

Influence of Social Media on the Academic Performance of Senior Secondary School Students

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Abstract

Social media is the fastest growing and dominant trend in the use of technology in modern times. Social media generally refers to the interaction of people using various platforms with the absence of geographical location and time barriers. However, there are contrasting opinions on the impact of social media on students' academic development, aimed at strengthening growing knowledge about the influence of social media usage on students with a view to enhancing their learning and academic development. This study provided further clarification on the potential benefits of social media on education by establishing the students' knowledge of social media sites and determining how social media use can affect the academic performance of the students. The study adopted the survey research design using both the quantitative and qualitative methods. With a population of 360, 186 respondents was used as the sample size using simple random sampling. From the data and information analysed, it was established that most of the respondents (98.0%) were subscribers of Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, 2go, YouTube and histogram. The study also established that social media has helped the respondents to access and share academic materials and also enable them to interact with one another as individual and as a group. Based on the findings, the study recommends that academic institutions should embrace the use of social media in enhancing learning and communication. That is, students-to-students and teachers-to-students in order to make academic teaching and learning more convenient, effective and efficient.

Keywords: Social Media, Academic Performance and Education

Introduction

In this age of media technologies, change has occurred and is still occurring not only in the technology itself, but also in the ways humans inter-relate, define, and shape their realities. Social media services are [online service](#) platforms or sites that lay emphases on expediting the creation of [social networks](#) or [social relations](#) amongst people who share activities, backgrounds, interests or real-life connections. Social network sites comprise depiction of each user's (often a profile), social links and a range of extra services. Most social networking sites are [web-based](#) and offer platform for users to inter relate over the internet notwithstanding their locations. Social network

provides the platform for [online community](#) services that enable members and visitors to leave comments, exchange photographs and send messages on the website. It also allows users to share ideas, activities, events, advertisements and interests within their individual networks (Wallace, 2006).

Social networks make accessibility users or visitors to the websites easy. This enables the social networking sites to give users and visitors the room to drop messages or comments on the profile web page that is visible to all or some (Boyd and Nicole, 2007). Social media have universally made communication easier and cheaper due to

their sophisticated nature. When used, they are very fast and easy to revive old relationships as friends meet and interact with each other irrespective of locations. According to Kabakci, Ferhan, and Ahmet, (2008), research has shown that people who are connected to network of their families and friends have a higher likelihood to be happier and healthier and possibly live longer than those who live in isolation. People with different problems need others to relate with, which is why social situations can have such a prolific and profound effect on people's thoughts, actions, feelings and psychology.

The social media sites today are dominating online activities and their presence has made acquisition of knowledge easier. For example, with the mobile phone facilities you can at your fingertips access information any time and at any location. Social media sites have become so ubiquitous that the world has almost 'shrunk' to what is termed a global village. It is so because time and space are no longer a barrier. People from all walks of life now use the social media networks to satisfy their communication needs irrespective of their age and location. Young people are among the most prolific users of social media (SM). Up-and-coming researches have shown that youths spend a considerable portion of their daily life interacting through social media John & Gasser (2011). This has led to the emergence of questions and controversies about the effects social media (SM) have on adolescent development. With social networking becoming popular, children can now create their own dozens of profiles, make friends, start relationships, participate in chat rooms, hold private conversations, have zoom meetings, share photos and videos, and share blogs by using their sophisticated mobile phones (Rohrer, 2010).

The politics, economy, culture, and even the shape of family life will be changed because of SM, John (2011). Many children make use of social media to post all sorts of information publicly than their parents realize. On social media sites, children share personal details about themselves, which

leave them vulnerable to predators, sexual solicitors, pedophiles, drug addicts, murderers, kidnappers, fraudsters, bullies and so on. Some of these young users now share pornographic photos through Google Picasa and Picasa Web Albums. The Picasa Web Albums were developed with the idea of storing pictures on the cloud as a secure and safe back-up and also to enable sharing of the photos with friends (Soola et al, 2007).

