

Extent of social media usage by students for improved learning in Tertiary Institution

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Abstract: *This study was carried out to ascertain the perception of students on the use of social media for educational purposes. It was conducted in three tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The sample comprised 200 respondents randomly selected from three tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Five research objectives and four null hypotheses were used for the study. Mean scores, ANOVA, multiple comparison test using schaffer model, and Correlational Analysis were the statistical tools used in the study. The study found that social media is used in the study. The study found that social is used for educational purposes in terms of communication, sharing and exchanging ideas with improved engagement with technology. The study also revealed that social media is frequently used for interactions with friends for classroom assignment, communication in and outside classroom, promoting interactions during lectures, promoting informal learning, enhance course grades, facilitating language exchange, video conferencing, creating room for educational and video sharing. In terms of attitude of students, respondents generally have favourable attitude towards use of social media. The study revealed significant differences exist in social media usage across the three universities involved in the study and significant differences exist in usage of social media between male and female respondents; and in attitude of students towards social media. Based on these findings, the study recommend that the use of social media should be incorporated into the curriculum for enhanced universities education.*

I. Introduction

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create -share, exchange and comment contents among themselves in virtual communities and networks. Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co- create, discuss and modify user- generated content. It introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) social media is “a group of internet- based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user- generated content. User generated content (UGC) covers a range of media content available in a range of modern communications technologies. It entered mainstream usage during 2005, having aroused in web publishing and new media content production circles. Its use for a wide range of applications, including problem processing, news, gossip and research, reflects the expansion of media production through new technologies that are accessible and affordable to the general public. All digital media technologies are included, such as question- answer databases, digital video, blogging, podcasting, forums, review-sites, social networking, social media, mobile phone, photography and wikis. In addition to these technologies, user- generated content may also employ a combination of open source, free software such as modular object oriented dynamic learning environment (MOODLE), and flexible licensing or related agreements to further reduce the barriers to collaboration, skill-building and discovery. UGC has also gained in popularity over the last decade, as more and more users have begun to flock to social media and “content-based” sharing sites.

According to Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, Zickuhr (2010), about 57% of social network users are 18-29 years old and have a personal profile on multiple social media websites. In a study by Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert (2009), the amount of time spent daily on social network sites varied greatly. However, an analysis of the data indicated most participants spent approximately 30 minutes a day socializing, mostly during the evening hours between 9pm to 12am. Students spent an average of 47 minutes a day on Facebook. More than 50% of college students go on a social networking site several times a day, Sheldon (2008). Quan- Haase- Haas and Young (2010) found that 82% of college students reported logging into Facebook several times a day. Younger students tended to use Facebook more frequently than older students to keep in touch with friends from high school or from their hometown, Pempek, Yevdokiya and Calvert (2009).

Time spent on social- networking sites adds up to be the equivalent of a full day’s work at 7.5 hours a week. That doesn’t include time spent on the internet doing other things- 13 hours, or time spent on iPhones or Blackberry’s- for which there are no statistics.

According to face book, users spend approximately 5 billion minutes a day on the site, Face book (2013), although a survey by the British price- comparison web site uswitch.com found that some Brits spend more than 10hours a week on social- networking sites, the equivalent of 24 days a year. Logging on daily is not compulsory, but some studies suggest that these sites may be addictive

That level of usage equates to 24 days a year, compared with an average of 22 days spent actually meeting friends and relatives in the flesh. It has overtaken online shopping, banking and downloading music as the most popular online activity. Only random web surfing and email are more online activities, Anna (2010). Women use social networking sites more than men, 56 percent compared to 46 percent. Nearly 75 percent of those visiting social networking sites are aged between 18 and 29 years. The average Brit spends 15.8 hours a week online, the equivalent to 34 days a year. Nearly eight million broadband customers pay between 15-30 dollars a month for their connections, with the average cost standing at 18dollars, Anna (2010).

