

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS: A STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of social media platforms on the Academic Performances of students in the university of Port Harcourt. It explains the functions of the internet and its influence on the university students' academic performance. The research objectives for this study are; To determine the level of information sharing utilized by students who engage the facilities of social media. To find out how often students use social media for Academic works. To examine the perceptions of students toward their academic performances as a result of the use of social media platforms. To evaluate if social media have any positive impact on them. The findings explained that the university students are exposed to new informations and happenings in the school and they spend more time online and anything of interest to them and their studies. The study recommends that the management of Academic institutions should provide a platform for guidance and counseling sessions on the awareness of the roles and proper functions of the use of various social media platforms during school hours so as to improve students academic performances.

Keywords: Academic Performances, Students, Social Media, Influence

Introduction

Since the evolution of Social media in Nigeria, It has played both positive and negative effects on the users. It started as a platform to connect with friends in an easy and convenient way to opening avenues for business connection, share information, meet and interact with people. An information graph shown that the social media week reveals that out of over 21million people that constitute the population of Lagos, the country's most populous city and 7th fastest growing in the world, over 90 percent access Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp from their mobile phones making the platforms largest mobile access in the world, over 1.5 million Internet user emanate from the country (Adeleye, 2015). Social media, internet-based tools that promote collaboration and information sharing (Junco, Helbergert and Loken; 2011), can be used in academic settings to promote student engagement and facilitate better student learning (Kabilan, Admd and Abidin; 2010). Because student engagement represents the time and effort that students invest in collaborative and educational activities (Kuh; 2011), it is often linked with the achievement of positive student learning outcomes, such as critical thinking and individual student development (Carini, Kuh and Klein; 2006). The relevance of the use of social media platforms has accelerated technology trends, which can help make the society more resilient in the face of threat.

Technologies are playing a crucial role in keeping the society functional. Social media platforms help the university students network socially in real time, these platforms provides the students with the ability to send and receive a variety of media, such as images, video and audio media messages. WhatsApp was founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum, both former employees of yahoo (Albergotti, MacMillan, and Evelyn, 2014). Nevertheless, the new media can be identified as the online media responsible for gathering and disseminating information. Some of the functions are to keep interactions and to help students stay in touch with lecturer, friends and families, and classmates, and to also keep students updated and informed about what is happening in the school which enhances academic performance,

(Olanof, 2012). In August 24 2014, Koum announced on his Twitter account that WhatsApp being one of the comely used social media platforms had over 600 million active users worldwide. WhatsApp added about 25 million new users every month or 833,000 active users per day. With 65 million new users, about 10% of the total worldwide users, India were the largest single country in terms of number of users. By early January 2015, WhatsApp reached a new milestone of 700 million monthly active users with over 30 billion messages being sent every day and in April 2015 WhatsApp had over 800 million active users (Sushma, 2012).

Tuckman (2008) defined students' performance as the apparent demonstration of understanding, concepts, skills, ideas and knowledge of students and proposed that grades clearly depict the performance of a student. Hence, their academic performance must be managed efficiently keeping in view all the factors that can positively or negatively affect their educational performances. He proposed that internet is advantageous to both students and teachers if used as a tool of knowledge creation and dissemination. In addition, academic performance defined by Kobal and Musek, (2006) refers to numerical scores of a student's knowledge, representing the degree of a student's adaptation to schoolwork and the educational system.

Statement of the Problem

Today the internet continue to grow day by day at an incredible speed. And as such, there are many activities that are of great use to students in improving their academic performances. Various studies have being done in the area of the influence of social media platforms, why students hook up on social media and then, multi-task between social networking sites and homework (academic). As a result, studies in this area believe that students that use social media are likely to have lower grades than students who do not often these platforms Tuckman (2009). Thus, this research aim to explore the significant influence social media platforms when used by students have on their academic performance while at school. The application brings so many benefits, such that, it provides information sharing and information literacy in enhancing the students participation and performance: Students could become literate enough due to the type of informations they receive. And there are collaboration learning with the use of various social media platforms. It also brings about solutions to Academic works which has gone beyond the four walls of class activities because students create educational and healthy chatting groups. This study will help discover the extent of the influence social media platforms have on the academic performance of students.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives are:

1. To determine the kind of information students of the University of Port Harcourt transfer using social media platforms while in school.
2. To find out how often students use social media for academic purposes in the university of Port Harcourt.
3. To examine the perceptions of students toward their academic performances as a result of the use of social media in the university of Port Harcourt.
4. To evaluate if social media has any influence on the academic performance of students in university of Port Harcourt.

