

Let's Socialize While Our Academic Activities Suffer:

An Analysis of Social Media Utilization among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Enugu Metropolis

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Abstract

This study examined the nexus between social media utilization and students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis. The main aim of this research was to investigate the influence of social media on the academic performance of students in tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis. Four research questions were designed and hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A survey was conducted by administering 381 copies of questionnaire to students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT); Institute of Management Technology (IMT); and University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (UNEC). Copies of questionnaire tailored to suit social media utilization and academic performance were administered to 381 students through multi-stage sampling technique and data were analysed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings indicated that there is widespread use of variety of social media among students of tertiary institutions. It also revealed that students engaged in diverse social and academic activities on Social Media Platforms. The findings further emphasized that students engaged themselves more in the social activities on social media at the expense of academic discourse. Finally, the study indicated that spending time on social media interferes with academic activities. From the findings, the study recommended that; tertiary institutions should provide incentives that will be used to educate students on the educational content of the social media.

Keywords: *.Social media .Tertiary institutions .Academic activities .Socialization .Regulation*

INTRODUCTION

Socialization is a lifelong process which continues as people move from one status to the other. It is an age long human activity which entails the relationship between one human and another or others in the environment in which they live (Haralambos, Holborn & Herald, 2008, p. 112). Socialization has long existed before the invention of technologies and the development of new technologies transformed systems of socialization in modern societies.

The convergence of information and communication technologies as typified by the social media is increasingly having more influence on all aspects of the society as it has become an integral part of the daily lives of many people. It has had a transformative impact on the mode of information sharing and access globally. Information and knowledge disseminated through the slow process of oral communications or with paper materials can now be transferred rapidly from an individual to an infinite number of users through a number of media and formats. Whereas the television revolution reached 50 million viewers in 13 years, the same feat was attained in less than four years by the social media (Molosi, 2001, p. 37). Yunus and Khayal (2000, p. 83) posited that if there is only one force that is transforming peoples' lives and holds promise to deliver tumultuous impact in the future, it is the Internet.

The social media are the fastest growing communication technology and have emerged as a major source of information that connects people, data and other computers, reducing the world to the much talked-about global village. Amichai-Hamburger and Hayat (2010, p. 586) described the social media as the creation of a continuous stream of computers linked together to form one grid, which enables interaction among hundreds and millions of people browsing the net. Aqil and Ahmad (2011, p. 210) averred that the social media place information on our finger tips and that they are ubiquitous, knocking at our door, making our lives easy and smooth. Adomi (2005, p. 260) noted that the social media have profound implications for African countries such as Nigeria as it has the potential to influence the social, political, educational, technological and other spheres of lives of its people. The social media by their nature have the capabilities of educating, informing, entertaining and inflaming the audience. They possess a "contagious and outreaching influence" which the conventional media lack. This potential is most likely what Osahenye (2012, p. 2) refers to as "unstoppable power of the social media."

The education sector was among those that first embraced the use of Internet, and it has continued to broaden the breadth and depth of opportunities within institutions of higher learning worldwide. The Internet has found useful applications in online data repositories, library catalogues, journals, news services, student and financial administration systems, online supported or solely online conducted teaching, as well as in digital communication with fellow students and lecturers. Universities worldwide now invest a lot on internet access because it reduces the time between the production and utilization of knowledge; improves co-operation and exchange of ideas with fellow researchers in other institutions, regions or countries, furthers the sharing of information; and promotes multidisciplinary research.

Therefore, it is necessary to examine how Nigerian students use this new means of communication. This is because students' contribution as youths can make or mar any nation.

Statement of the Problem

While some believe that the social media have an unprecedented negative influence on the academic life of young people considering the continuous failure of Nigeria's educational system, others believe that social media may not be responsible for such failure. Unfortunately, statistics from the Federal Ministry of Education support the fact that there is perpetual students' poor outing across all levels in Nigeria. What is not immediately clear is whether the social media are responsible for these failures as there is limited literature to draw reasonable conclusions.

Therefore, this study is an effort to understand the possible influence social media have on the academic performance of students in tertiary institutions, using Enugu Metropolis as a case in point.

Research Questions

This research is based on the following questions:

1. What social media sites are mostly used by students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis?
2. What kind of activities do students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis engage in on social media platforms?
3. Do students engage more in social activities on social media than academic activities?
4. To what extent does spending time on social media interfere with academic activities?

