



Social Media in Higher Education: Examining the Impact on Students Academic Life

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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the pervasive influence of social media on students' academic endeavors within higher education. Utilizing a descriptive survey methodology, the study examines the multifaceted dimensions of social media usage among students, ranging from communication to educational pursuits. Through questionnaire responses and analysis, the research investigates the time allocation students dedicate to social media platforms and its potential impact on academic performance. Findings reveal a complex interplay between social media engagement and academic outcomes, highlighting both positive and negative effects. Despite the convenience and connectivity afforded by social media, concerns emerge regarding its addictive nature and potential distractions from scholarly pursuits. The paper concludes with a comprehensive set of recommendations for institutions and students to navigate the intricate relationship between social media and academic success. These recommendations include implementing structured time management strategies, fostering digital literacy skills, providing resources for balancing online and offline activities, promoting the use of educational content on social media platforms, and fostering a culture of responsible online behavior. Additionally, collaboration between educational institutions, policymakers, and technology companies is advocated to develop guidelines and policies that support healthy social media usage and prioritize academic priorities.

INTRODUCTION

Contextual Background

In recent years, technology has increasingly played a pivotal role in enhancing human interactions, particularly within social and educational spheres. Higher education has witnessed a surge in exploration of the myriad opportunities presented by emerging technologies for institutions, educators, and students alike. The advent of technology has revolutionized interpersonal communication, giving rise to open social platforms such as social media, thereby fostering global connectivity (Kyoshaba, 2009). Platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, and Flickr have been integrated into learning environments to facilitate seamless communication among students and potentially with external stakeholders such as peers and subject matter experts. Consequently, the educational landscape has been reshaped, influencing both student learning and instructional methodologies. Within contemporary higher education settings, social media has become instrumental in fostering collaboration among instructors, students, and other stakeholders in the pursuit of knowledge construction. These platforms have the potential to enhance classroom experiences, foster collaborative learning, and facilitate knowledge dissemination (James). Educators and researchers continually experiment with social media technologies with the aim of fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and knowledge acquisition. However, the inherent openness of these platforms necessitates a thorough examination of their benefits, impacts, and associated risks, underscoring the importance of ongoing communication with students to address concerns and mitigate potential issues arising from their use.

Problem Statement: The proliferation of social media in everyday communication has been mirrored by its increasing integration into higher education teaching and learning practices. Consequently, this study seeks to examine and evaluate the impact of social media on teaching and learning within higher education institutions, encompassing both positive and negative ramifications.

Study Objective: The primary aim of this study is to assess the influence of social media on students' academic endeavors. Specifically, the study seeks to elucidate the types of social media platforms students are familiar with, their utilization patterns within higher education contexts, and their consequential effects on academic performance.

Research Questions: The central research query guiding this study is: "What distinct impact does social media have on students' academic lives?" To delve into this inquiry and analyze the underlying mechanisms driving this impact, the following sub-questions are explored:

1. What defines social media and motivates student engagement with it?
2. What is the extent of students' daily engagement with social media?
3. How does social media usage correlate with students' academic performance?

Significance of the Study: An in-depth understanding of social media dynamics and its influence on the learning environment holds immense significance for students, researchers, student affairs practitioners, and various stakeholders involved in educational discourse. The findings of this study can inform strategic interventions aimed at redefining attitudes towards social media usage, while also shedding light on the myriad opportunities it presents for enriching student experiences and academic endeavors.

Assumptions this study operates on the following assumptions:

1. Students utilize social media platforms for both communication and academic purposes.
2. On average, students allocate a minimum of one hour per day to social media engagement.
3. The impact of social media on academic performance is multifaceted, encompassing both positive and negative dimensions.

Scope and Limitations: This study aimed to evaluate the impact of social media on students' academic performance, focusing on specific variables related to social media usage. The research involved sixty (60) actively engaged social media users as respondents during the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024. It delimited its focus to variables such as respondents' internet access, usage patterns, perceptions of social media, and frequency of engagement, which were hypothesized to influence academic performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

Definition of Social Media

Social media encompasses mobile and web-based technologies that facilitate highly interactive platforms for individuals and communities to share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content (Kietzmann, 2012; Osharive, 2015; Raymond et al., 2016). It represents a dynamic medium where information dissemination is coupled with interactive engagement, distinguishing it from traditional media channels. Social media platforms enable the creation, exchange, and sharing of user-generated content, fostering an environment conducive to collaborative interaction and information exchange (Papacharissi, 2012).

Social Media and Student Academic Life in Higher Education

In the context of this study, academic life pertains to activities associated with intellectual pursuits, predominantly within colleges and universities, focusing on scholarly inquiry and reasoning rather than practical or technical skills (Owusu-Acheaw and Larson, 2015). Higher education encompasses post-18 learning occurring at universities and other institutions conferring academic degrees and professional qualifications. An increasing number of scholars are

exploring the implications of social media for higher education, recognizing its potential significance in educational practice and provision (IPAF, 2013).