Literature Review

Effect of Information Communication Technology (Ict) Amongst University Students

During the colonial era, education was mostly in the hands of the missionaries who introduced a type of education known as the Latin grammar. Education is only just becoming

accepted, as evidenced in the increased enrollments for the past twenty (20) years however, the consistent high rates in some major cases specifically, students making use of the social media, in collaboration of corrupt teachers has always device way out examination malpractices with special centers becomes the order of the day after all. However, the half-baked students with good results but cannot defend it have serious implication of producing quality of students. There is the need to study the cause of the high failure rates and low quality students that led to academic performance, the relationship of the above factors that led to the causes of poor academic performance among students in universities are caused by the high usage of the social networks, the quality of teaching and parental support. Education and Examination is a true measure of academic performance. (Okonkwo, 2016). In the study conducted by Englander et al., (2010), he observed that students spend more time using SNSs for other purposes apart from educational use, thus affecting their academic performance. In another study Nalwa and Anand, (2007), show that students like to use internet for their own responsibilities and this affects their academic performance. This study is further elaborated by Karpinski (2010) where they stated that SNSs users had lower grad rankings than students who never engage in social interactions. However there are general benefits associated with users of SNSs. Roblyer (2010) explained that SNSs are sources of communication among students and lecturers in their respective faculties. Furthermore, Kolek and Saunders (2008) resolved that users of SNSs who are students have no effect whatsoever with their academic. Despite the fact that a relatively large number of SNSs including facebook was initially created for learning purposes, there is some evidence that most SNSs users shows almost no attitudes towards finding academic information De Villiers (2010). Thus, it is possible that students are spending their time on visiting SNS instead of doing their course requirements. For example, a survey conducted by De Villiers (ibid) has shown that only an insignificant number of students (9 out of 200) who are studying at the University in Nigeria claimed that they were using WhatsApp for academic purposes. Even though more than a half of the respondents had a WhatsApp account (105 students), only 5% of them were involved in the learning process with the help of SNSAs.

Kuppuswamy and Shankar (2010) explained that the social networks grabs the total attention and concentration of the students and diverts it towards non-educational, unethical and inappropriate actions such as useless chatting, time killing by random searching and not doing their jobs. Though there are negative perceptions about the possible effects of SNS on the students' academic performance, some studies showed that students found it quite appropriate for teacher to use various social media platforms, and for teachers and students to socialize by this means (Baran; 2010). Students also believed that such tools could allow them to share knowledge in formal education contexts. In February 2014, the public authority for data privacy of the German State of Schleswig-Holstein has advised against using WhatsApp, as the service lacks privacy protection such as end-to-end client side encryption technology. In February 2015, a Dutch University student named Maikel Zweerink published an app that set out to prove that anyone can track social media platform user's status and also keep an eye of their changing profile pictures, privacy setting or status messages regardless of their privacy settings.

Usage of Social Media and University Students' Academic Performance

Slaouti, Onat-Stelma, and Motteram (2013) maintain that WhatsApp, Skype and GO SMS Pro are the commonly used social network applications among students in learning in many of the developed nations. In developing nations such as Nigeria, WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram are very common among students, WhatsApp being the leading, however, the use of WhatsApp, to a large extent, is not in learning.

Mwakapina (2016) asserts that any language is best learnt when there are enough rooms for interaction/dialogue, most of the English/SC classes are characterized by large classrooms. The exuberant zeal of Nigeria students for social network sites is one of the causes of their poor academic performance. Social media sites were created for leisure time but most Nigerian students will be online when their teachers are teaching them. Most Nigerian students don't have time to read for exams because they spend most of their time to chat, which makes many Nigeria students lost interest in reading because they are addicted to social network sites. Some hardworking students became lazy as a result of bad company on these platforms. Most students were introduced to Examination malpractice (exam runs) that had led to diminish of Nigeria education standard, that why there are many certified illiterate Nigeria. In as much as the application brings us to many benefits, it has also got it flaws that are currently causing more harm than good among students today, which has greatly affected many aspects of our lives. Today the Internet continues to grow day by day at an incredible speed and about 32.7% of the world population has access to internet. Howe (2012).

