix B] that further answers the research questions of this study and also some of the answers given were recommendations. The interviews were done individually as stated in chapter three.

From the survey, it was concluded that majority of the respondents do not communicate with their lecturers on social network sites. This finding brought up the question of "should lecturers communicate with their students more via social network sites.?"

Interviewee one stated that "*I think it is good for lecturers to communicate with students via social network sites; it is better and simpler I think.*"

Interviewee two stated that "*I don't know about other international students, but I often communicate with my lecturers via email and it helps me a lot. I think yahoo is also a type of social network platform.*"

Interviewee three also believes that international students should be able to communicate with their professors via social network sites because it is also a means of communication. She stated: "*There are some international students who are shy, they cannot ask questions in classrooms and with social network they can share their doubts, share their issues with their professors and professors should look forward to it.*"

Interviewee four stated "*I come from a country where communication on various social network sites especially Facebook was helpful between a lecturer and a student. However, in Dublin communication between a lecturer and a student is very tough. I think lecturers should communicate a whole lot more with students first before moving to social network sites.*"

In brief, international students believe that they should be able to communicate with their lecturers more on social network sites because it is easier and they will be able to share the things going on with their academic lives effectively. This should help also in improving the academic lives of international students.

It was concluded from the survey that class groups created on social network sites do not help the majority of respondent's academic life. This finding brought up the question of "What can be done to change this?"

Interviewee three stated: "*Social network class groups are important as well. I will suggest that students should discuss class work and everyone in the group comes up with their ideas through that.*"

Interviewee four stated "*Personally I feel nothing can be done to change this. Rather I see the groups as an information hub where little things that have been missed in class is repeated on such sites.*"

In brief, international students believe that there should be more communication and interactions on class groups created on social network sites by their classmates. It should be more of an "information hub" to help assist with course assessments.

The third question "Does social network sites make you feel closer to home? Does it help with loneliness?"

Interviewee one stated "*Yes it does all the time. I use WhatsApp, Facebook and FaceTime to talk to my daughter because I get to see her and I feel close to home.*"

Interviewee two stated "*Using Viber and Skype so that I communicate with my mum, my family. I also use Facebook to chat with friends from my country and thanks to social network platforms, it is made easier.*" She added: "*I don't get homesickness because I can communicate with them very often, every day, every time.*"

Interviewee three stated "*Of course, because it is the best way. Ten years back there were not many social networks available. 10 to 15 years if you were an international student here, you will have had to communicate with them through other media.*" She added: "*I get to talk to my family via social network sites and get rid of the homesickness.*"

Interviewee four stated "*Sometimes I do and sometimes I do not. But social network sites are cost effective when it comes to loneliness it helps a great deal to avoid being lonely and homesick.*"

Briefly, the issue of homesickness and loneliness is reduced and sometimes eliminated due to interactions with family and friends back home via social network sites. Communication with family and friends back home is made easy for international students.

The last question was on how colleges help to improve international students' relationship with other international students and Irish students via social network sites.

Interviewee two suggested that colleges should create social network apps that can help international students meet other students in their college online. She said "*I think it will be good for the college to create more social connection.*"

While interviewee four contradicts the above suggestion. She stated "*I do not think, this is the responsibility of the colleges to improve interpersonal relationships because they have a student union body which attends to the extracurricular activities of students and I think they are very effective and helpful.*"

In brief, the student union body is available for international students to create interpersonal relationships with other international students and national students, nevertheless more efforts should be made as some international students are able to communicate better online than through face to face communication.

Findings from the qualitative data, though limited, suggest some potential areas for further research. Further research could take a deeper look into the qualitative measures and find out more about the differences between communicating online with their friends from back home and their friends in the Ireland and also the willingness of lecturers communicating with students via social network sites more.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

5.1-Overview

In view of what was discussed in chapter four, this chapter will review the dissertation and make conclusions on whether it has met its objectives. The limitations and recommendations for further research will also be discussed.

5.2-Conclusion

As the number of international student increases, there is a great potential for the use of social network sites usage. This dissertation sought to find out the implications of social network sites usage on the academic and personal lives of international students. For each research question outlined at the start, results were for the most part in line with what was expected on starting the investigation, with respect to both the online survey as well as that of the personal interviews.

The data suggested high frequently of social network sites usage among international students, and that social network sites have indeed impacted their academic lives [because they are students in a foreign land] and their personal lives [because they are far away from home] both positively and negatively. These social network sites are mainly used for relationship maintenance, socializing, getting to know about the Irish culture and getting information. This finding is similar to Rahman (2014) research study finding.