In the last decade, the media climate in which children grow up has been transformed vividly and the time spent consuming media contents have grown exponentially. Childhood and adolescence have been drowned with and possibly transformed by TV shows, smart phones, Pads, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, World of War craft, Angry Birds, and texting, among others.

Statement of the Research Problem

Social media is said to be exposing people to modern technologies, educational materials, fostering greater value for collaborative skills and modern ways of communication, Research has shown that children between the ages of 13 and 17 do spend quality time each day interacting online, more than they do offline (Boyd and Jenkins, 2010). Scholars see the advent of social media as a vital building block for speedy academic development of the youth, while others see it as an obstacle for academic excellence, especially to the growing youth (Rohrer, 2010). It is this dilemma that formed part of the problem that was investigated in this study.

Despite the fact that social media give opportunities in the area of academic learning and intellectual development, it also presents potential problems in the learning process of the youth, especially secondary school students. Irrespective of where it is used or who is using it, the potential benefits of social media in academic development are still hypothetical. Hence, there is need for further research on social media for better use, understanding and proper implementation in the learning institutions in Nigeria. It is on this

premise, therefore, that this study sought to bring about greater understanding of the influence and potential benefits of social media use in senior secondary schools.

Objectives of the Study

This study is guided by the following objectives:

- i. to investigate the level of students' awareness and knowledge of social media;
- ii. to determine, through descriptive statistical tools social media can affect students' academic performance.

Benefits of Social Media

According to Kahne (2012), youth participation in social media can foster learning and get exposed to educational innovations to complement what is taught in traditional classrooms. Kahne further points out some potential benefits social media offers to young people, these include, but not limited to the following highlighted below.

Social media enable students to participate in after-school programs to implement digital Literacy and it has capacity of opening up avenues for beneficial cognitive and psychosocial development for young people in the online social world. Also, adolescent participation in social media has opportunity to foster learning that reinforces and complements what is taught in traditional classrooms (Tynes (2007).

Social media provides trustworthy information online pertaining to education, creates room for easy accessibility to educational resources through the Internet and increase users' ability to share their educational materials and promotes both formal and informal learning, while “formal” learning is what happens within the classroom, “informal learning” can be described as learning and engagement that occurs outside of formal school settings. Formal learning may or may not be guided by a teacher, but it definitely happens within the context of supervised instruction (Jenkins, 2009, cited in Liman (2014).

social media use by youth and found numerous social behaviors that provide a theoretical link to learning outcomes. For example, students in their study use MySpace profiles to display creative work and receive feedback from their network. Youth report experiencing social support for school-related tasks, daily stresses, and problems. Social Networking Sites help blend school and outside life for the teenagers in this study. These ethnographic studies offer rich accounts of new and vital literacy practices among youth.

Social media encourages students to work more collaboratively where physical and time barriers may have previously prevented such. Griffith, et. al (2005) cited in Liman (2014) “pointed out that online video games may assist young people to develop cognitive skills such as spatial visualization and analog representation”. While Drew and Waters (1986) in the same vein demonstrated that video games play could increase not only hand-eye coordination but also improve scores of general and verbal intelligence.

The swift adoption of social media culture by young people denotes an essential modification in people's usage of the internet mainly for academic development. Young people are consuming, creating, disseminating and rejigging media especially in the learning process. This has brought about the assertion that today, young people are not restricted to hard copy materials or teacher-student learning process but they are also actively learning outside the conventional classroom (Bruns, 2008). This all-encompassing media environment facilitates young people to undertake in creative content production, empowering them with new means of generating and supporting their academic achievement. It has also unlocked new debates on how to hypothesize and stimulate what is now termed cyber citizenship. Bruns coined the term “Produsage”, which he defined as [“the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement”](#).

Greenhow and Robelia (2009) also examine the

According to Cairnross (2000), as cited in Gana

(2011), the internet has become a tool used globally to disseminate information. It has had profound impact on academic, social and business communication. The internet and its components (Social media networking) have destroyed time, space and geography; in that people are able to share information with one another across distant borders getting responses instantly within real time experience. Thus with the Internet everyone is a potential recipient and transmitter of information as long as you have access and are connected to it.

