

The Effects of Social Networking Sites on the Academic Performance of the Engineering Students in the University of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study is aimed at finding out the effect of the use of the social networking sites on the academic performance of the engineering students in the University of Maiduguri. Two hundred and twenty two (222) students were used as samples for the study and a questionnaire was used to collect the data for the study. The research revealed that the most subscribed networking sites in a hierarchical order include: Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube and Google+. The study also revealed that many students are users of multiple social networking sites; and most of them use the networking sites to make friends and chat with them. It was also noted that students have more friends on the social networks than they have in the physical; the social networks were found to have no effect on students' (users') academic performance.

Keywords: *Social Networking Site, Academic Performance, Engineering Students, University of Maiduguri.*

1. Introduction

A social network represents relationships and flows between people, groups, organizations, animals, computers or other information and knowledge processing entities. Social network in other words is referred to as a social structure made up of individuals or organizations called "nodes", which are connected 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 (Asemah and Edegoh, 2012).

In modern computing, social network is made easy with the networking sites. A social networking site is a website that provides a virtual community for people of similar interests on a particular subject or just to 'hang out' together. According to Boyd & Ellison (2008), "Social Networking Sites are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, view and traverse their lists of connections and those made by others within the system". At the basic level, social networking sites allow users to set up online profiles or personal homepages, and develop an online social network. The profile page functions as the users own webpage and includes profile information ranging from their dates of birth, gender, religion, politics and hometown, to their favorite films, books quotes and what they like doing in their spare time. In addition to profile information, users can design the appearance of their page, and add content such as photos, video clips and music files.

Some types of networks are for general purpose while others connect people in the same professional world so that one can interact with those in the same field or to make connections in companies that are similar to ones work of life. Some of the most popular social networks are: Facebook, Myspace, Classmate, Google+,

Linkedin, Twitter, Netlog, Hi5, WhatsApp, Badoo, etc. It is not doubtful that some students in tertiary institutions repeat a class or proceed to the next level of their studies with course(s) carried over. The societal values and technological advancement such as social networking sites on the internet could be one of the factors that are affecting the academic performance of students. Boyd, (2006), viewed Internet as a very important element of life which cannot be ignored. Internet is used for educational purpose by a large community but unfortunately we have a larger community including majority of youths and teenagers who use Internet for only social networking.

The Federal Government of Nigeria has through its National Policy on Education (2004), spelt out how education can be utilized to bringing about the necessary transformation in the country. Admittedly, the university which is the apex of the educational system is expected to produce graduates who should be able to manage very high and sensitive positions so that the laudable objectives can be realized. Sadly, in recent times the product of this citadel of learning can no longer compete favorably with their counterparts from other parts of the world. The reason for this is not far-fetched. It is simple that the quality of education has fallen. To buttress this point, Esu (2006) opined that there is a near national outcry on the poor quality of education in Nigeria. Also, commenting on this, Ige (1997) noted that the scripts of some undergraduates in one of the national universities were unreadable and far beyond comprehension. As a lecturer in Delta State University, the writer has observed that some students find it difficult to take notes during lectures and that many are unable to have a firm grasp of material taught even after repeated explanations by the lecturer(s). In a study conducted by Quatman, et al, (2011) among High School students in California, the relationship between dating and academic achievement, academic motivation, depression and self-esteem was examined and

the result showed a relationship between dating more frequently and lower academic performance. Kopfler (2008) also undertook a research to find out the effects of romantic relationship on the academic performance of undergraduate students of Loyola University, New Orleans. No significant relationships were found between the two variables of grade point average and involvement in a romantic relationship. In fact students involved in relationship either physically or on a social network were motivated more to perform academically and faced higher stress level in meeting deadlines.