One finding of potential theoretical significant is the frequency in which social network sites are used and its addiction, which is a part of the negative impact of social network sites according to (Boyd, 2014, p.77). The data collected suggested that majority of the respondents (85%) use social network sites 7 days in a week and spend about 1 to 12 hours per day, this means that they spend half a day on social network sites and this may lead to ignoring the real life and most significantly to addiction.

The urge to stay connected to family and friends back home could be the reason why social network sites are used frequently by international students. In my opinion, more research needs to be conducted in order to better understand the mechanisms of these relationships.

Apart from getting information on social network sites for their academic research, essays and assignments, there are indeed academic groups created on social network sites by college students to help assist themselves after class lectures. This is good for international students who aren't confident enough to have face to face conversations with their class mates and also good for getting instant response to any academic related questions.

In Faruk (2015) research study, it was discovered that some of the positive impacts of social network sites on students' academic lives include communication, discussion, motivation, enabling restudying, easy to reach. This survey has a similar finding.

In addition to this, the survey discovered that communicating with lectures via social network sites is quite difficult for international students. From the interview, it was suggested that communicating via social sites is a means of communication and should be fully incorporated in colleges, as some college students feel more comfortable having online conversations with their lectures than having face to face conversations. This suggestion is debatable and can be researched in future studies.

By leaving their home countries, international students may lose their close relationships with people who they have grown to love and cherish, people who have one way or the other encouraged their sense of self and support. As a result, it is likely that they may be lonely and battle with homesickness. In order to manage such, international students may go on social network sites looking to make friends with Irish people, people from their home countries in Ireland and also people from other countries in Ireland.

While Catherine el al. (2014) discovers that international students tend to socialize with a large number of other international students via social sites, the data collected for this research study discovers otherwise. This research study discovers that majority of international students do not make friends with Irish people and the people from their home countries via social network sites. This may be because the majority are busy communicating and maintaining old relationships with family and friends back home rather than making new ones.

Some of the negative impacts of social network sites that have a significant and a little impact on international students from the data collected are addiction, exposure to inappropriate contents, reduced time for play and exercise and wastage of time and resources. While ruining of friendships or relationships, social isolation and online depression has no impact on international students' personal lives.

Whereas the positive impacts of social network sites on international students include the provision of social interaction, staying connected to family and friends both in Ireland and in home country, provision of old and current news both in Ireland and home country, getting to know more about an individual by checking their social network pages and it improves communication skills.

Finally, as stated in chapter 4, apart from using social network sites as a means of communication and getting information online, international students also use social network sites as a form of entertainment and relaxation [by listening to music and watching videos on YouTube, getting

sports updates on Twitter]. International students also use social network sites to promote their businesses and blogs and also to stalk their family and friends online.

5.3-Limitations and Recommendations

Some limitations of this study should be noted. Firstly, the sample was limited to international students located in just one college in Dublin. The findings might be different if it focused on all colleges and universities in Ireland. While international students in Ireland may share similar impacts of social network sites in their academic and personal lives, these common characteristics were not examined thus limiting the generalizability of the finding. However, it is representative.

Secondly, during the course of the research, I discovered that it would have been better if a focus group was done instead of personal interviews. However, this dissertation was done during the summer period and it was quite difficult getting a larger number of international students to participate. Future studies could address these issues by combining a larger sample of international students studying in different universities and colleges.

Thirdly, a major limitation was making sense of my data after collection. Nevertheless, I was able to read books on research methods and analysed the data in the best way that I could. Lastly, time constraint was also an issue, during the course of the research, I thought about so many ways [For example, interviewing Educators who work closely with international students] that could have uplifted the findings of this research, however, due to time constraint I was limited.

Some recommendation of this study should also be noted apart from the ones stated above. Social network sites are providing a wide range of services and packages for everyone's use is one main development in this generation and the results from this study have provided some practical implications. The findings can inform international students and individuals who work with international students, such as international offices in colleges about the implications of social network sites usage by international students.

Not only with these individuals understand more clearly the challenges that international students have using social network sites, but also it can help change the way in which international students are discerned. Critically, the findings have further endorsed the need for Educators who have the ability to assist international students in improving their social network sites usage for educational purposes and ways in which they can be relieved from conditions like homesickness and the need for social connectedness. Educators need to be concerned about these problems and try to find better ways to solve these problems.