Social networks are being used by teachers and students as a communication tool. Because many students are already using a wide range of social networking sites, teachers have begun to familiarize themselves with this trend and are now using it to their advantage. Teachers and Professors are doing everything from creating chat-room forums and groups to extend classroom discussion to posting assignments, tests and quizzes, to assisting with homework outside of the classroom setting. Social networks are also being used to foster teacher- parent's communication. These sites make it possible and more convenient for parents to ask questions and voice concerns without having to meet face-to-face. The advent of social networking platforms may also be impacting the ways in which learners engage with technology in general. For a number of years, Prensky (2001) dichotomy of Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants has been considered a relatively accurate representation of the ease with which people of different ages in particular those born before and after 1980 use technology. Social networking as an educational tool in the classroom enhances learning process and allows students and teacher to interact in new and exciting avenues. Face book, LinkedIn and Twitter are convenient platform for users to exchange ideas, find answers to questions and have discussion as the sites are suitably designed for the purpose. Social networking foster discussion, create meaningful dialogue, exchange views, and improve interaction amongst the students. Tutors can leverage the social network technology for higher ends. It is an effective way to increase student's engagement and building better communication skills are possible using the social media. Students will find it more comfortable expressing themselves on Twitter, face book or you tube than in a classroom. Social networking platforms are ideal for students and teachers to continue with their lessons after classroom hours and get better responses. Social media is an addition to classroom study and teachers and students can derive great benefits from the media. Twitter and face book can improve communication among students and teachers, send messages, updates and course schedule in bulk for the student community as a whole. Students can also post their views on the lesson.

Social networking in classroom offers students new ways of researching and learning. Social networking is software that allows people to come together around an idea or topic of interest. A school can use blog software to bring together anyone who's writing about politics or computing or Greek literature. Social networking can help in changing the way students or kid's looks at education not just their social lives. Ideas are shared and at the same time questions are posted so that students who do not have the guts to participate during discussions inside the classroom will be able to share his/ her ideas without facing their classmates. In that way it will give them more freedom of expressing their ideas on the lessons discussed.

Social media not only promotes connections to old friends but also facilities sharing important information in the form of videos, blogging, forums and also groups. Social networking is also useful in advertising; it brings about collaboration and communication in students. Social networking site that has face book functionality that is exclusively for teachers helps teachers to connect with other teachers for support. It is called Educators Connect.

Kids can gain social confidence from interacting with other people online or in class which may help them feel more secure in new situations, such as going to college, joining a sport team, and meeting new friends. Social media outlets, such as face book, have been shown to be useful engagement tools amongst college students by creating a space to communicate campus activities and events, thereby keeping students informed, Santovec (2006). There are many institutions that no longer issue e-mail accounts to students such institutions have chosen to communicate with students through a university fan page on face book. Even though this may mean accepting the fact that students' posts must be managed by consistently returning comments, Beck (2010). Social media allows students to share, communicate, and exchange ideas online, as well as, to build a connection within a community, Silius, Kailanto and Tervakari, (2011). Online networking is not only a good communication venue but also an avenue where faculty or administrators can build relationships with students by taking a glimpse into their lives as posted on face book, Santovec (2006).

Social media benefit students and faculty alike, through social media students experience increased engagement and interest, thereby giving them ownership of their education. Faculty can use social media to spur creativity in the teaching of their subject, Blankenship (2011). Approximately four out of five professors are

using some kind of social media; with about 50% of those using tools such as “videos, blogs, podcasts, and wikis in their classroom”, Parry (2010). Social networking sites used for academic purposes have shown positive results as students interact outside of the classroom and therefore, these social networking sites assist in the learning process for building community, Hung and Yuen (2010). Blending the real and virtual worlds, inside and outside of classroom has shown to increase peer to peer and academic engagement, especially for first year students, Mc Carthy (2010).

Interactive social media and community-based tools (Skype, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Blogs, Wikis, Blackboard and Moodle) are becoming more and more dominant in the classroom, Blankenship (2011).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The issue of whether social media helps or hurts a student’s academic performance is often couched in larger issues identified with the overall use of social media (e.g., its psychological effects, privacy and safety concerns; individual self-discipline and self- regulation concerns; human adaptability concerns). This is further influenced by their attitudes and preference. Social media is inherently about human behaviour not the technological tools themselves. These tools can be used by people for collaboration, networking, and production purposes: but they can also be used for less virtuous objectives. Therefore this study intends to find out if students use social media for educational purposes particularly in the context of an ever-changing globalized society.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

- Identify the perceived usage of social media for improved learning
- ascertain the frequency of the usage of social media sites by most students

1.3 Research Questions

- What are the usages perceived by students of social media for improved learning?
- How frequent do students use social media?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

- There is no significant difference among students in the usage of social media for improved learning
- There is no significant relationship between use of social media and attitude of students

II. Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey research designed to find out the extent of social media usage by students for educational purposes. The population of the study comprises of 100 level and 200 level students in three tertiary institutions in Rivers State which includes: University of Port Harcourt, University of science and technology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. A sample of 300 students was involved in the study from three tertiary institutions in Rivers State. 100 students were randomly selected for the study from each of the three schools. Simple Random sampling technique was applied in the selection process. The instrument used in this study to collect data from respondents is a structured questionnaire. To determine the reliability of the instrument, test-re-test was applied; and the reliability co-efficient of 0.84.