Onoyase (2014), in her research observed certain behaviors among undergraduates of Delta State University which depict that many of them are not interested in academic work. These deviant behaviors include deliberate lateness to lectures, absenteeism, and inattentiveness in class. Others include; paying colleagues to do assignments for them, unwillingness to acquire textbooks and other reference material useful for their study and engaging excessively in un-educative activities such as social networking at the detriment of their studies. To support these points she cited, Oyensusi (2008) who indicated that most students in this generation are frivolous in their approach to learning. They are just not as interested in having a sound education as listening to the latest pop album or watching the latest movies from Hollywood". Also commenting on this, Abdul (2004) noted that a good number of students are not interested in education because they do not see the need for it and have therefore developed negative attitude towards it.

Social networking sites have caused many problems. For instance, many students have lost interests in their studies as they spent most of the times on these sites. Boyd (2007) stated that, that which started as a hobby for some computer literates has become a social norm and way of life for people from all over the world. Banquil & Chua, (2009), concluded that social networking

sites do affect ones academic performance adversely. The sites directly cause the gradual drop in the grades of students. They adversely affect a students' academic performance if such a student invests his time in social networking sites instead of in his studies. Paul, et al, (2012), in their research on effects of online social networking on students' academic performance discovered that there is statistically significant negative relationship between time spent by students on online social networks and their academic performance. The time spent on online social networks was found to be heavily influenced by the attention span of the students. Specifically, they disclosed that the higher the attention span, the lower the time spent on online social networks. Furthermore, attention span was found to be highly correlated with characteristics that predict or influence students' behavior, such as their perceptions about society's view of social networking, their likes and dislikes of online social networks, ease of use of Online social networks, etc. This research work is therefore aimed at finding out the effects of social networking sites on engineering students' academic performance in the University of Maiduguri.

2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to determine:

1. The social networking sites that the engineering students of the University of Maiduguri are conversant with, and are subscribed to.
2. How students plan their time to study and socialize on the networking sites
3. The effects of the use of the social networks on students' academic performance.

3. Research Questions:

1. What are the social networking sites that the engineering students of the University of Maiduguri are conversant with, and subscribed to?

2. How often do they (engineering students) go online to socialize?
3. How have these social networking sites affected students' academic performances?

4. Methodology

A survey design was used for this study because it was oriented towards ascertaining and establishing the facts or pieces of information concerning the population. Nwogu (2006) stated that survey method is appropriate, especially for seeking individuals' opinions, attitudes and perceptions in their natural setting.

The population for this study was 2,500. Using a random sampling technique, the researcher selected a sample size of 250 respondents which represent 10% of the entire population. The research instrument used in the study was the questionnaire. The items in the questionnaire were divided into three sections; section "A" contained the list of social networking sites, while section "B" contained the statements in relation to how the students plan their time to study and socializing on the networks, and section "C" contained the statements in connection with the effects of social network on academic performance.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

The presentation of data was based on the 222 questionnaire returned out of the 250 questionnaire distributed, representing 88.8%. Analysis and presentation of data and results are ordered according to research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the social networking sites that the engineering students of the University of Maiduguri are conversant with, and are subscribed to? To answer this Research Question, the frequency distribution of the responses and the percentages were computed as shown in the figure below.

