VIRTUAL EXAM STUDY SUPPORT APP REWISE

BUSINESS CASE

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Problem

Due to various factors, including the prevalence of social media, mental/physical disabilities, globalisation or racism – students find themselves isolated and have to shoulder university coursework and exams all alone.

An international student study conducted twelve years ago concluded that two thirds of the respondents experienced both personal and social loneliness as a result of loss of networks or family contact [1].

Another study surveyed an American university and found out that at least 15.1% undergraduates were cyberbully victims [2]. Online chat groups can be very rough on an individual if they display any socially unacceptable behaviour. The study above linked self-esteem, depression, and loneliness to each other – meaning that students suffering from any of these issues are less likely to form lasting social bonds or interact, study with other students from their course.

Lastly, a survey by Trendence UK reported that 9.8% of people aged 16-24 always or often feel lonely. Whilst 15.8% regular students feel lonely on a daily basis, it is even worse for disabled, black and minority ethnic and international students, with percentages almost doubling.

Most importantly, the number one student concern was "coping with the course" (51.1%). The other ones in top six included making the most of their time at university (48.6%), mental health concerns, "gaining the right skills/experience for career" (41.6%), "finding a job after graduation" (46.3%).

Proposed Solution

The aim of my project is to create an Android (due to highest market share) application that will serve as a social media for exam revision. It would allow students to share files, participate in chatrooms and study groups, view exam information, have some basic gamification to reward for participation and allow anonymity if desired.

The purpose of the app is to allow students to re-connect with their university lives in a judgement-free environment. It is based on a premise that people learn most efficiently when collaborating. In my own experience, I found that the further we

(students) advance in the course the less we interact with each other due to time constraints, being scattered through modules, having gap/placement years and losing contact with friends.

The application will need some basic supervision and an initial user approval after registration to make sure it is a legitimate user. Any misuse of the application can be reported and the misbehaving student banned. The application will also be able to work with various universities, therefore Newcastle University could outsource it as a service.

Market/Competitors

There are many websites geared toward exam revision, but not many encouraging collaboration between students. The few competitors that could somewhat replicate the behaviour of my solution are:

slack

- Google Drive integration for file uploads
- Allows group, general, direct chats
  Google Calendar integration for study groups
- No way to directly extract exam info
- No way to be anonymous in the app
- Functionality has to go through a 3rd party integration
- Need to have someone monitoring the relevant Slack workspace at all times

Blackboard

- Mainly used for lecture slide, file sharing and lecture recaps
- Almost impossible to replicate my proposed solution
- Vast amount of functionality unused
- Has community discussion boards that allow student interaction, however, unused

Timescale

- Total project time: Tuesday, 28th January – Friday, 8th May
- App design time: Tuesday, 28th January – Friday, 13th March
  - Finished on Thursday, 13th February
- App development time: Thursday, 13th February – Friday, 8th May

Risks

- Not delivering all proposed functionality, due to only having two months for development and other modules/final thesis running simultaneously. I will attempt to deliver basic and intermediate functionality by using the Agile approach and initiating regular meetings with lecture leader.
- Writing insecure/cluttered/over-complicated code due to unfamiliarity with Kotlin, Android studio and lack of time.
- Creating a complex, hard to navigate user UI due to not having much user feedback or time to mitigate that with questionnaires, user groups.

References

[1] Loneliness and International Students: An Australian Study - Erlenawati Sawir, Simon Marginson, Ana Deumert, Chris Nyland, Gaby Ramia, 2008. (2020). Journal of Studies in International Education, [online] p. Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1028315307299699 [Accessed 13 Feb. 2020].

[2] Varghese, M. and Pistole, M. (2017). College Student Cyberbullying: Self-Esteem, Depression, Loneliness, and Attachment. Journal of College Counseling, 20(1), pp.7-21.

[3] Wonkhe. (2019). Only the lonely - loneliness, student activities and mental wellbeing at university. [online] Available at: https://wonkhe.com/wp-content/wonkhe-uploads/2019/03/Only-the-lonely-8-Page_v2-003.pdf [Accessed 13 Feb. 2020].

[4] Stickpng.com. (2020). Slack New Logo transparent PNG - StickPNG. [online] Available at: https://www.stickpng.com/img/icons-logos-emojis/tech-companies/slack-new-logo [Accessed 13 Feb. 2020].