Bibliography

- Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). *The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities*. Journal of studies in international education.
- Bandura, A. (1986) *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice _ hall.
- Berger, A.A. (1998). *Media Research Techniques*. (Second Edition). Sage Publications: USA.
- Berger, A.A. (2012) *Media and society: A critical perspective*. 3rd edn. United States: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Bista, K. and Foster, C. (eds.) (2016) *Exploring the social and academic experiences of international students in higher education institutions*. United States: Information Science Reference.
- boyd, d. m. and Ellison, N. B. (2007) 'Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* Vol. 13, Issue 1, p210-230, Blackwell.
- boyd, danah (2014) *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. United States: Yale University Press.
- Catherine, F. (2012) *Griffith College*. Available at: <http://www.educationinireland.com/en/where-can-i-study-/view-all-private-higher-education-institutions/griffith-college-dublin-introduction.html> (Accessed: 4 July 2016).
- Catherine, G., Marsha, B., Basil, A. and Shanton, C. (2014) 'Home away from home: International students and their identity-based social networks in Australia', *Journal of International Students*, 4(1), pp. 15–2.
- Chalawadi, B. and Dinesh, D.V. (2016) The effect of Internet uses on youths. International Recognition Multidisciplinary Research Journal. Vol5, Issue7, 3 (2), pp 1.
- Denscombe, M. (2010) *The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects*. 4th edn. Maidenhead, England: McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing.
- Dominick, J.R. and Wimmer, R.D. (2002) *Mass media research: An introduction*. United States: Wadsworth Publishing Co.
- Donelan, H., Kear, K. and Ramage, M. (eds.) (2009) *Online communication and collaboration: A reader*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Faruk, V., Ömer (2015) 'Positive and negative aspects of using social networks in higher education: A focus group study', *Educational Research and Reviews*, 10(8), pp. 1147–1166.

Fread, D. (2014) ProQuest document view - international students' use of social networking sites: A study of usage, social Connectedness, and Acculturative stress. Available at: <http://gradworks.umi.com/15/61/1561065.html> (Accessed: 4 July 2016).

Gunter, B. (2000) *Media research methods: Measuring audiences, reactions and impact*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hansen, A., Cottle, S., Negrine, R. and Newbold, C. (1998) *Mass Communication Research Methods*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Harris, M. (2015) *Top 4 Social Music Sites Some of the Top Free Digital Music Services to Use for Social Networking*. Available at: <http://mp3.about.com/od/digitalmusicdelivery/tp/Top-Social-Music-Sites.htm> (Accessed: 11 July 2016).

Hesse-Biber, S.N. (2010) *Mixed methods research: Merging theory with practice*. New York: Guilford Publications.

ICOS (no date) *Student statistics / student Info. / Irish Council for International Students (ICOS)* -. Available at: http://www.icosirl.ie/eng/student_information/student_statistics.html (Accessed: 9 June 2016).

ICOS and international students (1994) Available at: <http://www.ucc.ie/publications/heeu/Minority/cox.htm> (Accessed: 16 June 2016).

Ireland, E. (2015) *25% increase in International Students Studying in Ireland since 2012 – Enterprise Ireland*. Available at: <https://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/News/PressReleases/2016-PressReleases/25-per-cent-increase-in-international-students-studying-in-Ireland-since-2012.html> (Accessed: 16 June 2016).

Jane, C. (2015) 'Students' stories of studying abroad: Reflections upon return', *Journal of International Students*, 5(1), pp. 50–59.

Johnson, R., Nevil, Prabha, V., Blessy and Judith, N. (2015) 'Online social networking: Usage in adolescents', *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(22), pp. 80–84.

Johnson, R.B. and Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2004) 'Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come', *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), pp. 14–26. doi: 10.3102/0013189x033007014.

Kadushin, C. (2012) *Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings*. New York: Oxford Univ Pr on Demand.

Kumar, R.C. (2008) *Research methodology*. India: APH Publishing.

Leading Social Networks Worldwide as of April 2016, Ranked by Number of Active Users (in millions). Available at: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/> (Accessed: 16 June 2016).

Learning, I. of L. (2009) 3. *Importance of quantitative research.* Available at: http://libweb.surrey.ac.uk/library/skills/Introduction%20to%20Research%20and%20Managing%20Information%20Leicester/page_45.htm (Accessed: 20 July 2016).

Lievrouw, L. A. and Livingstone, S. (2002) *Handbook of New Media: Social Shaping and Consequences of ICTS.* SAGE publication Ltd.