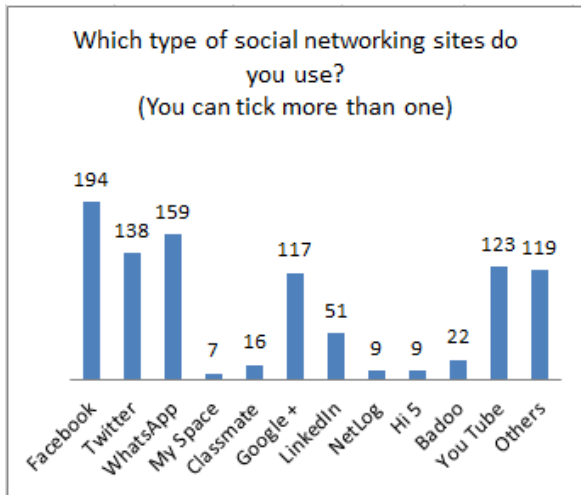


Figure 1: The frequency distribution of responses on subscribed social networks

Figure 1 gives few commonly used social networking sites and the users that subscribed to more than one site. The chart above shows that 194 (87.4%) respondents have account with Facebook, 138 (62.2%) of the respondents use twitter. There are 159 (71.6%) respondents that use WhatsApp and 7 (3.2%) uses My Space. The respondents that subscribed to Classmate are 16 (7.2%) and Google+ has 117 (52.7%) subscribers. There are 51 (22.9%) users of LinkedIn and NetLog have 9 (4.1%) users. Hi5 has 9 (4.1%) subscribers while 22 (10%) respondents subscribed to Badoo. YouTube is subscribed by 123 (55.4%) respondents and other social networking sites not mentioned are subscribed by 119 (53.6%) respondents.

Research Question 2: How often do they (engineering students) go online to socialize? To answer Research Question 2, the mean scores of the data were computed from the frequency distribution of the responses. The result of the computation is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Computed mean distribution of students' frequency on the use of social networking sites

S/n	Statement	Mean	Decision
1	You are a user of social networking site	3.54	Agreed
2	You use the social networking sites to make friends and chat	2.79	Agreed
3	You have more friends on the social networks than you do in real life	3.81	Agreed
4	You prefer to interacts with people on social networking sites rather than face to face	1.98	Disagreed
5	You use social networking sites very often	3.11	Agreed
6	You stay too long online whenever you login to your profile on those networks	2.31	Disagreed
7	You do stay awake late in the night or gets up early to spend more time on social networking sites	1.75	Disagreed

Research Question 3: How have these social networking sites affected students' academic performance? To answer Research Question 3, the mean scores of the data were computed from the frequency distribution of the responses. The result of the computation is shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Computed mean distribution of how social networks affect academic performance of students.

S/n	Statement	Mean	Decision
1	You have ignored some important activities occasionally because of social networking sites	1.91	Disagreed

2	You boycotted lectures on some occasions because you were `chatting with friend online	1.31	Disagreed
3	Active participation in social networking affect academic performance of students	2.67	Agreed
4	Social networks affected your performance seriously	1.85	Disagreed
5	Social networks have little or no effect on your academic performance	3.07	Agreed
6	Social networking sites are helpful to your studies	2.17	Disagreed
7	It is important that students subscribe to, and be members of at least one social networking site	2.55	Agreed
8	It is advisable for students not to participate in any social network if they want to excel academically	2.01	Disagreed

The respondents' responses to whether they use the social networking sites are mostly yes, which revealed that they use these social networking sites greatly. They also accepted to be users of multiple social networks. It was noted that among the social networking sites, the most subscribed are: Facebook which has the highest number of users followed by WhatsApp, Twitter and YouTube, Google+, in a descending order. The least utilized by the students include: Myspace, Hi5 and Netlog others include Classmate, Badoo, LinkedIn, in ascending order. This is in agreement with the findings of Ezekiel et al, (2013) in a study titled "Influence of Social Media on the Academic

Performance of the Undergraduate Students of Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria" showed that the Facebook is the social media network that is mostly used by the undergraduate students of Kogi State University. This however corroborates Asemah and Edegoh (2013) who noted that Facebook is the most used new media by students of Kogi State University. The Facebook, as noted by Asemah and Edegoh

...is a social networking site, which allows participant to create a profile, search and receive friend request. Participants can upload profile pictures, tags pictures and comment on pictures of friends. It also gives participants the opportunity to upload and share information, either public or private. There is also room of privacy in which participants grant access to selected participant within his or her group of friends.

