

USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

By

Joy Ani

joy.ani@unn.edu.ng

Victoria N. Okafor

victoria.okafor @unn.edu.ng

Corresponding Author

Justina N. Ekere

justina.ekere@unn.edu.ng

Nnamdi Azikiwe Library

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

Purpose: The use of social networking in teaching and learning in higher institutions nowadays is crucial essential especially in this time technological advancement and during this time of pandemic. This study therefore is an investigation into the academic use of social networks among undergraduates in federal universities in south east Nigeria.

Design/methodology: The researcher used descriptive survey design which was considered most appropriate for this study. The sample size was 400 undergraduate students from three of the five federal universities in South East Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique involving purposive and proportionate stratified sampling technique was used.

Findings: The research work found out of the twenty social networks listed, only Facebook and Googleplus wer the ones utilized by undergraduates and out of two students make use of Facebook for achieving specific academic purposes. It was also found out that students' engagement with social networks increases technology proficiency and enhances research skills. The major problems that hinder academic use of social network include slow internet, poor time management and lack of personal computers.

Originality: The importance of this study now in developing countries is crucial especially in this period of pandemic, learning, studies and research should have continue online with the use of social media and thereby not wasting the period. Based on this universities in federal universities in South East Nigeria should create adequate awareness to their students on the available social networks that can be used for academic purposes; social networks should become a seamless part of the curriculum and not just an additional means of communication.

Practical implications: Faculty members in every university should see the benefits of involving social networking in teaching, learning and doing research in higher Institutions. If it has become part of our curriculum we would have now continue with our learning and research during this pandemic.

Research limitations: The data collected does not cover the whole country, yet the benefit of utilizing social networking in teaching is crucial to every country. It is necessary that developing countries should include social media as part of their curriculum.

Keywords: Social Network, Social Media, Universities, Academic Use, Nigeria

Introduction

Academic is referred to as those activities that have to do with learning and research carried out in institutions of higher learning such as universities and colleges which are called academic instructions. The university is charged with the responsibility of carrying out all the academic works capable of impacting knowledge to its members which include the undergraduate students and these academic works are summarised as research, teaching and learning. For the students to accomplish these, they require the needed information which may be in different formats like audio-visual, printed, audio, visual, electronic etc. However with the advent of computers and information and communication technology (ICT) these resources can be made available and accessible online. Some of these resources are journals, text books and other relevant learning resources. The internet which provides a platform for social networking is also one of the resources that can help to improve academic performance of undergraduate in institution of higher learning. Everyday people are turning to the internet to maintain social networks where they keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. These online social networks have strengthened virtual friendships and have provided a platform for varied activities. Social network are of different purposes including social activities, political, business, sports and academic use.

Academic use in the context of this study can simply be referred to as those uses which undergraduates make of the social networks for the purpose of research, teaching and learning. The use of social network for academic purposes is apparent in alternative ways provided by the instant and multimodal media to engage in the pursuit of their discipline, the exploiting of communication channels which link them with alumni and staff, creating communication of inquiry and support, utilising networks of individuals, groups and bodies, which can be useful sources of knowledge and resources that can enable creative and collaborative learning experiences

Social media can be described as technologies that facilitate social interaction, make collaboration possible, and enable deliberation among people at the global level (Tayo, Adebola and Yahya, 2019). The list of social networking sites may be quite lengthy. The most popular are *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *MySpace*, *Cyworld*, *Bebo*, *Library thing* and *Wordpress*. Adding to these, Ahmad (2011), listed *Friendster*, *Downlink*, *Ryze*, *SixDegrees*, *Hi5*, *LinkedIn*, *Orkut*, *Flicker*, *YouTube*, *Reddit*, *Twitter*, *FriendFeed*, *BharatStudent* and *Floper* as significant social networking websites patronised by youngsters. Specifically however, Duke (2011) listed the following as social network sites that are dedicated solely for academic purposes: *Academia.edu*, *Academici*, *Zotero*, *Myscience*, *Peer Evaluation*, *Quartzy*, *ResearchGate*, *SciSpace*, *CiteULike*, *LikedIn*, *Mendeley*, *myExperience* and *Epernicus Network*.

The present generation of students due for higher institution are digital group and they are avid users of social networks. They are seen spending a lot of time using the social networks but mainly for connecting with friends and mere socialising. This reflects in the general dwindle of academic performance and in the fewness of excellent results in many universities. However, the importance of social networks cannot be overemphasised despite its misuse. Of recent the Nigeria Government is looking away out of distance learning of undergraduate in various Universities while they are at home due to COVID-19. The social networks are a means lectures can use to connect their students. This work is relevant and timely because much has not been written on academic use of social networks as it concerns undergraduates in Nigerian context generally. With an inquiry into this by this research, the current use can be ascertained while deducing the hindrances to effectiveness, and charting the way forward for profitable academic utilisation of these networks for improved academic performance. Therefore, the topic of this study put in question form is what is the academic use of social networks by undergraduates in federal universities in south east Nigeria?