Lister, M., Dovey, J., Giddings, S., Grant, I. and Kelly, K. (2008) *New media: A Critical Introduction.* 2nd edn. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Maiworm, F. and Teichler, U. (1996) *Study Abroad and Early Careers: Experiences of Former ERASMUS Students.* United Kingdom: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Maria, S. (2012) *Higher education.* Available at: <http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Higher-Education/> (Accessed: 9 June 2016).

McQuail, D. (2000) *McQuail's Mass Communication theory.* 4th edn. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

McQuail, D. (2010) *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory.* 6th edn. London: Sage Publications.

Murdock, G., Golding, P., Pickering, M., Deacon, D. (1998). *Researching Communications. A practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis.* Arnold Ltd: Great Britain.

Palfrey, J.G. and Gasser, U. (2010) *Born digital: Understanding the first generation of digital natives.* New York: Basic Books.

Pandit, K. (2007). The importance of international students on our campuses. *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers*, 69, 156-159.

Perrin, A. (2015) *Social Media Usage: 2005-2015.* Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/08/social-networking-usage-2005-2015/> (Accessed: 21 June 2016)

PEWReasearch Center (2014), *Social Networking Fact Sheet* Available at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/data-trend/media-and-technology/social-networking-use/> (Accessed: 21 June 2016)

Pollak, S. (2015) *Report Sheds Light on Digital Addiction Among Irish Children.* Available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/report-sheds-light-on-digital-addiction-among-irish-children-1.2096183> (Accessed: 11 July 2016).

Preece, J. (2006) *Online communities: Designing Usability, Supporting Sociability*. United Kingdom: Wiley, John & Sons.

Project Atlas Ireland (2016) *International students in Ireland*. Available at: <http://www.iie.org/en/Services/Project-Atlas/Ireland/International-Students-In-Ireland#.V44mlVQrLIU> (Accessed: 19 July 2016).

Rahman, N (2014) The Usage and Online Behavior of Social Networking Sites among International Students in New Zealand. *The journal of Social Media in society* 3 (2), fall 2014, pp. 65 - 81.

S, A.-H., Abir and H, A.-B., Ali (2014) 'The impact of social networking: A study of the influence of Smartphones on college students', *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 7(2), pp. 129–136.

Saw, G., Abbott, W., Donaghey, J. and McDonald, C. (2013) 'Social media for international students – it's not all about Facebook', *Library Management*, 34(3), pp. 156–174. doi: 10.1108/01435121311310860.

Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting Qualitative Data. (Third Edition)*. TJ International: Great Britain

Sovic, S. / and Blythman, M. (eds.) (2012) *International students negotiating higher education: Critical perspectives*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Strasburger, V.C., Wilson, B.J. and Jordan, A.B. (2008) *Children, adolescents, and the media - 2nd edition*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Strategy Group (2011) *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* Available at: http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/national_strategy_for_higher_education_2030.pdf (Accessed: 9 June 2016).

Summers, M., & Volet, S. (2008). Students' attitudes towards culturally mixed groups on international campuses: impact of participation in diverse and non-diverse groups. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33, 357-370.

The impact of social media [Youth engagement & social media - an online guide] (2014) Available at: http://www.practicalparticipation.co.uk/yes/what/what_does_it_change (Accessed 10 November 2015)

Thurlow, C., Lengel, L., Tomic, A. and Tomic, P.A. (2004) *Computer mediated communication: Social interaction online*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Waters, J.K. and Lester, J. (2010) *The everything guide to social media: All you need to know about participating in today's most popular online communities*. United States: Adams Media. august

Wiseman, J.P. and Aron, M.S. (1972) Field projects in sociology. United Kingdom: Corgi Childrens.

Woginrich, J. (2016) *How I quit my smartphone addiction and really started living*. Available at:
<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/feb/11/smartphone-technology-addiction-facebook-twitter> (Accessed: 11 July 2016).

Yakunina, E.S., Weigold, I.K., Weigold, A., Hercegovac, S. and Elsayed, N. (2013) 'International students' personal and Multicultural strengths: Reducing Acculturative stress and promoting adjustment', *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 91(2), pp. 216–223. doi: 10.1002/j.1556-6676.2013.00088.x.

Zerman, S. (2014) "*The Impacts of Study Abroad Opportunities on International Students*". Thesis. Rochester Institute of Technology. Available at: <http://scholarworks.rit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=9025&context=theses> (Accessed: 2 August 2016).

Appendices

Appendix A (Survey Questionnaire)

Masters Dissertation Survey

Topic: The implications of social network sites Usage on International College Students' Academic and Personal Lives

Section A

Demographic Data

1. Sex

Mark only one oval.