The internet can enhance the academic performances of students if used positively, in that, it makes communication easier and faster thereby enhancing effective flow of information and idea sharing among students. However, if used negatively it has adverse effect on the performance of students. Among the negative effects identified include the following: it takes much of the students studies time, results in procrastination and related problems, destroy students grammar and spellings, leads to lack of concentration during lectures and difficulty in balancing online activities and academic preparation. It is evidently clear that social media's impact on youth is creating additional challenges and opportunities. A recent study by Nielson found that nearly 80 percent of active internet users visit social media sites regularly (Nielson 2011).

Influence of Social Media Platform on the Academic Performance of Students

Students at universities and major institutions of higher education use mobile communication based text messaging and instant messaging. Texting is based on short messages services (SMS) between students through mobile devices (Kaseniemi and Rautiainen 2010). Instant messaging is based on sending brief, typed messages over the internet between two work stations or computers. Students use both texting and instant messaging in higher educational purposes (Jeong 2007; Kennedy 2008). Motiwalla (2007), in his research related to use of instant messaging for educational purposes, suggested that popularity and support for mobile devices within the student population is great and that majority of students at universities benefit from texting through mobile learning devices. Other research in this field found that students in universities are oriented and positive about using mobile learning in educational fields, which argues for why researchers in this domain should investigate how mobile learning technology can be best utilized in education (Litchfield 2007). Other studies in the field of principal factor influencing students' motivations to engage in social interactions (Cheung 2008) confirmed the principal role of online social presence in determining students' engagement through mobile technologies.

Goodfellow and Hewling (2005) suggest that cultural issues in an online learning environment, such as an e-learning platform, mobile learning system, and so on, were related first to the development of inequities arising from dominant cultural values embodied in learning resources and methods (Gunawardena, Wilson and Nolla 2003) and second to the potential online social interactions arising from cultural difference (Wong and Trinidad 2004). Discussion forums exist in a variety of distance learning platforms, such as e-learning platforms (Moodle, Blackboard, e-tutor. e.t.c) or mobile platforms (WhatsApp) these forums provide

online students opportunities to collaborate and cooperate together to construct knowledge (Chan 2005). Researchers in the field of collaborative and cooperative learning consider discussion forums to be effective tools for training. Researchers in the field of online learning suggest that discussion forums promote the creation and development of learning communities and support learning process. Synchronous and asynchronous communication between students promotes learning effectiveness (Zengin, Arıkan and Dogan 2011) The online discussion integrated in mobile devices provides opportunities for students to interact socially with their instructor to facilitate learning and solve learning difficulties.

Theoretical Framework

The Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) and its relation with the study. It explains why and how students of the university of Port Harcourt actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. According to Turney (2017), The uses and gratifications theory is one of many used to create effective communication programs when it is implemented properly. It describes the relationships formed between the media and its active audience (students). The university students (acting actively, not passively) select and use the media to fulfill their own needs and desires. These students find information that are educating, informative, intriguing, humorous, Interesting or shocking, they are inclined to share this with their colleagues in school through their social network (Johansson, 2017).

Methodology

This study adopts the quantitative research method using survey research design. The survey technique is the most commonly used research method by behavioural scientific. In getting responses from the respondents (students), the researcher formulated a questionnaire in line with the research objectives . The questionnaire consisted of open and close-ended questions whereby, the copies of the questionnaires were administered to the population by the researcher through different online platforms. After applying the questionnaires to the target public, the data gathered was coded into the Statistical Package of the social science software and tabulated for easy understanding of data collected. The population was selected based on a random sampling technique. The random selection gave a chance for different categories of individuals to fit into the study. The sample size for the study is 200 students of the university of Port Harcourt, which was correctly filled. The source of data collection for this research work was a self-administered questionnaire to evaluate the influence of social media on the Academic Performances of student in the university of Port Harcourt. The researcher gave the questionnaire to the students to fill out, at their own convenience.

Findings

Table 1: Showing gender of the students.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	82	41
Female	118	59
Total	200	100%

In table 1, the respondents' gender distribution is contained and the table shows that 41% are male and the remaining 59% are female.

Table 2: Showing age-group of Students.

Age-group	Frequency	Percentage
16-20	103	51.5
21-25	62	31
26-30	20	10
30 & above	15	7.5
Total	200	100

The table above indicates that the respondents between the age ranges of 16-20 have more participation in the study with 51.5% followed by the respondents between the range of 21-25 with 31%. This indicates that majority of the respondents are between the age range of 16-20.

Table 3: Showing the academic level of respondents.