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to determine the academic use of social networks by undergraduate students in federal universities in South East Nigeria.

Specifically, the study is to:

1. Determine the extent to which social networks are used by undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria.
 2. Determine the social networks used for specific academic purposes by undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria.
 3. Identify the hindrances to academic use of social networks by undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria.
1. Suggest strategies that can be used to improve academic use of social networks by undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria.

Literature Review

The meaning of social networking has taken an altogether new dimension in the contemporary. Some years ago, it was used in referring to attending a social function such as a business luncheon, a conference, workshops, professional meetings office-sponsored cocktail party or such similar meetings with the hopes of meeting new people. Supporting the assertion, Barczyk and Duncan (2011) adds that social networking currently means hooking-up and attracting other people in websites such as *Facebook*, *Google+*, *MySpace*, or *LinkedIn*.

A variety of scholars have defined social networking in different way. Abdul, Adil, Mulla , Mulla , Sayed, singh, Tripathi, Sowmya and Eusufzai (2020) explained that social media based on Cambridge definition, can be defined as websites or computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on internet using computer or mobile phones. They went further to say that many have not known that social media can be divided into 6 classes. The classes are social networks, bookmarking sites, social news, media sharing, micro blogging, blog comment and forums. To them social networks are social media sites that enhance communication with people surrounding with same interest and background. Examples are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Bookmarking Sites are sites that allow user to save and organize link to numbers of online resources and website. On another way Tayo, Adebola and Yahya (2019) looked at social media is an online platform which enables people to build social networks or relations with other people who share similar personal or career interests, activities, backgrounds or real-life connections. Social media is therefore the interaction among individuals in which they create and share information and ideas in networks. However, social media relies on many electronic devices like tablets, i-pads, laptops, and Internet-based technologies for connecting people. Thus, Asemah, Okpanachi and Edegoh (2013) define a social network as a social structure made up of individuals or organisations called nodes, the people concerned are linked together by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige.

These researchers' idea of social networks and social networking are referred to as social networking sites (SNSs) and online social networks in current literature.

In the view of Ramanigopal, Palaniappan, and Hemalatha (2012), Social networking is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like small rural communities or a neighbourhood subdivision. These researchers maintain also that though social networking is possible in person, especially in the workplace, universities, and high schools, it is most popular online, as it is a virtual social world where one makes friends, exchange photographs, strike business deals, play games, fall in love, split, fight, argue and quarrel without having met these people face to face. Some social networking websites like *Facebook* allow users to customize their profiles by adding multimedia content. Having millions of users, they have an impact upon patterns of

informal scholarly communication, either in terms of information-seeking and sharing or on the structure of research (Matzat, 2004; Fry & Talja, 2007; Mangan, 2012). This therefore means that social networking sites can be very useful in carrying out academic activities such as teaching, learning and research in a nut shell.

In other words SNSs provide many positive impacts on the lives of the learners which include increase the rate and quality of collaboration, students communicating effectively with others and sharing information quickly. Talaue, Alsaad, AlRushaidan & AlHagail (2018) emphasise that social media platforms help with access to information and educational-related materials. Considering the aforementioned, many students and instructors are using social media as a teaching and learning tool. It help them to increased their productivity greatly and learn how to work well in groups Academia should on their own part support the use SNSs and be able to slot in any suitable technologies into the process of teach and learning as a core part of its teaching strategies.. According to Lederer (2012), SNSs improved communication between students and instructors, while the latter can answer students' questions, post homework assignments and lesson plans, send messages and updates, schedule or announce upcoming events and share websites and multimedia content.

As the technologies are becoming increasingly entrenched in the lives and educational experience of the students of today, social networking sites are becoming prevalent in the educational context that many educators are already exploring ways in which these tools can be used for teaching and learning activities. According to Ingrid & Marc (2013), academics mainly employ social media sites to communicate their personal status, be informed about news, and socialize. They mostly communicate their personal viewpoints about a topic relevant to their field or the progress and dynamics of a certain research field. They also search for news and information about their field published by "friends" and to inform themselves about the academic viewpoint of colleagues. In clear terms, Abdelraheem (2013) while emphasising that the process of teaching and learning has always been fruitful position for early adopters of innovation in computing technology, also maintains that educational practitioners and theorists have begun to keenly investigate how social media can be harnessed to illustrate and put into practice new paradigms for communication, learning, and education. He further mentioned some of the SNSs that can help as Wikis, blogs, micro-blogs, online groups and forums, podcasts, Web mash ups, virtual worlds, recommender/evaluation systems, social repositories, and social tagging/bookmarking are but a few of the applications enabling innovative behaviours that support the acquisition, access, manipulation, processing, retrieval, presentation, and visualization of information within a teaching/learning space.