Although scholars have argued that in as much as the internet facilitates openness, access, and encourages communication as well as promoting people's development, it has also opened the door to some ill practices in the society as Blumenfeld (2010) notes:

Some of the concerns with respect to social media networks are; children's exposure to sexual solicitors, pedophiles, problematic contents, imposters, fraudsters, murderers and bullies, among others.

Blumenfeld further explained that a lot of children have been killed by the people they met on social media, while some were bullied- leading to emotional trauma that subsequently led to the victims committing suicide.

Perhaps in the field of education, social media network plays the most active role by supporting relationships between teachers and students and among students themselves. These provide opportunities for learning, educating, content sharing and professional development in different areas of human endeavours. Considering various debates surrounding the influence of social media participation amongst students, it is clear that social media plays a vital role in education, shaping the behaviour and opinions of young people around the world if properly used and not marred or abused as the case may be. Although the Internet provides a wealth of information and

opportunities to youth, as with any other aspect of their lives, there are potential risks and dangers.

Social Media Effects on Young People

The social media and its trends have a lot of effects on the lives of young people (positively and negatively). The social media has been discovered to have subtle influence on the lives of its audience to the point where people tend to correct their habit to the offerings of the media.

Social media contents exposed young people to negative influences and behaviours instead of knowledge acquisition, it has on the other hand created good learning environments for educational development. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the media also contribute to the positive development of students, especially to their educational, social, psychological and spiritual well-being. Existing literature revealed that there are many media programmes that are packaged which use virtual reality to educate, inform and entertain children in amazing ways. (Sobowale, 1999). Such programmes are in form of cartoons (e.g. Walt Disney's Ice Age, the jungle Boy, Lilo and the Stich, Bugs Life among others), musicals (like Sing Along Songs, ABCD Series), films (like 'The Scout Master', 'The Karate Kids') and games (like 'The Adventure').

On the contrary to the above, some studies documented that watching violent films and television programming can lead to increased hostility and aggression in the lives of young people. Gerbner et al, (1994) for instance posit that an association between playing violent computer games can increase aggression on children. From the early days of television, there has been public outcry about its harmful effects on children (Signorielli, 2005). Today, its effect is even more exposed and common to young people with the internet. One other problem of the advent of the internet is its inability to impose gate-keeping to enable parents control bad media contents fed into the net. The internet has also revolved into an unparallel outlet for pornography, which exposes

children to harmful effects (Heider and Harp, 2002).

Social Media Use for Students' Academic Learning

Today the fast growth in social media usage as a platform for social interaction could be said to have some effects on students' intellectual development. Even though research on social media and learning achievement is gradually gaining ground compared to studies of safety, sociology, peace and conflict resolution and psychological well-being. There are researches that argue on Social media, its impact on youth, and its place in the education sector. In his paper, Karpinski (2009) gained media traction as his study revealed that Facebook users in colleges have lower GPAs compared to students who do not use Facebook. Karpinski (2009) presented varying hypotheses for his findings. In instance, Facebook users invest a lot of time on online activities and spend less time on their books.

Hargittai et al, (2009) point out limitations in the Karpinski research. Firstly, the representative population of the research was limited. Secondly, the study used few control variables in its analysis. Also, Hargittai et al, (2009) took the issue with the liberal conclusions of Karpinski (2009), namely, that the original research presents strong points for a negative relationship between Facebook use and grades. Hargittai et al, (2009), present a trident of analyses that utilize an expansive sample of college students, a representative population with national outlook of 14–22 year olds.

The researchers make use of more controlled variables vis-a-vis racial background, socio-economic status, and previous academic records variables. From this precedence, the study finds that usage of Facebook does not have a significant relationship to the performance of students academically in any of their data. The study puts that the nexus between Facebook and students' academic performance is an exciting vista for studies in the future. Furthermore, save for the fact that a lot of youth utilize Facebook, there seem to

be no strong and substantial point why utilization of Facebook should impugn on students' academic performance. A lot of the researches on social media and education measure learning from a perspective of literacy (Greenhow and Robelia, 2009; Ito *et al.*, 2009; Jenkins, 2006).