Discussion of findings

Research Question 1: What are the perceived usages of social media for educational purposes?

Table 1.1: Perceived usage of social media for educational purposes

S/N	Perceived use of Social media	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Remark
1	Social media improves my communication skills	3.44	0.49	Agree
2	I can share and exchange idea/views	3.44	0.49	Agree
3	Engagement with technology has improved	3.48	0.50	Agree
4	Social networking foster discussion in classroom	3.46	0.51	Agree
5	Social networking creates meaningful dialogue	3.50	0.50	Agree
6	Social networking has brought about new ways of researching and learning	3.53	0.49	Agree
7	Collaboration in classroom has improved with social media	3.52	0.52	Agree
8	Social confidence amongst students has improved greatly with social media	3.53	0.50	Agree
9	There is creativity in teaching subjects	3.47	0.53	Agree
10	Social media brings people from all walks of life together	3.49	0.50	Agree
11	Social applications offer assortment of tools that learners can mix and match to best suit their individual learning styles and increase their academic success	3.45	0.51	Agree
12	Youths can further explore topics that they are interested in through online social networking	3.60	0.46	Agree
13	Social networking has helped people connect with old friends and relatives	3.54	0.49	Agree
	Overall Mean	3.49	0.49	Agree

Midpoint = 2.50; any mean score < 2.50 suggest disagreement; any mean score > 2.50 suggest agreement.

Entries in Table 1.1 shows that Respondents agreed that social media improves their communication skills (mean = 3.44; S.D = 0.49). Also, social media enables them to share and exchange ideas/ views (mean = 3.44; S.D= 0.49). Respondents agreed that their engagement with technology has improved (mean= 3.48; S.D= 0.50). Social networking foster discussion in classroom (mean= 3.46; S.D= 0.51). Respondents agreed that social networking creates meaningful dialogue (mean= 3.50; S.D= 0.50). Social media has brought about new ways of researching and learning (mean = 3.53; S.D = 0.49). Respondents agreed that collaboration in classroom has improved with social media (mean = 3.52; S.D= 0.52). Also, social confidence amongst students has improved greatly with social networking platforms (mean = 3.53; S.D =0.50). Respondents agreed that there is creativity in teaching subjects (mean = 3.47; S.D= 0.53). Social media brings people from all walks of life together (mean= 3.49; S.D= 0.50). Respondents agreed that social media applications offer assortment of tools that learners can mix and match to best suit their individual learning styles and increase their academic success (mean = 3.45; S.D= 0.51). Youths can further explore topics that they are interested in through online social networking (mean= 3.60; S.D= 0.46). Respondents agreed that social networking has helped them to connect with old friends and relatives (3.54; S.D = 0.49). An overall Mean of 3.49 and standard deviation of 0.49 suggest Agreement i.e. social media benefits students. This means that students can explore topics that they are interested in through online social networking. There is an indication that social media usage level is high among respondents.

Hypothesis 1: There are no significant differences in social media usage

Table 1.1a: ANOVA of differences in social media usage

Source	Sum of Sq	Df	M _n S _n	F _{cal}	F _{tab}
Btw group	47195.666	2	23597.833	105.53*	3.07
Within group	62610.016	280	223.607		
Total	109805.582	282			

The result of one way ANOVA reveals significant difference exist in social media usage across the 3 universities, since the F_{cal} value of 105.53 is greater than F_{tab} of 3.07. The result is significant at 0.05 levels.

Table 1.1b: Post Ho, Multiple Comparison Test using Scheffe model

Institutions	N	Mean
University of Science and Technology (UST)	82	100.35 a
University of Education (UOE)	100	104.66 a
University of Port Harcourt (UPH)	101	129.43 b

Mean scores with different alphabets down the column are significant at 0.05 levels.