Prominent amongst the academic use of social networking is applicable in libraries for quick information exchanges. Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwoma (2012), observe that social network sites such as *Library thing*, *We Read*, *Research Gate* and others are used in collaboration with other librarians, professional issues, product inquiry, assisting in research and learning, research update and search for needed information while sites like *Facebook*, *LinkedIn* and *Sci Blog* are used in socialization, self-esteem, meeting new people, entertainment and keeping up to date on current trends. Siddhartha S, et al(2020) was of the opinion that the first phase of the research using web content analysis revealed that Facebook is the most popular social media presence among various organizations. It was also found that there are a higher percentage of organizations that use Facebook for interactivity with stakeholders. Social media helps developing countries be more visible to the rest of the world.

Ansari and Khan (2020), Based on the empirical investigation, it could be noted that application and usefulness of the social media in transferring the resource materials, collaborative learning and interaction with the colleagues as well as teachers would facilitate students to be more enthusiastic and dynamic. This study provides guidelines to the corporate world in formulating strategies regarding the use of social media for collaborative learning. Hussain, Gulrez, and

Tahirkheli (2012), see the use and benefits of social network for academic gains mostly emphasise on creating contents while said little or nothing on the way of sharing, interacting and collaborating and socializing through social media sites. Furthermore, the researchers highlight other aspects of the use of social networks in higher education such as its exploitation for enhancing the study experiences of learners by providing them with students support services, including e-mentoring, e-feedback and other e-facilities. Academic use of social networks can also been discussed under some important headings as seen below.

Practically, students' access to lecture notes is of benefit since they can download it and prepare themselves in advance to the seminars or lectures. Consequently, students going through the note get a broader vision about the lectures, which helps them comprehend the contents better. At times they use YouTube to watch educational video-clips, which help them to get better understanding of the note. Still students can use Voice-based or video-based media such as Skype for group discussions concerning the courses or mostly group assignments. Some academics use these networks to disseminate their curriculum vitae, find collaborators for research projects, search for a job, establish and monitor their web visibility, and others join just for no specific reason or simply because others are there or a colleague invited them (Nández & Borrego, 2013). In the opinion of Gomez, Roses and Farias (2012), academic use of social networking include the resolving of queries about course contents and exam with other students, enquire about topics covered in class during non-attendance, to keep abreast of other students' opinion about a subject, to compare and exchange lecture notes, to organise extracurricular activities, to consult recommendation on books or recourses recommended and to participate in tutorials and consultation sessions with tutors.

Finally, worthy of mention is the work of Selwyn (2009), summarised five education-related interaction that may appear on student Facebook Walls: describing and reflecting on the university experience; exchange of useful information; exchange of academic information; displays of request and/or disengagement; and informal discussions of academic work. Effectively engaging students requires not only understanding their attitudes towards academic life, but also understanding their social life. It is important to accept that many students are digitally driven having been surrounded by, and using sophisticated cell phones, computers, and technologies of different sorts; and as a result are under the influence of the digital culture. It is incontestable that these students prefer receiving information quickly and are well skilled at processing such information rapidly, and will give priority to active rather than passive learning, which is provided by social networks. Discovering ways of integrating course contents and other teaching-learning activities into social networks should therefore be of utmost interest of contemporary academics.

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey design was used for the study. Nworgu (2015) explains that studies which aim at collecting data, describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population is a descriptive survey research. The author further states that such researches are only interested in describing the certain variables in relation to the population and are concerned with describing events the way they are. This design is appropriate for this study because it intends to find out the opinions and views of the respondents on academic use of social networks among undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria. The population of the study comprises all undergraduates in the five federal universities in the south-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The zone is made of five states and each state has one federal university. As obtained from institutions' websites and planning units, the total population of these students is seventy-two thousand and ninety-six (72,096), comprising twenty-two thousand, six hundred and forty-nine (22,469) students from UNN; fourteen thousand, five hundred (14,500) students from FUTO; twenty thousand (20,000) students from NAU; fourteen

thousand three hundred and sixty seven (14,367) students from MOUAU and, seven hundred and sixty (760) FUNAI students.

The sample that was used for the study was 400 students. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for this study. In stage one (1), three universities were purposively selected out of the five federal universities in south east Nigeria. These universities are: University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO) and Michael Okpara University of Agriculture (MOUA) Umudike.

In stage two (2), the total population of the five federal universities is seventy two thousand and ninety six (72,096). Then, from the entire target population of fifty-one thousand three hundred and thirty six (51,336) students of the three universities selected, the researcher will apply Yamane (1967) simplified formula to determine a useable sample size. The formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

gave rise to a sample size of 397.79 approximated to 398.

Where: 'n' is the sample size; 'N' is the population (72,096) and 'e' is the level of significance (0.05). However, to avoid decimals the researcher decided to adopt 400 as the sample size of this study.

In stage three (3), Proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to determine the sample size for individual university. Therefore, UNN has 44% of the target population with the sample of 176 students. Following, FUTO has 28% of the target population which is 112 sample and MOUAU also has 28% of the target population which is 112 sample. All these amount to the sample size of 400 respondents. A structured Questionnaire titled 'Academic Use of Social Network Sites among Undergraduate Questionnaire (AUSNSUQ)' was utilised as the instrument for collecting data. Out of total of 400 copies of the questionnaire distributed 398 were filled and returned for the study. Data collected were analysed using, frequency count, percentage and mean. After the analyses of data a mean of 2.50 and percentage 50 and above were acceptance while result below it were rejected.