Social media plays a vital role in students' academic lives, serving as a platform for social interaction, identity formation, and knowledge acquisition (Papacharissi, 2010). Its presence in higher education reflects a shift towards more connected, collaborative, and flexible learning environments, characterized by digital multitasking and increased student autonomy (Subrahmanyam and Šmahel, 2011). Students are increasingly drawn to social media platforms due to their customizable nature, offering opportunities for self-expression and engagement in the learning process (Tapscott and Williams, 2007). Educators recognize the importance of integrating social media into higher education to better engage with students and foster a sense of community (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Selwyn, 2012).

Platforms like WhatsApp, WeChat, LinkedIn, and various flipped classroom tools are utilized by universities to create alternative spaces for online interaction among students and faculty (Reuters, 2009; Jonah, 2013). Social media platforms provide liberal environments for students to freely express their views, share resources, and engage in discussions, thereby enriching the learning experience (Mason and Rennie, 2007).

In summary, social media has become an integral part of higher education, facilitating collaborative learning, fostering student engagement, and expanding educational opportunities beyond traditional classroom settings. Its influence on academic life underscores the need for further research to better understand its implications and optimize its use in educational practice.

Impact of Social Media on Student Academic Engagement

Social media presents students with a novel avenue for familiar activities, offering a direct platform for them to publicly assess and comment on various aspects of campus life, including institutional policies, classes, professors, administration, and fellow students, in real-time. It traverses our campuses almost unnoticed, carrying with it the weight of social injustices and complex legal precedents accumulated over decades of student expression (Jeong, 2005; Gurcan, 2015).

Recognizing the positive potential of social media, there is no suggestion of curbing its use, as the technology has already permeated various aspects of student communication and engagement. Today's students predominantly communicate via technology, and prohibiting platforms like Facebook or texting would sever an essential relationship with technology. Teachers utilize various tools such as Skype, email, and social media to interact with students in online teaching environments (Jaclyn, 2011; Rouse, 2016). Social media

facilitates collaboration and discussion by enabling easy sharing and searching of content, offering student's flexibility in meeting their educational needs (Dewing, 2010).

However, concerns regarding inappropriate conduct on social media platforms are significant. Private relationships formed outside classroom circles may lead to inappropriate behavior (Gurman, 2015). Users may engage in discourteous and disrespectful language, including profanity, vulgarity, or harassment, without proper oversight. The circulation of sexually explicit or hate-based material without notification poses risks to students' privacy and safety (Saunders, 2012).

Despite these challenges, commentators should focus on the vast opportunities presented by social media to enhance the learning experience of students, rather than fixating on potential pitfalls (BlogDashContent, 2017).

Student Addiction to Social Media

The pervasive nature of social media on the internet raises concerns about potential addictive behaviors among students (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011). The increasing amount of time undergraduates spend online, particularly on platforms like Facebook and Twitter accessed through smartphones, is worrisome (Shensa, 2015). Many students exhibit signs of addiction, unable to refrain from checking and updating their social media profiles even at the expense of other activities (Morahan-Martin and Schumacher, 2000).

Alarmingly, there is a growing trend of social networking obsession among students, which could negatively impact their academic, social, and personal lives if left unchecked (Owusu-Acheaw, 2015). This phenomenon, if not addressed, could exacerbate existing challenges in the education system (Bello, 2012). Studies have linked internet addiction to poor academic performance and emotional well-being among students (Jeong, 2005; Ogedebe et al., 2012).

Observations suggest that Nigerian youths, in particular, exhibit obsessive behavior towards social media, spending excessive amounts of time online, even during lectures and academic activities (Olubiyi, 2012). This pervasive engagement with social media detracts from valuable time that could be spent on academic pursuits and productive networking (McQuail, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study draws from several key concepts in the fields of education and social psychology. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides a foundational lens through which to understand the influence of social media on student behavior and academic performance.

According to this theory, individuals learn by observing others and imitating their actions, with behavior being shaped by both personal factors and the social environment. In the context of social media, students may model their behavior based on the online interactions they observe, affecting their engagement in academic activities.

Moreover, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) sheds light on the motivational aspects of social media usage in the academic context. SDT posits that individuals have innate psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and that satisfying these needs fosters intrinsic motivation and well-being. Applied to social media, students may be driven to engage in online activities to fulfill these psychological needs, potentially influencing their academic performance.

