

Full Length Research Paper

Influence of Social Media on University Students' Academic Performance in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Received 12 May 2020; Accepted 23 July, 2020

ABSTRACT: This research adopted a descriptive survey design to determine the influence of social media on the academic performance of students in three universities. The universities are Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, and the University of Port Harcourt, all in Rivers State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of the study, three (3) null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study was 1,750 undergraduate students of the Department of Business Education in the 2018/2019 academic session. A Stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 350 students, using the Taro Yemane (1984) formula. A modified four-point Likert-scale type questionnaire was used to gather data. Before use, the questionnaire was validated and also subjected to a reliability test which yielded an index of 0.83 using Pearson's product moment correlation statistics. Results showed that a large number of

students in the Universities are addicted to social media. Findings show that the use of Facebook and WhatsApp platforms would likely influence the academic performance of the University students in Rivers State. It was recommended that social media should be used for promoting educational purposes, social networking sites should be broadened and new platforms created to enhance academic activities and improve students' academic performance. It is also suggested that a one-credit course on the use of social media should be included during the orientation/induction programmes of the fresh students in the universities.

Keywords: Social media influence, academic performance, Facebook, WhatsApp, university students

INTRODUCTION

Communication is very essential for transferring and accessing information. Communication touches all spheres of human activities at all levels. The world of today is a global village as a result of information and communication technology (ICT), and social media often function as the connecting factor (Rahman, 2014). ICT is helping people to be better informed by accessing

information about almost anything at anytime and anywhere. Social media exist so as to provide communication among people regardless of the distance and other physical barriers (Stenger, 2013). Use of media makes it easy for individuals to share information, files, pictures, videos, create blogs, send messages and conduct real time conversations (Boyd, 2007).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of user generated content. In line with this, Salter (2012) stated that social media introduced significant and pervasive challenges to communication between organizations, communities and individuals. The availability of high-speed Internet broadband connection with massive use of desktop, computer, laptops, e-readers, text messaging, Facebook, YouTube and smart phones enables millions of people to actively engage in media, text messaging, content sharing, on-line learning and much more.

Ezenwafor (2012) observed that since technology is ruling the world in all disciplines and activities, it ranks high in innovation, development and in use of the technologies which require adequate integration of ICT in students' communication. Social media are platforms where everyone can add or edit information. It is a web where digital tools allow users to create, change and publish dynamic contents. Social media are an aspect of the Internet that provides a lot of sites for socialization. Today, there are more than 20 popular social media websites. These include but not limited to : Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Digg, Delicious, Stumble upon, Bizsugar, Vine, Periscope, Quora, Snap chart, Redid it, Flickr, Tumblr, Pinterest, Google, LinkedIn, Twitter, Viber (Anthony, 2016). There is much interest from schools and Universities in the potentials of public social networking services and social media such as blogs to influence or supplement formal educational activities and enhance learning objectives (Fogg, 2010; Bell, 2013). Social media service users between lecturers and students can improve interaction, incentive and engagement with education (McBride, 2009). This is evident by the participation and sharing of messages in their WhatsApp platform. It also allows lecturers to share with their peers operating all around the globe in order to plan approaches for support and motivation. Social media help lecturers to link with their students about assignments, upcoming events, useful connections and samples of work outside the classroom. Students can also use them to connect classmates about questions regarding class assignments, examinations and projects. In Nigeria, one of the most popular and commonly used social media sites is Facebook (Nigeria social media statistics for March 2020). Facebook is a social networking website that was initially designed for college students but is now open to anyone from 13 years of age. Facebook users can build and customize their own profiles with photos, video, and information about themselves. Friends can browse the profiles of other friends and write messages on their pages (Tech-term.com, 2008). Paxson (2010) opined that Facebook is used to keep users connected with those around them and to be up-to-date in the global news. It is one of the new media networks which use mix of interpersonal and