Result

What is the extent of utilization of different social networks by undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria?

This research question was to find out the social networks used by undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria. To answer this question, the opinion of the undergraduate on items 1-20 of the questionnaire showing list of social networks were analysed and presented in a table below. Both percentage of each group on the rate of use were found and mean of each cluster was found.

Table 1: Extent of utilization of social networks used by undergraduates in 1 universities used for the study..

S/N	Social Networks	HU/%	MU/%	RU/%	NU/%	Mean	Decision
1.	Facebook	182/46.7	109/27.9	81/20.8	18/4.6	3.17	Accepted
2.	Twitter	74/19.1	70/18.1	121/31.3	122/31.5	2.25	Rejected
3.	Linkedin	16/4.1	52/16.0	51/13.2	252/65.1	1.59	Rejected
4.	Googleplus	160/41.3	51/15.8	60/15.5	107/27.6	2.71	Accepted
5.	Flickr	9/2.3	21/5.6	65/17.3	281/74.7	1.36	Rejected
6.	Fiverr	2/0.5	17/4.7	65/17.8	293/80.3	1.28	Rejected
7.	Hootsuite	2/5.3	20/5.3	53/14.2	299/79.9	1.26	Rejected
3.	Livejournal	35/9.2	55/14.5	42/11.1	247/65.2	1.68	Rejected
9.	Ning	5/1.3	33/8.9	44/11.9	289/77.9	1.34	Rejected
10.	Myspace	15/4.0	51/13.5	89/23.7	221/58.8	1.63	Rejected
11.	Hi5	15/4.1	22/5.9	77/20.8	256/69.2	1.45	Rejected
12.	Academia.edu	90/23.4	81/21.0	46/11.9	168/43.6	2.24	Rejected

13.	ResearchGate	56/15	83/22.2	46/12.3	189/50.5	2.02	Rejected
14.	CiteULike	8/2.2	38/10.2	71/19.1	254/68.5	1.46	Rejected
15.	Mendeley	8/2.2	17/4.6	75/20.4	267/72.8	1.36	Rejected
16.	Bibsonomy	11/3.0	11/3.0	57/15.5	289/78.5	1.30	Rejected
17.	Zotero	10/2.8	21/5.8	56/15.6	272/75.8	1.36	Rejected
18.	Nairaland	51/15.8	121/31.3	52/13.5	152/39.4	2.24	Rejected
19.	Skype	54/14.3	98/25.9	94/24.9	132/34.9	2.02	Rejected
20.	Googletalk	50/15.8	103/27.2	76/20.1	140/36.9	2.22	Rejected

Key: HU – Highly Used; Moderately – Used; RU – Rarely Used; NU – Not Used.

Table 1 above revealed that the respondents from the three selected universities in South East Nigeria make use of only Facebook and Googleplus. This is because the Mean scores of 3.17 and percentage of use of 74.6 for Facebook and mean of 2.71 and 57.1% of use for Googleplus are accepted while all others like Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, Fiverr, Hootsuite, Livejournal, Ning, Myspace, Hi5, Academia.edu, ResearchGate, CiteULike, Mendeley, Bibsonomy, Zotero, Nairaland, Skype and Googletalk with Mean scores below 2.50 and percentage of use below 50% are rejected. This indicates that majority of the undergraduate students in federal universities in South East Nigeria are not aware of the existence of or does not make use of all the other social networks. The result also shows that out of the two social networks that were accepted, undergraduate students make use of Facebook more than Googleplus.

What are the social networks used for specific academic purposes by undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria?

This research question was to find out various social networks that students make use of in achieving specific academic purposes. In order to answer this question, items 1-22 of the questionnaire showing a list of academic purposes with social networks were analysed and presented in a Table 2 using Percentage.

Table 2: Percentage responses on Social networks used for specific academic purposes by the Respondents