This viewpoint of literacy centers on learning practices, such as creating media, instead of the standard gauges of learning like grading or the regular assessments. As Hull and Schultz (2001) note, one of the chief inputs of literacy researchers is to appreciate the concept of practices. Activities of children in school vis-a-viz paying attention to the lesson of a teacher, solving class exercises on their books, writing assessments to test their assimilation of lessons are viewed as specific practices of literacy. Formal educational system is planned to instill knowledge in students so as they can excel in the behaviors they are being taught. Nonetheless, practices of literacy that is not done within the walls of a school could suffice for different purposes than projected in the four walls of a class. Putting into context the emergence of new technologies, contemporary communication amongst youth have changed and their patterns of learning is now different outside of the classroom.

According to Jenkins (2006), today's youth must be knowledgeable across different gauges surrounding the social media cyber space. In an instance, he describes performance as the ability to embrace varying characteristics all in a bid for discovery. The social media that is seen as a veritable tool for building identity could be utilized to foster the exploration of varying voices, characters and viewpoints in students' learning process. Jenkins characterized appropriation as a skill to remix different contents from different sources in communicating ideas. Social media are spaces which merge a number of media tools, and may hypothetically be useful in helping students gather, synthesize, and rejig contents. He conceptualizes networking as the ability to source, incorporate, and spread information.

Likewise, a study on university-age youth finds

that they churn out a great bulk of writings via tools like microblogs, networking sites, e-mails /and other social media tools (Fishman, Lunsford, McGregor, and Otuteye, 2005). For researchers on the subject of new media effects, exploratory studies on media practices affords an important bridge to learning outcomes. Feasibly, networking sites on the cyberspace that: (i) are utilized for precise learning means, (ii) that hold robust educational values that are erected within the virtual community, and (iii) that engenders specific information and social learning attitudes will lead to improved learning outcomes. Attitudinal engagement that is behavioural engagement denotes involvement in academic, extra-curricular or social activities.

In describing emotional engagement, it refers to the positive and negative emotional state students may possibly have about tutors, mates, and the larger school community. Meanwhile, cognitive engagement describes the energy and enthusiasm that a learner is ready to invest so as to understand problematic models and acquire novel skills. As earlier stated, a large chunk of the studies on social media submit that the more learners interact with their social network, the more they cultivate advanced quality connections with others. Researchers on education subjects who investigate learning from a social context, in areas as extra-curricular activity, out-of-school time, and climate of the classroom also discover a linkage among high-quality associations, academic engagement of students, and performance (Eccles and Templeton, 2002; Feldman and Matjasko, 2005; Martin and Dowson, 2009). A major hypothesis among education researchers is that youth participation in extracurricular and school activities increases their social connectedness with teachers and peers (Eccles and Templeton, 2002; Feldman and Matjasko, 2005). This relationship is interrelated to improved engagement with academics and school.

Engagement has been also connected to a decreased probability to drop out of school

(Fredericks *et al.*, 2004). These assumptions are still huge questions for researchers in education. Social media provides a fresh perspective within which to discern how associations affect grades, school engagement, and performances of students. Scholars of social media have also the capability to unswervingly study how online rapport and networks may engender this social learning process.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws its theoretical backings from Constructivist Learning Theory. This is because the theory of Constructivist attempts to explain how learners learn by constructing understanding for themselves (Jonassen, 1994). Constructivist learning theory seems to be a combination of behavioural change, cognitive and critical learning theories. In his work, Bruner (1973) posits that learning is a process that is active, where learners build new thoughts or ideas on the basis of their existing and previous understanding of a phenomenon. He further adds that learners pick and process knowledge, construct postulations, and arrive at decisions by relying on a rational base to do so. He also suggests that a theory of instruction ought to address four key areas: (1) inclination to learning; (2) the methods with which a body of knowledge can be arranged for it to be readily available to be grasped by learners; (3) the utmost and operative structure to deliver teaching; and (4) the method and nature of accolades and penalties. Proper procedure for organizing information should bring about simplification, generation of new postulations, and swelling the management of information. While on the hand, Thanasoulas (1994) extends the definition of the concept when he asserts that, constructivist theory takes a multi-disciplinary approach, as it taps from a wide range of theories from critical education, sociology, philosophy, and psychology.