This study also revealed that the students use the social networks to make friends. This corroborates Shana, (2012) which revealed that students use social network mainly for making friends and chatting. Shahzad (2012) cited Charlene Li, et al (2007) that students' activities on social networking sites focus on communicating with each other. It was discovered that the most popular activities carried out by students on social networking sites revolve around looking at profiles of one another, searching for someone here and there, or updating one's own profile. This agrees with Oye, (2012) which noted that most of the younger students use social networking sites mainly for socializing activities, rather than for academic purposes.

This study revealed that students have more friends online than in the physical world and almost the same number of students agreed that they prefer to interact with friends face-to-face than online interaction. This is in line with a study by Lenhart & Madden, (2007), which reported that students utilize the sites to communicate with already known friends. Qualitative studies also converge with this finding that U.S. youth mostly use social networking sites to interact with friends and not to meet strangers (Agosto & Abbas, 2010; boyd, 2008). In her own

study, Donath (2007) observed that, “Whether face-to-face or online, much of what people want to know is not directly observable”. She contends that much of human interaction consists of signals that communicate the status and characteristics of an individual.

The current study revealed that a good number of students agreed to the use these sites frequently but disagreed with the statement that students do stay awake late in the night only to socialize on the networks. On the issue of whether social networking sites affect active participants’ academic performance, they agreed that it may have very little or no effect on their academic performance. The findings here is in line with the findings of Young (2006), in a study titled “the effect of internet use and social network on the academic performance of students” which observed that the internet, though consume time, have less effect on studies.

A conference paper by Karpinski (2009) received much media attention with findings that college Facebook users have lower GPAs than students who are not users of the site. Karpinski offers several hypotheses for these findings. Facebook users spend too much time online and less time studying. Banquill & Chua (2009) came up with a conclusion that social networking sites do affect one’s academic performance adversely. It directly causes the gradual drop of grades of students. It directly affects students’ academic performance if the student invests his time in social networking sites instead of in his studies. Yoon, (2000) also observed that the type of social media or network subscribed to by a teenager exerts influence on him or her to visit the internet. Moon (2011), in a similar study on “The impact of Facebook on undergraduates’ academic performance, overruled that social media have negative impacts on students; According to the result, the more students use Facebook, the more it affects their academic performance. Seyi (2012), in a study on “social media and Nigeria youths burden” also revealed that social

media negatively influence the academic performance of students.

Considering the helpful nature of the social networking sites to their studies, the students out rightly disagreed. The postulation negates Madge et-al (2009) who argued that “often students use social networking websites to discuss their academic issues formally and informally and also to interact with their instructor, teachers and professors”. The University of New Hampshire agrees, and believes that current college students grew up in the technology era and social networking is now just a part of a student's daily routine. Their research shows that '63% of heavy users received high grades (U of NH, 2009). Despite their agreement that there are little effects, the respondents still maintains that it is important to subscribe to at least one social networking site in order to relate with friends and well-wishers and to get information about others.

6. Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to determine the “The Effect of Social Networking Sites on Engineering Students’ Academic Performance in the University of Maiduguri”. Survey research design was adopted using the questionnaire for the gathering of data, followed by the analysis of data and discussion of findings.

This study has investigated that the engineering students of the University of Maiduguri are mostly users of the social networking sites. And the most subscribed networking sites in a hierarchical order are; Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube and Google+, among others. Most students are users of multiple social networking sites and they frequently visit these networking sites. It was also discovered that most students use the networking sites to make friends to chat with and most students have more friends on the social networks than they have in physical world. There is a growing concern regarding whether social networking sites are contributing to the decline in

academic performance of engineering students of the University. What does appear to be clearer in the research literatures was that for some students the use of social networking sites can be harmful to their academic performance, and for other students it seems to have no effect. For the latter group, Social networking sites are seen as a beneficial tool for socialization. They spend more time chatting and posting messages than they do in other activities. Findings of the present study showed that despite spending time on the internet or on social networking sites; students were still efficient enough in their studies. They do not face any difficulty in meeting their academic requirements.

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