Male

Female

2. Age

.....

3. Which course are you studying?

.....

4. Nationality

.....

SECTION B

General Knowledge of Social Network Sites

5. Do you know about social network sites like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat? Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

**6. Which of the following social network sites do you use most often in Dublin?
(Please pick three) Check all that apply.**

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Snapchat
- Pinterest
- Instagram
- Other:

7. On average, how many days do you use social network sites in a week?

.....

8. On average, how much time do you spend daily on a social network sites? Mark only one oval.

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 to 12 hours per day
- 13-24 hours per day

9. Do you think you are addicted to social network sites? Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Fair
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

SECTION C

Impacts of social network sites on your academic life

10. Do social network sites have a huge impact on your academic life? Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Fair
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

11 Are you able to communicate with your lecturers on social network sites? Mark only one oval.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- Not applicable

12. Are you on any social network sites group created by your classmates? Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

13. If yes, has the group helped your academic life in anyway? Mark only one oval.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very Often
- Not applicable

14. Are you able to share and discuss inclass lectures with your class mates on social network sites? Mark only one oval.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- Not applicable

15. Do you get to find out if your results are out via any social network sites? Mark only one oval.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- Not applicable

16. Have social network sites helped any of your assignments or essays? Mark only one oval.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- Not applicable

17. Have social network sites improved your academic life in any other way? Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

18. **18. If yes, please state the ways it has**

Section D

Impacts of social network sites on your personal life

19. Do social network sites have a huge impact on your personal life? Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Fair
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

20. Are you able to express yourself better on social networks than face to face conversations in Dublin? Mark only one oval.

- A great deal
- Much
- Somewhat
- A little
- No

21 Do you get to communicate with your family and friends back home on social network sites? Mark only one oval.

- A great deal
- Much
- Somewhat
- A little
- No

22. How often is the communication with your family and friends back home on social network sites? Mark only one oval.

- Very frequently
- Frequently
- Rarely
- Very rarely
- Never

23. Do you communicate with people from your country who live in Dublin on social network sites? Mark only one oval.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- Not applicable

24. Do you communicate with people from other countries in Dublin on social network sites? Mark only one oval.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- Not applicable

25 Does social networking improve your interpersonal relationship with Irish students?
Mark only one oval.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- Not applicable

26. Does social networking improve your interpersonal relationship with students from your home country? Mark only one oval.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often
- Not applicable

27. Have you ever made friends with Irish people on social network sites? Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

28. If yes, do you get to meet up with them in real life? Mark only one oval.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very Often
- Not applicable
- No

29. Have you ever made friends with people from your home country on social network sites? Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

30. If yes, do you get to meet up with them in real life? Mark only one oval.

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very Often
- Not applicable

31. Have social network sites helped your social life in Dublin? Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

32. If yes, please state the ways it has below

SECTION E: Positive impact of Social Networking

4– significant impact

3– moderate impact

2– little impact

1 – no impact

33. Provision of a basis for social interaction Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

34. Educational impact Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

35 Staying connected to family and friends in Ireland Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

36 Staying connected to family and friends in your home country Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

37. Improves communication skills Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

38. Making of new friends in Ireland Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

39. Job opportunities Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

40. Learning more about someone's life story by just checking their page Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

41. Provision of past and current news in Ireland Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

42 Provision of past and current news in your home country Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

43 If there are others, please write them out in detail

Negative impact of Social Networking

4 – significant impact

3 – moderate impact

2 – little impact

1 – No impact

44. Cyberbullying Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

45. Exposure to inappropriate content Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

46. Reduced time and attention to college work Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

47. Reduced time for play and exercise Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

48 Ruining of any friendship or relationship of yours Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

49 Wasting of time and resources Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

50. Social isolation Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

51. Online depression Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4

52. If there are others, please write them out in details

SECTION F

Other reasons for using social network sites

53. 32. Kindly write out 3 other purposes you use social network sites for

Appendix B (Interview Questions)

1. The survey conducted found out that majority of international students do not communicate with their lecturers on social network sites. Do you think this is right? Why do you think lecturers should communicate with students via social network sites more?
2. The survey also found out that class groups created on social network sites do not help majority of the respondents' academic life. As an international student, what do you think should be done to change this?
3. The survey discovered that most international students communicate with their family and friends back home very frequently via social network sites. Does this make you feel closer to home? And does this help with loneliness?
4. As an international student, how do you think colleges can help improve your interpersonal relationship with other international students and Irish students via social network sites?