Theory of constructivist learning is a clear subject in [education reforms](#) and related movements. Jean Piaget, is of course one of the earliest theorists of constructivism. In his theory of Cognitive

Development (1955), he demonstrated how children pass through four stages in their development - Sensory-motor, pre-operational, concrete-operational and the formal-operational. These processes occur not through direct instruction, but rather through the child's own mental activity and internal motivation to understand.

However, Constructivism is a learning theory found in psychology which explains how people might acquire knowledge and learn. It therefore has direct application to education. The theory suggests that humans construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences. Constructivism is not a specific pedagogy. Piaget's theory of Constructivist learning has had wide ranging impact on learning theories and teaching methods in education and is an underlying theme of many education reform movements.

This theory promotes and helps in understanding the mental capacity of students at levels of

growth and how to engage them in learning activities. For example, young children starts learning even from age 0 and above and they explore the world around them and express their views through physical expressions.

Methodology

This work used quantitative and qualitative data to investigate the influence of social media on the academic performance of SS1 – SS3 students of Rimi College, Kaduna. A sample size of 186 students randomly selected was used. Descriptive survey research was employed and a questionnaire and focus group discussion were used for data collection.

Findings

The findings of the study are presented in the tables below.

Table 1: Types and Frequency of Social Media Site Used by Students

Variable	Twitter	WhatsApp	YouTube	FaceBook	2go	Total
Frequency	31	21	15	62	21	150
Percentage	20.7	14.0	10.00	41.3	14.0	100

Table 2: Deployment of Social Media by Students

Variable	No resp.	Yes	No	Total
Chatting				
Frequency	7	82	61	150
Percentage	4.7	54.7	40.7	100.1
Online Calls				
Frequency	4	22	124	150
Percentage	2.7	14.7	82.7	100.1
Sharing of audio and visual files				
Frequency	4	32	114	150
Percentage	2.7	21.3	76.0	100
Sharing Pictures				
Frequency	5	48	97	150
Percentage	33.3	32.0	64.7	100
Searching for materials for class assignment				
Frequency	5	73	72	150
Percentage	3.3	48.7	48.0	100
Studying Math/English language				
Frequency	0	95	55	150
Percentage	0.0	63.3	36.7	100.00

Table 2 above reveals that the respondents have more knowledge on Facebook network (41.0%), followed by Twitter (20.0%), while Youtube recorded (10.0%) WhatsApp also accounted for (14.0%), and 2go also has (14.0%). This shows that the respondents' knowledge of social media and its benefits/risks which is fundamental to the learning process is mostly via Facebook. That is, a significant number of the respondents - 41.0% have knowledge of Facebook. A summary of table II reveals that majority of the respondents believe that Facebook gives them the opportunity to learn and upgrade themselves academically. This supports also some responses from the Focus Group Discussion participants

who acknowledged the importance of the new media technologies. According to one of the FGD participants:

We are privileged now to have kinds of social media unlike in the days of our parents. What we are enjoying was not in existence during the period of our parents. With the Google, Facebook, Wikipedia different types of information are brought to our finger tips; if you have access to internet with your Smartphone you can ask questions and get information on any subject of your choice within few minutes. The social media assist students a lot when it comes to academic work (An SS1

student).

Based on the comment above, the respondents have some knowledge of social media and their components, which confirms with the findings in Table 1. On the other hand, according to an SS1 science student, when asked of the positive/negative influence of the social media (during the FGD), he responded by saying:

Most of the times I get carried away by WhatsApp and Twitter instead of reading my books or searching the net to upgrade my studies. But I don't visit YouTube, I don't want to watch what is against my faith, so I stay away to avoid what will make me behave abnormal because of my family background (FGD Response).