Level	Frequency	Percentage
100	27	13.5
200	41	20.5
300	41	20.5
400	62	31
500	29	14.5
Total	200	100

In this table, 27 (13.5%) of the respondents are 100 level students, 41 (20.5%) respondents are 200 level students, 41 (20.5%) of the respondents are 300 level students, 62 (31%) of the respondents are 400 level students, while 29 (14.5%) of the respondents are 500 level students.

Question Analysis

Table 4: Showing if students access Social media platforms in school

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	157	78.5
Sometimes	24	12
No	18	9
Total	200	100

The above table explains that 157 of the respondents with 78.5% access social media platforms, 24 of the respondents representing 12% access social media sometimes, and 18 of the respondents representing 9% don't access social media at all.

Table 5: Showing how often students use Social media platforms in school

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	113	56.5
Often	42	21
Slightly often	28	14
Rarely	11	5.5
Never	6	3
Total	399	100

In the table above, 56.5% of the respondents access social media very often, 21% of the respondents access social media often, 14% of the respondents access social media slightly often, and 5.5% of the respondents access social media rarely, while 3% of the respondents never access social media.

Table 6: Showing what students do most with their Social media platforms

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Chat	53	26.5
Do Assignment	49	24.5
Both	98	49
Total	200	100

According to this table, 53 of the respondents representing 26.5% mostly chat with their social media, 49 of the respondents representing 24.5% mostly do assignments with their social media, while 98 of the respondents representing 49% both chat and do assignments with their social media.

Table 7: Showing if students get educational information on Social media.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	141	70.5
No	22	11
Not really	37	18.5
Total	200	100

The above table shows that 70.5% of the respondents gets educational information on Social media, 11% of the respondents don't get educational information on social media, and 18.5% don't really get educational information on social media.

Table 8: Showing if students make use of educational information

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	100	50
No	14	7
Sometimes	58	29
Rarely	15	7.5
Never	13	6.5
Total	200	100

From the above table, 100 respondents makes use of educational information, 14 respondents don't make use of educational information, 58 respondents sometimes makes use

of educational information, 15 respondents rarely makes use of educational information, and 13 respondents never makes use of educational informations.

Table 9: Showing what time students access social media platforms on their device.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Leisure time	81	40.5
Lecture time	16	8
Both	23	11.5
Anytime	88	44
Total	200	100

The above table indicates that 81 respondents which represent 40.5% access social media platforms on their devices during their leisure time, 16 of the respondents representing 8% access social media on their device during lecture time, 23 respondents which represent 11.5% access social media on their device both leisure and lecture time, and 88 respondents which represent 44% access social media on their device anytime.

Discussion of Findings

The findings explained that the students in the university of Port Harcourt are exposed to new information and happenings in their school and female students are more likely to be the major users of social media platforms; they spend more time online and anything of interest to them and their studies. Students who make use of social media most are students that falls within ages of 16-20 and they are more of 400 level students. Social media platforms are preferred because almost half of the respondents (students) are mainly interested in WhatsApp and access very often than any other online applications. This study also shows that certain percentages of students frequently gets educational information and use them for their academic activities. These studies also found out that students don't only chat, but share and receive academic information such as assignments, projects with the use of social media facilities like recording, calls, video calls and status.

Conclusion

From the outcome of the study thus concludes that social media platforms has played a significant role in influencing the academic performance of students generally. It could be seen that majority of the respondents makes use of WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and confirmed that WhatsApp has influenced their studying habits, and has informed them well on happenings and updates in the society. It helps the student's get and send educational related information which enhances their academic performance if he/she invests his/her time in the proper areas of studies. The studies also discover that some of the features of social media such as recording, audio/video calls and status have really contributed so much in the information dissemination of both educative and informative messages. Students get to easily know about emergency activities, programmes, classes or when information is passed to absentee. Also, majority of students get and share information from contents and updates from social media, majority of students access various platforms to be informed. The research shows that social media has really played an effective role in influencing the academic performance and habits of students in the university of Port Harcourt.

Recommendations

The followings are recommendations on the findings of the study; Management of Academic institutions should intensity guidance and counseling sessions in their respective institutions. Time Management should be incorporated into the curriculum of tertiary institutions. Students should be enlightened on the devastating effect of retiring to the short hand form of writing on their spellings and grammatical construction of sentences during their communication. Students should join educational groups in order to learn from one another and only log in online and chat at leisure times to stop wasting time on chat. Spend more time to study and less time to chat. Don't study for Examination alone but study to acquire skills. Read to pass Examination without examination malpractice. Make proper use of the internet to improve academic performance.

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