Research Hypotheses

The research is based on the following alternate hypotheses:

Hypothesis One

H₁: Students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis engage in social and academic activities on social media

Hypothesis Two

H₁: Students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis engage more in social activities on social media than academic discourse

Hypothesis three

H₁: Spending time on social media interferes with students' academic activities

Literature Review

Students and the Challenges of Social Media

In the opinion of Alexander & Salas (2008, p. 104), in the early years of personal computers and internet access, websites were used primarily for information gathering and research. In the past several years, the internet has become the centre of communication between people, as well as being their prime source of entertainment. Today however, social media and the internet have undoubtedly become the tool used for almost every assignment or paper that a student will write in the university, and in their later years in life (Alexander & Salas, 2008, p. 106). Lin & Subrahmanyam (2007, p. 659) in their study show that youths have turned to be the greatest consumers of the Internet, particularly for social interactions.

According to Lewis (2008, p. 36), young people, particularly students have become accustomed to this lifestyle much more than older generations have in recent years, as this way of living is all they know.

There have also been controversies as to whether or not young people should be able to freely use the internet for communicating with others (Tynes, 2009, p. 578). There are adults and many professionals, including lecturers, who encourage the use of social networking sites like Facebook because they allow students to connect with one another and discuss school related issues (Alexander & Salas, 2008, p.115). However, Marsh (2012, p.19) noted that social networking sites like every good thing have a flip side as well. He relented that social networking are time-consuming as students are gradually becoming addicted to them. The hours and time spent on these sites is enough to be used to acquire knowledge, rather such study and useful time is spent social networking. This is the reason Mbachu (2011, p. 33), pointed out that Nigeria is not a reading nation, that statistics of illiteracy ratio (those who cannot read) and those who refused to read continue to increase on daily basis. He also stated further that, "a white man once said if you want to hide anything from a Blackman, hide it in a book". In other words, social networking is taking greater part of students' studying hours and the negative effects abound.

Karpinski (2009) reported in her findings that the majority of students who use Facebook every day are underachieving compared with those who shun the site. Ultimately, the split attention paid to multiple tasks causes individuals to become distracted from their reading; the time that should be spent studying is spent on social networking (Rouis, Limayem, & Salehi-Sangari, 2011, p. 985). The act of procrastination and cramming rather than studying as a result of social networking usage among students are on the rise. Banquill, Chua, Leano, Rivero, Burce, Dianalan, and Timog, (2009) stated that students also show the act of procrastination and cramming because of these social networking sites that exist in the present day. As a result, in their study, they proved that every day habit of procrastination and regular cramming of homework and studying of lessons have been the most tremendous factor of acquiring substandard scores, the cause of which is the excessive usage of social networking sites. They

suggested that students should learn to balance their time and to know that their number one priority should be studies rather than entertainment.

Poukhan (2010, p.346) stated that educators tend to see social media as encouraging poor traditional literacy skills (writing, grammar, vocabulary) and could largely be disruptive to learners' studying skills needed in the school environment. Students are developing skills in "code-switching" (for instance, the use of 'time' written as 'tym', through as 'tru', 'because' as 'coz', 'there as 'dere' and so on) in order to adapt to different web environments.

Emewu (2012, p. 33) revealed that Nigeria has been hit by the social media bug much more than any other country in Africa. According to him, this is because of the currency of the internet rave in the country unlike in other parts of the world where the Minister of Communications Technology notes that there is the need for louder calls, "for international agreement on why and how it should be managed and governed". An instance of this is the case of a Nigerian student who was murdered by friends she met on a social networking site. According to Glamtek (2012, p. 36), it has been over the news, how a young Nigerian female student; Miss Osokogu was allegedly lured and murdered in Lagos from her Abuja base, by friends she met on Facebook. This is perhaps only one of the examples of negative influence of excessive social interaction on social networking sites.

Recent surveys have revealed that a growing number of today's undergraduates often referred to as "Net Generation" students (those born between 1980 and 1989) consumed approximately 9 hours of social media per day with most of them using social network sites (SNSs) with Blogging and Microblogging tools (Cabral, 2011, p. 12). The "I Generation" (those born between 1990 and 1999) even consume more time on social media particularly on chatting platforms such as Facebook Chat, 2GO and Google Chat than they do with their friends Face-to-Face. These two 'generations' spend more time on social media than the "Generation X" (those born between 1965 and 1979) who spend approximately from 20 minutes to 3 hours on social media (Rosen, 2011, p. 13).