S/No	Academic purposes social networks can serve undergraduate student	PERCENTAGE OF YES AND NO																			
		Facebook		Twitter		LinkedIn		Googleplus		Flickr		Fiverr		Hootsuite		Livejournal		Ning		Myspace	
		Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
		es	o	es	o	es	o	es	o	es	o	es	o	es	o	es	o	es	o	es	o
1	Acquisition of technical and vocational skills	3	6	1	8	1	8	3	6	0	9	0	9	0	9	5	9	0	1	2	9
		4	5	2	7	2	7	7	2	3	9	3	9	5	9	5	4	0	0	8	0
		7	3	8	2	3	7	4	3	7	7	7	5	5	5	0	0	0	3	7	3
2	Collaborative/ joint/group study	5	4	1	8	2	9	1	8	1	9	0	9	1	9	2	9	0	9	1	9
		8	1	4	5	0	8	4	5	0	9	5	9	3	8	3	7	5	9	8	8
		3	7	8	2	0	3	7	0	5	7	7	5	7	5	2	2	5	2	3	6
3	General research or academic work	1	8	4	9	1	9	8	4	0	9	0	9	0	9	9	9	1	9	1	8
		6	3	0	6	5	8	3	6	5	9	5	9	3	9	3	0	3	9	8	8
		1	9	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	7	7	7	7	7	2	0	8	2	6	4
4	Informal learning (e.g. online degree)	1	8	4	5	1	8	3	9	2	7	0	9	1	9	0	9	3	9	8	6
		8	1	0	9	0	9	5	6	4	5	8	9	0	9	3	9	8	6	8	9
		6	4	5	5	8	2	5	9	1	2	0	7	2	2	0	5	8	2	0	0
5	Discovery and exploration of areas of academic interests	3	6	6	9	4	9	3	6	1	9	0	9	1	9	4	9	0	9	2	9
		1	8	3	3	0	6	0	9	3	8	8	9	0	9	3	5	8	9	5	7
		7	3	7	0	9	1	7	2	0	7	2	0	7	2	5	2	6	4	6	4

S/No	Academic purposes social networks can serve undergraduate student	PERCENTAGE OF YES AND NO																																																											
		Facebook		Twitter		LinkedIn		Googleplus		Flickr		Fiverr		Hootsuite		Livejournal		Ning		Myspace		Hi5		Academia.edu		ResearchGate		CiteULike		Mendeley		Bibnosomy		Zotero		Nairaland		Skype		Googletalk		Over all																			
		Ye s	N o	Ye s	N o	Y e s	N o	Ye s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o	Y e s	N o																
1 3.	Connect ion with other scholars in differen t parts of the world	65 .1	34 .9	31 .2	68 .8	4 .2	95 .9	32 .1	96 .3	2 .7	97 .5	1 .9	98 .0	1 .9	99 .0	1 .5	98 .3	1 .9	98 .3	3 .6	2 .7	0 .0	98 .0	2 .9	8 .3	5 .7	97 .0	0 .5	99 .8	0 .2	99 .8	0 .2	99 .0	0 .5	99 .3	0 .7	99 .6	0 .3	93 .7	11 .3	88 .7	8 .5	91 .5	9 .5																	
1 4	Followi ng other academi cs and receivin g notificat ions about their research updates	52 .5	47 .5	29 .1	70 .9	3 .8	96 .2	18 .1	81 .9	1 .3	98 .7	0 .5	99 .3	2 .7	97 .5	5 .5	94 .0	1 .0	99 .8	1 .9	98 .0	0 .2	99 .6	12 .4	87 .8	6 .2	93 .5	0 .5	99 .8	0 .2	99 .8	0 .2	99 .0	1 .0	99 .1	14 .9	85 .0	4 .3	96 .7	12 .3	87 .5	8 .7	91 .5																		
1 5	Access to free and bundle ss informa tion	40 .7	59 .3	21 .1	78 .9	4 .3	95 .7	34 .9	65 .1	1 .8	98 .2	1 .3	98 .7	1 .9	99 .0	4 .8	95 .2	8 .0	99 .2	1 .8	98 .2	0 .0	98 .3	11 .7	88 .3	4 .2	95 .8	1 .2	98 .0	1 .0	99 .8	0 .2	99 .5	0 .9	99 .8	3 .2	96 .5	9 .8	90 .5	8 .2	92 .0																				

[illegible]

Results as shown in Table 2 above, reveals that the undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria make use of only Facebook for academic purposes in item 2 with 58.3% ; item 6 with 54.3% ; items 13 and 14 with 65.1% and 52.5% respectively; item 17 with 54.0% and item 19 with 53.0% . However, it could be observed they do not make use of many of the social networks listed as this was evident in the percentage responses where over 80%

respondents said “No” while less than 10% said “Yes” to the use of social networks for academic intentions.

What are the hindrances to academic utilization of social networks by the Respondents?

This was to find out what hinders effective use of social networks for academic purposes among undergraduates. In order to answer this question, items 1-18 of the questionnaire were analysed and presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean responses on the hindrances to academic use of social networks .

S/N	Hindrances to academic use of social networking:	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Social networks are not always appropriate or successful for teaching and learning activities	67	116	112	100	2.38	Rejected
2	Social networks can be a distraction and are disruptive to the learning process	73	142	123	59	2.58	Accepted
3	Addiction to non-academic uses inhibits academic uses	168	167	49	7	3.27	Accepted
4	Cyberbullying (unsolicited reception of some messages and or pictures)	142	179	53	12	3.17	Accepted
5	Lack of trust in peer feedback	67	205	82	34	2.79	Accepted
6	Difficulty in adapting to available tools	57	180	124	24	2.70	Accepted
7	Lack of non-verbal cues such as gestures and eye contacts reduce the extent of the communication	125	141	108	15	2.97	Accepted
8	Non-availability of peer or group members at all times one may require assistance	79	204	50	49	2.82	Accepted
9	Inability to have access to computing resources and Internet when off-campus	97	115	119	50	2.68	Accepted
10	Fear of plagiarism (unauthorised copying of ideas without reference/permission)	126	144	103	15	2.98	Accepted
11	Electricity failure	195	131	30	31	3.27	Accepted
12	Low bandwidth of the internet (slow internet)	164	181	42	5	3.29	Accepted
13	Lack of personal computers and laptops	146	165	51	31	3.08	Accepted
14	Poor time management	150	184	50	9	3.21	Accepted
15	Health issues like backache fingers/joint pain dry face.	111	163	77	39	2.89	Accepted
16	Fear of implantation or spread of a computer virus	72	162	115	45	2.66	Accepted
17	Fear of unauthorized access of profiles	96	165	105	24	2.85	Accepted