The Scheffe model helps to separate means and show where actually the differences in social media usage lie. From the Scheffe model, significant difference exist in social media usage between UST and UPH respondents (Mean for UST= 100.35; Mean for UPH = 129.43). Also significant difference exist between UOE and UPH (M UOE= 104.66; M UPH= 129.43).

The result indicates that significant difference exist in social media usage across the 3 universities used for the study. The positive differences exist in social media usage between University of Science and technology, and University of Port Harcourt respondents. Also significant differences exist between University of Education and University of Port Harcourt respondents. When one way ANOVA was applied F_{tab} value of 3.07 was found to be statistically significant at 0.05level of probability (Table 1a). The result therefore is that there is a significant difference in social media usage between the 3 universities. The result is expected because students at the urban area have internet access and are used to social media. Also, students from all walks of life tend to expose others to the use of social networking devices.

Result from the study is expected because social media applications offer assortment of tools that learners can mix and match to best suit their individual learning styles and increase their academic success and can discuss topics that they are interested in through online social networking.

The result of the present study is in agreement with those of Tasir et al (2012) and Liu (2010) who also found out that students' are familiar with the concept of social media and also show positive satisfaction with the use of social media tools for learning and researching. Santovec (2006) found that social media outlets, such as face book, have been shown to be useful engagement tools amongst college students by creating a space to communicate campus activities and events, thereby keeping students informed.

However, finding not agreeing with the present one is found by Hille (2009) who argue that adolescent students may immerse in online social media gaming, chatting or other online entertainment, and even become addicted if there is no effective management and supervision from their parents and teachers. The students may

also be exposed to pornographic and violent contents flooding the social media sites. The difference in the result could be because of the different locations where the study was conducted.

Table 1.2: Extent of usage of social media

S/N	Extent of usage of social media by students	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1	Interaction with friends about class assignment	3.60	0.55	Agree
2	Improves communication in and outside classroom	3.65	0.48	Agree
3	Creates social confidence among students	3.62	0.51	Agree
4	Promotes interaction during lectures	3.21	0.73	Agree
5	Promotes informal learning	3.26	0.70	Agree
6	Increase course grades	3.10	0.79	Agree
7	Facilitates language exchange	2.98	0.94	Agree
8	Video conferencing	3.09	0.88	Agree
9	Designing different learning experiences for students	2.96	0.94	Agree
10	Multi tasking is achieved	2.48	0.29	Disagree
11	Collaboration and constructive work can be achieved	2.63	0.50	Agree
12	Limits the risk of predators	2.53	0.35	Agree
13	Creates room for educational and other video sharing	3.34	0.69	Agree
14	The use of multimedia and other visual aids	3.29	0.72	Agree
15	Presentation of class projects are also done	3.33	0.74	Agree
16	It allows users to download their data in an open format	2.30	0.95	Disagree
17	It makes sharing in the web more like sharing in real life	2.32	0.98	Disagree
18	Chat with all my friends at the same time	3.04	0.91	Agree
19	Video calls	2.90	0.95	Agree
20	Interaction with the use of avatars	1.66	0.76	Disagree
21	3D virtual world	1.68	0.76	Disagree
22	Can be used to find jobs, people and business opportunities	1.40	0.67	Disagree
23	Employers can list jobs and search for potential candidates	1.39	0.65	Disagree
24	Create blogs	1.38	0.65	Disagree
25	Plug-in architecture	1.43	0.68	Disagree
26	Create and manage theme-based image collection such as events and hobbies	1.41	0.66	Disagree
27	Browse pin boards for images	1.45	0.66	Disagree
28	Allows users to post multimedia and other contents to a short-form blog	1.48	0.68	Disagree
29	Users follow other users	1.56	0.78	Disagree
30	Knowledge management	2.39	0.97	Disagree
31	Note taking	2.09	0.93	Disagree
32	Create effective online learning sites	1.12	0.43	Disagree
33	Interaction and collaborative construction of content	1.10	0.35	Disagree
34	Customize open architecture	1.17	0.44	Disagree
35	Add online elements to courses traditionally delivered face-to-face	1.18	0.46	Disagree
36	Assisting members in finding friends and classmates from kindergarten, primary school, high school, college, work and military	1.17	0.45	Disagree
37	Marketing services	1.22	0.56	Disagree
38	Social gaming platform	2.09	0.37	Disagree
39	Create user group	2.06	0.34	Disagree
40	Members can create their own web page	1.30	0.61	Disagree
41	Share videos and post blogs	1.29	0.64	Disagree
42	Meeting new people	2.19	0.86	Disagree
43	Dating sites	2.13	0.47	Disagree
44	Global science oriented multimedia portal that specializes in online video streaming used to support communication between scientists, scholars, researchers and professionals	1.42	0.71	Disagree
45	Used by academic and students as a virtual educational tool	1.36	0.61	Disagree
46	Provide information to students on local and online classes	1.30	0.53	Disagree
47	Provides teachers background training	1.31	0.55	Disagree
48	Hosts online community	1.25	0.51	Disagree
49	Host tribes of friends	1.21	0.48	Disagree
50	Allows members play games	1.18	0.44	Disagree
51	Share tags and virtual gifts	1.18	0.45	Disagree
52	Provides free course resources	1.19	0.48	Disagree
53	Provides peer to peer learning	1.24	0.59	Disagree
54	Chat with friends	2.14	0.10	Disagree
55	Meet with friends	2.25	0.36	Disagree
	Overall Mean	3.16	0.80	Agree