Though there have been many social, economic, and environmental factors that have added to the pressure of university students in the past ten years, declining standards of education has remained a major national problem (Bowen, 2008, p. 6). Even though many schools have created many strict rules that forbid the use of handheld technology during school hours or block certain social networking websites, many young people are still able to connect during school hours as they please (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2008, p. 119). This has caused distractions during instruction time and has had a negative impact on the learning environment. Karpinski (2009) pointed out that social media users devoted lesser time to their studies in comparison to non-users and subsequently had lower Grade Point Average (GPA). Bello (2012) observes that if the dangerous trend of social network "obsession" is left unchecked, it could further affect an already collapsing educational system in Nigeria.

Academic Use and Benefits of Social Media to Students

Technology, in various forms, has always held forth the promise of improving education (Wenger, 1998, p.201). This is true of the various innovations that have taken place across educational settings over the years, including the introduction of white board to replace the blackboard, use of projectors and virtual learning platforms. The most recent and perhaps most visible cases are web-based training programmes and degree-granting programs from fully accredited institutions offered via what is known as "distance learning."

Though many arguments can be made about the possible risks of adolescent social networking, it is important to point out the benefits of these websites as well. Many schools have started using these sites to promote education, keep students up to date with

assignments, and offer help to those in need (Boyd, 2007, p.3). In general, the internet and social networking sites can be a positive influence on young people.

Some social networking websites are specifically specified for educational environment. An example is linkedin.com which is fully featured for education purpose, letting users update their educational credential as well as make professional connections. A number of studies have found relationships between social media and students' commitment in higher education. In addition to the above statement, Boyd & Ellison (2007, p. 2) stated that social networking sites may enable collaboration among students since it is mostly used by them. Boyd & Ellison (2007, p. 2) also pointed that often, students use the social websites to discuss their academics issues formally and informally and to interact with their instructors, teachers and professors.

Theoretical Framework

The theories that guided this study are Technological Determinism Theory and Diffusion of Innovation theory.

Technological Determinism Theory

Technological determinism theory describes how technology influences human evolution: how who we are is determined by the tools we invent and use. This theory believes that technology is an autonomous force that changes the society. It provides an explanation for many changes that could be observed through the new media technology in the society. Technological Determinism states that media technology shapes how we as individuals in a society think, feel, act, and how the society operates as we move from one technological age to another (Mcluhan, 1962).

This theory is appropriate for this study because technology alters the perception of the audience. The advent of social media and social network has altered the patterns of communication in our society. It has defined not only the speed, but the frequency of communication.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

The Diffusion of Innovation theory was propounded by Everett Rogers in 1962. The process of adopting new innovations has been studied for over 30 years, and one of the most popular adoption models is described by Rogers in his book; Diffusion of Innovations (Sherry & Gibson, 2002).

Diffusion of Innovations seeks to explain how innovations are taken up in a population. It explains the process of the permeation of innovation at first exposure to the innovation's existence and gaining some understanding of how it works; how innovations become known and are spread throughout a social system. Diffusion of Innovations offers three valuable insights into the process of social change; what qualities make an innovation spread; the importance of peer-peer conversations and peer networks. This theory is appropriate for this study because innovation of social networking has diffused in the society that students and other members of the society virtually depend on it for social interaction and bonding.

Methodology

In examining social media utilization and students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis, the researchers adopted a quantitative design for data collection. This design is considered the most appropriate for this research. This is because there is a high level of precision in relation to questions to ask target population to determine the issues that are relevant to the study.

To generate quantitative data, the survey method was adopted for this study. It was essentially considered as the most suitable method for the work because students' opinion would be the main source of primary data collection.

Population of the Study

The population for this study comprises all the undergraduate students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis. The total population of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis is **58, 086**. Enugu Metropolis has the following tertiary institutions;

Sampling

In determining the sample size for this study, Krejcie and Margan's sample size table was used. In Krejcie and Margan's table for determining the sample size, it is given that if one population is over 50, 000, the sample size is 381. Since the study population is 58, 086 (above 50,000), it therefore means that the sample size is 381. The multi stage sampling technique was used in this study because of the complex nature of the population. (Kothari, 2012, p. 66).