18	Cyber extortion and fraud (such as theft of funds or credit card/account numbers)	129	179	60	23	3.06	Accepted
----	---	-----	-----	----	----	------	----------

Key: SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree

Table 3 above shows that all the items listed from 2-18 with the Mean scores above 2.50 which is acceptable, are hindrances to academic utilization of social networks by undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria except item 1 with the Mean score of 2.38 which is rejected. It is also important to mention that Low bandwidth of the internet (slow internet) with the Mean score of 3.29; Addiction to non-academic uses inhibits academic uses with the Mean score of 3.27; Electricity failure with the Mean score of 3.27; Poor time management with the Mean score of 3.21; Lack of infrastructure like computers and laptops with the Mean score of 3.08 and Cyber extortion and fraud (such as theft of funds or credit card/account numbers) with the Mean score of 3.06 constitute major hindrances to employing social networks for academic purposes..

What are the strategies for enhancing the use of social networks for academic purposes?

This research question was to find out possible strategies or ways to improve academic use of social networks among undergraduates. To answer this question, items 1-15 of the questionnaire were analysed and presented in a table using Mean.

Table 4: Strategies for enhancing the use of social networks for academic purposes.

S/N	Suggestions to enhance academic use of social networks	VA	A	FA	NA	Mean	Decision
1	Social networks should become part of the curriculum and not just an additional means of communication	150	109	111	19	3.00	Accepted
2	Students must be disciplined to ward off distractions	242	91	19	43	3.35	Accepted
3	Adopting a strictly followed time management schedule will weaken additions	206	91	52	44	3.17	Accepted
4	Strictly use a separate account for classroom communications	135	154	45	57	2.94	Accepted
5	Personal security measures such as the choice of strong and unique password for each network site should be put in place	159	117	65	50	2.98	Accepted
6	Use of strong privacy and security settings and regular updates of same	171	95	111	12	3.09	Accepted
7	Avoidance of suspicious third-party applications and installation of applications only from trusted vendors	162	146	72	12	3.17	Accepted
8	Treat those network sites as public and share information only with people you know and trust	173	132	66	21	3.17	Accepted
9	Installation of reliable anti-virus software to prevent attack from computer viruses	284	70	32	7	3.61	Accepted
10	Provision of alternative source of power supply to curb incessant power outages	242	96	30	25	3.41	Accepted
11	Upgrading of equipment to improve internet connection	268	80	16	28	3.50	Accepted
12	Make due considerations about personal posts and posts revealing information about others – family, friends, and foes	120	142	91	40	2.87	Accepted

13	Group contacts according to levels of personal information they should be authorised to access based on individual comfort level	124	171	78	8	3.08	Accepted
14	Be conscious of the unintended audience since published information is visible to the world and can be re-posted to other sites	194	133	41	22	3.28	Accepted
15	A designated member of staff should be in charge for the planning, implementation, operation and monitoring the social network site utilization of the department/faculty/institution	178	155	39	21	3.25	Accepted

Key: VA – Very Adequate; A – Adequate; FA – Fairly Adequate; NA – Not Adequate

From Table 4 above, it is observed that all the strategies mentioned were accepted as means of improving academic use of social networks as all the Mean scores rated above 2.50. However, use of reliable and up-to-date anti-virus software to keep off attack from computer viruses with the Mean score of 3.61; Upgrading of equipment to improve internet connection with the Mean score of this 3.50 and Provision of alternative source of power supply to curb incessant power outages with the Mean score of 3.41 are major strategies for enhancing academic use of social networks for undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria.

Discussions

Social Networks is a means communications among different categories of people. This study was set with the aim of finding out the social networks that undergraduate students in federal universities in South East Nigeria make use of in general. It was discovered that out of these twenty social networks listed below as seen in the questionnaire *Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, googleplus, Flickr, Fiverr, Hootsuite, Livejournal, Ning, Myspace, Hi5, Academia.edu, ResearchGate, CiteULike, Mendeley, Bibsonomy, Zotero, Nairaland, Skype and Googetalk*, only *Facebook* and *Googleplus* were acknowledged as the ones utilized by the respondents in the study area as they had Mean scores of 3.17 and 2.71 respectively. This therefore means that, either the students are not aware of the existence of these mentioned social networks or that they are aware of the existence but does not really know how to make use of them. It is important to mention that there are so many other social networks in existence but the researcher chose to mention the few above as they are regarded as Academic Social Networks (ASNs). This study however is important because it will create awareness of the existence of these social networks as well as expose the undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria to making use of them for academic purposes.