mass communication capabilities that has not existed before now. Facebook also places emphasis on interactivity, mobility and it is used by students in Universities. Next to Facebook is WhatsApp which came second in the list of most popular used social media platforms in Nigeria. WhatsApp Messenger, like some other social media has been around for a while but recent updates and upgrades have improved the functionality of the platform since its joined the families of social networking. The main purpose behind this application is to replace SMS with a cross platform mobile messenger that works on an Internet data plan. If one has unlimited text, it is still beneficial as it is a convenient way to skip international fees that carriers may charge. It is currently available for iPhone, Android, Windows Phone, Nokia Symbian 60 and S40 and Blackberry. It is common because there is no cost to message friends and family other than the Internet data plan that users already have on their phones. Academic performance gives us a view of how a student has performed in his or her course of studying and giving the period of engagement. It involves the assessment of students' learning progress in task that is required of them (Andreas and Haenlein, 2010). In Universities, the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) is used to give a sum total of a student's academic performance. Academic performance is seen as the sum total of a student's ability and performance (Morrell, 1987). The CGPA is used as an index in grading students giving 4.00 or 5.00 as the highest point of score while the lowest 0.00. With so many social networking sites and their attractive adverts on the Internet, students are tempted to abandon their assignments, homework and reading times in preference for chatting online with friends. However, one can identify social media adductors by pointing out at those who spent more time in their phones browsing or networking. The implication, is that these students attendance for chatting on social media become habitual and addictive (Apuke, 2016). This group of students neglects other important responsibilities, commitments in favour of Facebook. According to Kist (2012), these victims spend a lot of time thinking about Facebook or planning how to use it. They feel an urge to use Facebook more and more. It is also observed that they use Facebook in order to forget about their personal problems. They always become restless or troubled if they are prohibited from using Facebook. They also use Facebook and WhatsApp platforms so much that the addiction has had a negative impact on their relationships. This observation has becomes a threat to students' studies and performance and therefore call for investigation.

Statement of the problem

The educational system in Nigeria is faced with so many challenges which have certainly brought about a rapid

decline in the quality of education. Students' addiction towards social networks, their frequency of exposure to social network and its influence on their academic performance remain a centre stage of discussions in recent times. For instance, Habes et al. (2018) revealed that a large number of University students use social media with more focus on Facebook, which in turn negatively affected their academic results. Oye (2012) posited that most of the younger students use social networking sites mainly for socializing activities, rather than for academic purpose. It is a common sight to see a student chatting in sensitive and formal organized places like church, mosque and lecture venues even on the high way. This phenomenon has become very worrisome and the effect of this threat has not been given the attention it deserved. It is therefore of great importance to explore some of the trending issues facing students' academic performance as a result of their use of social media. To what extent has this phenomenon affects students performance is a question that needs to be answered. Thus, the problem of this study is to find out the influence of the use of social media networks on academic performance of University students in Rivers State.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of social media on academic performance of students in Rivers State. The universities are Rivers Stage University, University of Port Harcourt and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The following objectives guided the study:

- (i) To examine the influence of the use of Facebook networking platform on University students' academic performance.
- (ii) To examine the influence of the use of WhatsApp networking platform on University students' academic performance.
- (iii) To determine the difference between male and female students' in their use of Facebook and WhatsApp networking platforms.

Hypotheses:

The following null hypotheses were formulated for testing;

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of the influence of use of Facebook networking platform on their academic performance of students.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of the influence of use of WhatsApp networking platform on academic performance of students.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of the male and female students' usage of Facebook and WhatsApp networking platforms on their academic performance.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. To achieve the objective of the study, data were collected from a sample of 350 (calculated using Taro Yemane 1984 formula), drawn from a target population of 1750 students of the department of Business Education of 2018/2019 academy session of the three public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The Universities are: Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and University of Port Harcourt. The sampling technique adopted was stratified random sampling. The instrument used for data gathering was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire format is a four point Likert scale categorized into Strongly Agree (SD) = 4-points, Agree (A) = 3-point, Disagree (D) = 2-points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1-point. The questionnaire was validated by experts in ICT and statistics. The questionnaire was also subjected for a test of reliability, using test-retest method and the two sets of data yielded a coefficient of 0.83 using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation statistics. The data collected were analyzed, using SPSS version 20.0 for descriptive statistics. To interpret the outcome of the study, items with mean score of 2.5, and above indicated agreement while any item with a mean score below 2.50 showed a disagreement. The three hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square (χ^2) statistic at 5% Alpha level.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: The use of Facebook does not significantly influence students' academic performance. The result in Table 1 shows that the calculated (X^2) value of 265.01 is greater than the critical (X^2) value of 7.81 at 5% level of significance. The null hypothesis which states that the use of Facebook does not significantly influence students' academic performance is hereby rejected. Hence we conclude that the use of Facebook do influence students academic performance.