Apart from knowing that the social media presents good atmosphere for learning, the respondents are also aware that social media also pose some threat based on the understanding of some of the respondents. Therefore, awareness and knowledge of social media in terms of learning to an extent may influence performance and academic productivity. Table 2 shows that the highest value 54.7% accounted for respondents that use social media for chatting while 40.7% of the respondents indicated that they do not use the medium for chatting while 82.7% of the respondents do not use social media to make phone calls (via Facebook and Skype etc) and other activities, while 14.7% of the respondents said they use the social media for calls, while 2.7% declined the question. 21.3% accounted for respondents who use social media for sharing of audio and visual file while 76.0% of respondents answered that they do not use social media for sharing audio and visual files. Also, 32.0% responded that they made use of the social media for sharing digital pictures while 64.7% of respondents do not use social media for sharing pictures.

Table 2 also shows that 48.7% of the respondents use social media to search for materials for class assignments while on the other hand, 48.0%

responded in the negative; while 3.0% accounted for no response. 63.3% respondents used the social media to study mathematics, while 37.0% respondents said no to the question. It could be inferred that there is the tendency of the use of the social media platform impacting on students' learning of mathematics through the sharing of formulas and download of sampled exercises. It was also shown that 76.0% of the respondents indicated that they use social media to study English Language only, while 24.0% indicated that they don't use social media to study English Language and 0.0% declined the question.

Discussion of Findings

Revelation from the study shows that good number of the respondents holds the strong view that Facebook gives them the opportunity to learn and upgrade themselves academically. This is in collaboration with the result of the Focus Group Discussion on the same subject matter.

The benefits derived from facebook include but not limited but not keeping customers updated with stories, post and events, create group to keep people posted about ones programme, offering consumer service through messenger and reaching more people with page promotion.

Additional reasons why students use the social media are that it affords them opportunity to find concrete information online. Although there others search engines students can use for academic work like the g Google, Yahoo, Baidu, AOL, Ask.com, Exite, DuckDuckGo, Bing, etc, the Facebook platform has shown that the opportunity to make millions of friends from around the world, with varied experiences is a very good ground to gain information that will help his or her academic pursuit. This is coupled with the distant learning opportunities face book also bring along with it. The introduction of social media has significantly impacted on how learners learn and the mode tutors teach (Boateng and Amankwaa, 2016).

Conclusion

In this stage of the Internet and social media, tremendous change has been witnessed. There is a shift not only in the technology itself, but also in how communication activities are being carried out. As knowledge is power, so also information is power. This is so because the new media as a medium has paved the way for the accessibility of information, so, power to effect change becomes available. Information is shared commonly amongst people from all walks of life via the new media. Today the new technologies have taken over many aspects of our daily activities. Therefore, it is imperative to study social media usage as it divulges ample information about the change in patterns of communication, as the young generation integrates it into their lives.

Recommendations

- i. This research suggests that as books and teachers are no longer seen as the only sources of information for study and learning, government should boost computer laboratories with state-of-the art technologies, free subscriptions and more training and retraining of teachers especially those that have not yet tapped into the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) world.
- ii. Also, there is need for secondary institutions to include in their school syllabuses, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and to equip their computer laboratories with the new technologies in order to enhance learning process, which will create a digital enabling environment that will boost the learning activities in order to achieve the outlined aims and objectives.
- iii. Despite social media's contributions to education in the learning process, due to the dangers posed by social media, schools and parents should introduce safety measures such as ikeepsafe (app), Internet Nanny, V-Chip and Rating systems to curtail negative

contents. Paralert which monitors children's activities online.

- iv. Educators should start thinking and planning in such a way that they can establish good synergy between social media components and new technologies and come up with well-designed system of learning at the secondary school level. However, it is imperative to have focused syllabuses that connect the potentials of social media to ease access, involvement and learning in a way that students will be the utmost beneficiaries. This will give both the teachers and students ample opportunities to understand and practice the ethical uses of social media.

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