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Data for this research were gathered through questionnaire as indicated in the research methodology. Out of the 381 copies of questionnaires distributed, 374 copies were duly returned and analysed using SPSS.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H₁: Students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis engage in social and academic activities on social media

To test this hypothesis, Pearson correlation was used to establish the kind of activities students of tertiary institutions engage in on social media platforms. The result showed a strong positive correlation **(.000)**. This means that students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis engage in social and academic activities on social media

Hypothesis Two

H₁: Students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis participate more in social activities on social media than academic discourse

To test this hypothesis, Pearson correlation was used to establish whether students engage more in social activities on social media than academic. The result of the test showed that there is a strong positive correlation **(.000)**. The result showed that students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis participate more in social activities on social media than academic discourse.

Hypothesis Three

H₁: Spending time on social media interfere with academic activities

To test this hypothesis, Pearson correlation was used to establish whether spending time on social media interfere with academic activities. The result of the test showed that there is a strong positive correlation **(.000)**. Therefore, it is accepted that spending time on social media interfere with academic activities.

Discussion of Results

Hypothesis One: Students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis engage in social and academic activities on social media

In hypothesis one, the researchers sought to establish the kind of activities students of tertiary institutions engage in on social media platforms. The Chi-square test showed that the calculated value was higher than the table value and as such, the alternate hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected. This therefore means that students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis engage in both social and academic activities on

social media. Apart from the hypothesis test, data generated and presented showed that 90 percent of students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis consistently use social media for many activities, which include social and academic. The import of this analysis is that students in tertiary institutions use social media for many ramifications, often determined by the users.

This result confirmed Coyle & Vaughn (2008, p. 14) assertion that social media is used to a large extent by young people to remain socially connected.

Hypothesis Two: Students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis participate more in social activities on social media than academic discourse

In hypothesis two, the researchers sought to find out whether students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis participate more in social activities on social media than academic discourse. The Chi-square test revealed that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. This means that students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis participate more in social activities on social media than academic discourse.

Furthermore, data in table 10 revealed that 44.9% & 35.8% strongly agree & agree to the fact that students often use social media to view celebrities/ fashion news/pictures. The implication is that 80.7 percent of the respondents were of the view that more time is given to social media than their studies. This agreed with the result in table 13, where 51 percent of the respondents noted students do not use social media to get study partners. This showed that students of higher institution in Enugu Metropolis participate more on social activities in social media than they participate in academic activities.

Hypothesis Three: Spending time on social media interfere with academic activities

In hypothesis three, the researchers sought to find out whether spending time on social media interfere with students' academic activities. To ascertain this, the hypothesis was subjected to an empirical test using Chi-square formula. The test revealed that the alternate hypothesis was accepted and the null rejected. The import of this test is that the length of time spent on social media negatively influence students' academic performance. Analysis indicated that on, "students devote more time to social media than reading books". It also showed that students use social media while classes are on.

Information in table 16 showed that 43.3% & 39.6% of the respondents strongly agree & agree that spending time on social media interferes with ability to study or complete assignments. Additionally, table 15 indicated that 93.8 percent of the respondents noted that most students engage in social activities on social media while classes are. Therefore, spending time on social media interfere with academic performances. This corresponds with the findings of existing literature.

Karpinski (2009) elaborated this, stating that the majority of students who use Facebook every day are underachieving compared with those who shun the site. Therefore, social media users may feel socially successful in cyberspace but they are more likely to perform poorly in exams.

Summary of Findings

1. Students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis use variety of social media sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, BBM, Twitter among others, although WhatsApp is the most preferred.
2. Students use social media to engage in diverse social and academic activities. These activities include relating with peers; discussing national issues like politics, sports; find study materials, keep vigilant about happenings in the world; watch movies and cybercrimes.

3. The findings of the study similarly revealed that students of tertiary institutions in Enugu Metropolis participate more in social activities on social media than the academic components of it.
4. 93.8% of respondents indicated that there are instances where students' engage in social networking while classes are on. This means that spending time on social media interfere with ability to study or complete assignments.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study and existing body of knowledge in this area, the researchers conclude that there is widespread use of social media for social and academic activities among students of tertiary institution in Enugu Metropolis. The aim of being active on daily basis on social media, for the students, is to feel socially integrated and part of the social media community.

The researchers conclude that the length of time spent on social media has a great influence on academic performance.

Recommendations

First, university management together with the parents/guardians of the students should provide incentives that will be used to orientate students towards educational content of the social media. Universities should only allow access to educational sites in ICT and e-libraries.

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