Hypothesis 2: The use of WhatsApp does not significantly influence students' academic performance. The result in Table 2 shows that the calculated (X^2) value of 302.17 is greater than the critical (X^2) value of 75.62 at 5% level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that the use of WhatsApp does not significantly influence students' academic performance is hereby rejected. Hence the study conclude that the use of

Table 1: Chi-square (X^2) Analysis of the Influence of the Use of Facebook on Students' Academic Performance (N = 350).

Variables	N	df	X^2 -Crit	X^2 Cal	Decision
Use of Facebook and students' academic performance	350	57	7.81	265.01	Rejected

$P < 0.05$.

Table 2: Chi-square (X^2) analysis of the influence of the use of WhatsApp on students' academic performance (N = 350).

Variables	N	df	X^2 -Crit	X^2 Cal	Decision
Use of WhatsApp and students' academic performance.	350	57	75.62	302.17	Rejected

$P < 0.05$

Table 3: Chi-square (X^2) analysis of male and female students' usage of Facebook and WhatsApp (N = 350).

Variables	N	df	X^2 -Crit	X^2 Cal	Decision
Male and female students Usage of Facebook and WhatsApp.	350	27	40.11	288.29	Rejected

WhatsApp do influence students' academic performance.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between male and female students' usage of Facebook and WhatsApp. The result in Table 3 shows that the calculated (X^2) value of 288.29 is greater than the critical (X^2) value of 40.11 at 5% level of significance. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between male and female students' usage of Facebook and WhatsApp is hereby rejected. Hence we conclude that the use of Facebook and WhatsApp do influence students academic performance.

DISCUSSION

The result of research question 1 which was analyzed and presented in Table 1 shows the extent to which the used of Facebook influence academic performance of students in the Universities in Rivers State. The result shows that the used of Facebook and WhatsApp does influence students academic performance. Information provided on the questionnaire reveals that social media enable students participate in academic fora, disseminate and acquire knowledge pertaining to their studies. Students also use Facebook in various ways to accomplish a wide range of social responsibilities and just for fun too. Other students see it as a distraction. Yeboah and Ewur (2014) collaborate this in their claim that the use of WhatsApp increases the provisions and access to learning materials, anywhere, anytime and in various formats, and also has the potential to enhance students' capabilities. The result of research in Table 3 shows that difference exists between male and female students' usage of Facebook and WhatsApp. Information

in the analysis of the questionnaire show that female students tend to use social networks to foster social connections more, while the males would likely use social networks for non-academic purposes, and counseling which enables students to use these sites beneficially as it unveils their reality to them. This is in line with the findings of (Lin and Subrahmanyam, 2007) which noted that students have shown that boys have been online more than girls in previous decades because of earlier forms of technology such as video or computer games. Further analysis on the testing of the hypotheses showed that the use of Facebook can influence academic performance of students in Rivers State, and the use of WhatsApp can also influence students' academic performance which means that there is a significant difference between male and female students' usage of Facebook and WhatsApp.

Conclusion

The result from the findings of this study showed that, though Social media have negative effects on student such as; distracting them from their academic work, they also have benefits and can be used appropriately. For instance, students can form online communities in order to plan for a project, have group discussions about class material, or use the Social networking sites(SNS) as a way to keep in contact when a student who has been absent needs to be updated on current academic information.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, the following

recommendations are made:

- (i) School counselors should be able to educate students on the negative and positive influence of Social media on their academic performance.
- (ii) Through counseling intervention programs students should be able to understand themselves better and how to manage their study time and prevent distractions from social media.
- (iii) Social Networking Sites should be expanded and new pages created to enhance academic activities and avoid setbacks in the students' academic performance.

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