Table 1.2 shows that students agree that they interact with friends about class assignment (Mean= 3.60; SD= 0.55), Also, they agreed that social media improves communication inside and outside classroom (Mean= 3.65; SD= 0.48), social media creates social confidence among students (Mean= 3.26; SD= 0.51), social media promotes interaction during lectures (Mean= 3.21; SD= 0.73), Respondents agreed that social media promotes informal learning (Mean= 3.26; SD= 0.70), Also, they agreed that the use of social media increase course grades (Mean= 3.10; SD= 0.79), Social media facilitates language exchange (Mean= 2.98; SD=0.94), video conferencing is done through social media (Mean=3.09; SD= 0.88), social media help in designing different learning experiences for students (Mean= 2.96; SD= 0.94), collaboration and constructive work can be achieved (Mean= 2.63; SD= 0.50), Respondents agreed that social media limits the risk of predators (Mean= 2.53; SD= 0.35), Also, social media creates room for educational and other video sharing (Mean= 3.34; SD= 0.69), the use of multimedia and other visual aids (Mean= 3.29; SD=0.72), presentation of class projects are done (Mean= 3.33; SD= 0.74), Also, social media helps us chat with all our friends at the same time on group assignment (Mean= 3.04; SD= 0.91). An overall mean of 3.16 suggests that social media is frequently used for educational purposes.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between use of social media and attitude of students.

Table 1.2: Correlation Analysis

	Mean	SD	r-cal	r-tab
Usage	112.25	19.73	-0.025 NS	0.139
Attitude	49.643	3.67		

Table 1.2 shows inverse relationship between usage of social media and attitude towards social media. The relationship is however not significant at 0.05 level. The implication is that usage level does not necessarily influence attitude.

The result revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female students on social media for improved learning. An overall mean of 3.16 was gotten for extent of social media use for improved learning. Regarding uses of social networking sites, it emerged out that the majority of students use social networking sites for education that is in general and for specific school work. Also, it was found out that most of the students who use social networking sites for education use social networking sites in carrying out group projects and assignments.

The findings of the present study is in agreement with those of Junco (2011) and Sponcil and Gitimu (2012) who also found that the idea of taking a popular and free technology and integrating it into learning and teaching is a good one for both male and female learners. They also found that using social networking tools can help students communicate with each other and faculty, promote informal learning, allowing shy students form a forum for increased participation, increases students' engagement and improves overall course grades.

However, finding disconcertant with the present one is found by Oluwatoyin (2011) who argued that university students in Nigeria who use social networking sites spend less time studying and these has resulted in lower grade point. Suhail and Bargees (2006) opines that it has been found that excessive usage of social networking sites causes many psychological, physical, interpersonal and educational problems to users. The difference in the result could be that since female are seen as very emotional; they tend to be carried away by social networking sites and their attitude towards social media for educational purposes changes.

III. Conclusion and Recommendations

- The study found out that most of the students who use social networking sites for education use social networking sites in carrying out group projects and assignments.
- The study found out that social media benefits students. This means that students can explore topics that they are interested in through online social networking. There is an indication that social media usage level is high among respondents.

It is therefore recommended that social media should be incorporated into the curriculum of tertiary institution. Also there is need to upgrade facilities in the Information and Communication technology Centres of the institutions. The need to ensure that Centres for Educational Technologies are adequately equipped is desirable.

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