This was designed to determine the social networks used for specific academic purposes by undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria. From the findings made, it was discovered that all the social networks mentioned above are not used by these students for academic purposes. This was evident in the percentage of the respondents that said “No” to the utilization of these social networks for achieving the academic endeavours. . The findings however revealed that these students make use of only *Facebook* more than they use other social networks for achieving a few of the academic purposes listed. This implies that students make use of social networks for other purposes like charting with friends, making new friends, keeping other relationships, sharing pictures and profiles to mention but a few other than achieving academic purposes. This is in accordance with Tayo, Adebola and Yahya (2019) looked at social media is an online platform which enables people to build social networks or relations with other people who share similar personal or career interests, activities, backgrounds or real-life connections. In other words it help people to keep in touch with old

friends, find the lost contacts, communicate with the like-minded people, join groups with shared interests, organize or join events, view and tag photos, share/ post photographs, play games, update one's own status, see others' status .These reasons are not bad, they are also part of learning for a student who is focused and wants to learn from friends.

The research question here was designed with the aim of finding out the possible problems or what hinders undergraduates in federal universities in South East from making use of social networks for academic purposes. From the study, it was discovered that the following factors constitute problems or pose as hindrances to academic use of social networks by respondents are: when it is a means of distraction or disrupting a learning process, addiction to non-academic uses, Cyber bullying (unsolicited reception of some messages and or pictures), Lack of trust in peer feedback, difficulty in adapting to available tools, Lack of non-verbal cues such as gestures and eye contacts reduce the extent of the communication, Non-availability of peer or group members at all times one may require assistance, In ability to have access to computing resources and the internet when off-campus, Fear of plagiarism (unauthorised copying of ideas without references/ permission), Power failure, slow internet, Lack of personal computers and laptops, Poor time management, Health issues, Fear of implantation or spread of a computer virus, Fear of unauthorised access of profiles and Cyber extortion and fraud (such as theft of funds or credit card/account numbers).

In support of these findings, Olowu and Seri (2012) think that youths are exposed to a higher risk of social network obsession due to so much their liability on it since they are adjusting to a considerable amount of developmental and life changes. This inclination and contact with more new things are aided by the use of technology and social networks. It is observed the findings of this research that, youths in Nigeria spend a lot of time on social media at the detriment of other necessary things such as their studies. Youths' uses of these social networking sites tend to point towards having passion it. Another finding here was that the factor which says that "Social networks are not always appropriate or successful for teaching and learning activities" is not a hindrance to academic use of social networks by these students.

The intention here was to find out possible strategies or ways of enhancing the use of social networks for academic purposes as indicated by the respondents. The responses here showed that the following strategies can be very helpful in achieving this purpose: Social networks should be part of the curriculum , Students must be disciplined enough to keep at bay distractions, Adopting a strictly followed time management schedule will weaken addictions, Strictly use a separate account for classroom communications, Personal security measures such as the choice of strong and unique password for each network site should be put in place, Use of strong privacy and security settings and regular updates of same, Avoidance of suspicious third-party applications and installation of applications only from trusted vendors, Treat those network sites as public and share information only with people you know and trust, Putting in place up-to-date anti-virus software prevent attack from computer viruses, Provision alternative power supply to curb incessant power outages, Upgrading of equipment to improve internet connection, Make due considerations about personal posts and posts revealing information about others – family, friends, and foes, Group contacts according to levels of personal information they should be authorised to access based on individual comfort level, Be conscious of the unintended audience since published information is visible to the world and can be forwarded to other sites and a designated member of staff should be assigned to playing and monitoring of services of the social network site of the department/faculty/institution.

In line with this finding, it is important to mention that in a bid to arm the academia of the tips for safe use of social networking sites for academic purpose, Barczyk and Duncan (2011) counsel that matters must be kept professional. This implies the strict use of a separate account for classroom communications. Also, like the previous writers, these researchers emphasise the thorough use of privacy settings and performing frequent checks on these settings with adequate plan on how to respond to 'friend' requests from parents or relatives of

students. Also, it is very important that users are conscious of the unintended audience. The realization and acceptance of the fact that published information can be made visible to any world and other sites, including something that is out of context. In agreement with the finding, in Klopfer, Osterweil, Groff and Haasit (2009), noted that social networking technologies should be used to communicate assignments, class discussion, and content that supported schoolwork such as videos.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the study, the students utilize Facebook and Googleplus more than other social networks. It was also discovered from their responses that they make use of WhatsApp, 2go, YouTube and many others for chatting and mere fun as against the social networks under study meant to achieve other very important things. Therefore, the respondents make little academic use of social networks, rather they make use of it for other relationship connected to other activities probably because they are not aware of their uses. There is also a fact that most faculty member are not utilize and interact with their students in social network during their teaching. As a result of this, there is a need to create awareness that will bring to the knowledge of these students and faculty member the probable means using of these social networks in learning and teaching. This set back can be attributed to the fact that most of the studies on the use of social networks are not carried out within this country. However, if the recommendations made in this study are adequately considered and implemented, the students will have a better view of the available social networks and the best use of them for academic purposes.

The following recommendations could enhance academic use of social networks among undergraduates in federal universities in South East Nigeria.

1. Universities in Nigeria should make use of social networking to be part of their curriculum.
2. University libraries should create awareness and give orientations and workshops from time to time to students and faculty members on how to use these social networks for relevant academic activities.
3. Universities should subscribe to high bandwidth to enhance the speed of internet connections and provide adequate ICT facilities like computers, alternative power supply
4. The available computer should be protected by installing anti-virus software to prevent destructions of valuable documents.

References

- Abdelraheem, Y. A. (2013). University students' use of social networks sites and their relation with some variables. The West East Institute International Academic Conference Proceedings, Antalya, Turkey January 14-16, 2013.
- Abdul, S, Adil, H., Mulla, M., Mulla, M., Sayed, F. R., Singh, K. S. Tripathi, S., Sowmya R and Eusufzai. S. Z. (2020). Usage of Social Media among Undergraduate University Students European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine 7(8), 1605-1617.
- Ahmad, A. (2011). A short description of social networking websites and its uses. (IJACSA) *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications*, 2 (2) 124 – 128.
- Ansari, J. A. N. and Khan, N. A. (2020). Exploring the role of social media in collaborative learning the new domain of learning. *Smart Learning Environment*, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-020-00118-7>.

- Asemah, E. S., Okpanachi R. A. and Edegoh, L. O. N. (2013). Influence of Social Media on the Academic Performance of the Undergraduate Students of Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3 (12), 90 – 96
- Barczyk, C. C. & Duncan, D. G. (2011). Social Networking Media as a Tool for Teaching Business Administration Course. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1 (17) 267 – 276
- Ekwelem, V.O, Okafor, V.N & Ukwoma, S.C (2012). Use of Social Networking Sites by Nigerian Librarians: An exploratory study. Conference Proceedings of Nigerian Library Association 2012. Enugu: Speed and Skill Coy. 118-126.
- Gomez, M., Roses, S. and Farias, P. (2012). A Descriptive Study of the Academic Use of Social Networks among University Students. *Comunicar*
- Hussain, Gulrez, and Tahirkheli. (2012). Academic Use of Social Media: Practices and Problems of University Students. Conference paper presented at the International Conference on Education and Management Innovation Singapore 2012.
- Klopfer, E., Osterweil, S., Groff, J. and Haas, J. (2009). The Instructional Power of Digital Games, Social Networking and Simulations and How Teachers Can Leverage Them. Boston: The Education Arcade.
- Lederer, K. (2012). Pros and cons of social media in the classroom. *Campus Technology*, 25(5) 1-2.
- Matzat, U. (2004). Academic communication and Internet Discussion Groups: Transfer of information or creation of social contacts? *Social Networks*, 26 (3), 221-255.
- Mehmood, S. & Taswir, T. (2013). The Effects of Social Networking Sites on the Academic Performance of Students in College of Applied Sciences, Nizwa, Oman. *International Journal of Arts and Commerce*, 2 (1) 111 – 125.
- Nández, G. & Borrego, A. (2013). Use of social networks for academic purposes: a case study. *The Electronic Library*, 31 (6), 781-791.
- Olowu, A. O. & Seri, F. O. (2012). A study of social network addiction among youths in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Science and Policy Review*, 4, (1) 62 – 71
- Ramanigopal, C. S., Palaniappan, G., & Hemalatha, N. (2012). Social networking: problems and prospects of the knowledge society. *International Journal of Research in Management Economics and Commerce*, 2 (2), 116 – 129.
- Selwyn, N. (2009). Faceworking: Exploring students' education-related use of Facebook. *Learning Media and Technology*, 34 (2), 157–174.
- The Web's Largest Resource for Definitions & Translations. (2015). "University." Definitions.net. STANDS4 LLC, 2015. Web. 10 Sep. <http://www.definitions.net/definition/University>. Retrieved on 10th September, 2015.**
- Talaue, G. M., Alsaad, A., AlRushaidan, N. & AlHagail, A. (2018). "The impact of social media on academic performance of selected college students". *International Journal of Advanced Information Technology*, vol. 4, 27-35
- Tayo, S. S., Adebola S. T. and Yahya, D. O. (2019). Social Media: Usage and Influence on Undergraduate Studies in Nigerian Universities. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (IJEDICT)*, 2019, Vol. 15, Issue 3, pp. 53-62
- Usulel, K. Y. & Mazman, S. G. (2011). Gender differences in using social networks. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 10 (2), 133 – 139.
- Yu, A. Y., Tian, S. W., Vogel, D. & Chi-Wai Kwok, R. (2010). Can learning be virtually boosted? An investigation of online social networking impacts. *Computers & Education*, 55 (4), 1494-1503.