Additionally, the Uses and Gratifications Theory offers insights into the reasons behind students' utilization of social media platforms. This theory suggests that individuals actively seek out media to fulfill specific needs, such as information-seeking, entertainment, social interaction, and identity expression. By understanding the gratifications students derive from social media usage, educators and policymakers can develop interventions to harness the positive aspects while mitigating potential negative effects on academic performance.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey. This design is considered apt because it enables the researcher to generate data through the standardized collection procedures based on highly structured research instrument(s) and well defined study concepts and related variables

Data Collection Methods

The data collection process employed multiple instruments, including survey questionnaires, observations, literature reviews, and analysis. These methods were utilized to address the research questions comprehensively.

Survey Questionnaires: Survey questionnaires were distributed to gather data for the research questions. These questionnaires consisted of clear and concise questions designed to elicit accurate responses from the participants. Each item in the questionnaire was tailored to address specific aspects of the research sub-problems. Google Form was utilized to create and administer the questionnaire, ensuring ease of data collection.

Literature Review: Secondary data were gathered from previous studies, literature reviews, books, documents, and electronic sources relevant to the study's objectives. This comprehensive review helped contextualize the research findings and provide additional insights into the topic.

Observations: Interviews were conducted to supplement the survey data and literature review findings. Researchers observed the behaviors and interactions of participants in relevant settings to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic.

Population: The target population consisted of students enrolled at Adamu Augie College of Education's main campus. The sample was drawn from this population to represent various demographic and academic backgrounds.

Sample and Sampling Procedure: A total of sixty (60) students volunteered to participate in the study. Convenient sampling technique was employed to select participants, ensuring accessibility and feasibility. The sample comprised an equal distribution of thirty female and thirty male students, with representation from different academic disciplines including Sciences, Vocational studies, Arts, and Islamic Studies.

Data Collection Procedure: The data collection period spanned approximately one week. Each interview session lasted between 20 to 30 minutes and was conducted in English. Detailed notes were taken during the interviews to facilitate transcription. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded for accuracy and ease of transcription.

Data Analysis: The collected data were transcribed and categorized based on participants' responses. Relevant themes were identified and developed from the transcriptions, allowing for an inductive analysis approach. Key words and phrases were noted in the margins, facilitating the grouping of margin notes into distinct subthemes and overarching themes. This iterative process enabled a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the data.

There are 71 students actively using social media that are members of the surveys' WhatsApp group. Slovin's formula is written as:

1. $n = N / (1 + N e^2)$
2. Where:
n = number of samples
N = total population
e = error tolerance (0.05)
thus,
 $n = N / (1 + N e^2)$
 $= 71 / (1 + (71 \times ((0.05)^2))$
 $= 71 / 1.1775$
 $= 60.3$ or 60

To solve the three research topics, statistical tools were identified. Mode was utilized to answer the first and second research questions, in addition to the literature review. For the third research question, an average weighted mean was used. The obtained data were utilized to examine the effect of social media on students' academic achievement

Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of Data

This section presents the data collected, analyzes the findings, and interprets them in relation to the research questions posed in the study. The responses of the respondents are assessed based on the following parameters:

Analysis and Discussion I: Reasons for Social Media Usage: To investigate why students use social media, respondents were surveyed using questionnaires (see appendix). Items 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 provided insights into this matter. The

majority of respondents (93%) reported having cheap access to the internet, primarily through their smartphones, indicating widespread internet availability.

Regarding social media usage, communication emerged as the primary purpose, cited by 35% of respondents, followed by entertainment (29.5%) and educational information-seeking (25.5%). Additionally, the study found that 71.7% of respondents utilize the internet for assignments, with only 20% preferring traditional library resources. Furthermore, 48.3% of respondents reported using their smartphones during class to enhance their English vocabulary, highlighting the integration of technology into the learning process. Analysis and Discussion II: Time Spent on Social Media According to a News poll (Newspoll, 2013), a significant percentage of teenagers spend up to 7 hours a day on social media platforms. Similarly, the survey found that the majority of respondents (38.3%) spend 4-6 hours daily on social media, with 28.3% spending 1-3 hours, and 26.7% spending over 6 hours. This indicates a considerable amount of time dedicated to social media engagement among students.

Analysis and Discussion III: Impact on Academic Performance The survey revealed divergent views on the impact of social media on academic performance. While 38.3% of respondents strongly agreed that social media negatively affects their academic performance, 16.7% strongly agreed on its positive impact. Some respondents (20%) remained neutral, while others (13.3%) reported no significant impact.

RESEARCH RESULT

Findings

Their key motivations for using social networks are to find friends and classmates, as well as communicate with them. The time spent on informal groups allows most responders to create their own unique relaxation time while also preparing for tests. Most students spend about 20% of their time on social media. Almost half of those polled admit that using social networks aided them in their personal lives by allowing them to communicate with friends, organize leisure activities, and find interest groups. Some argue that social networks had no effect on their way of life, while only a few acknowledged that social networks had an impact on their free time. 10% reported addiction.

To summarize, social networks have become a vital part of the students' daily lives, occupying the majority of their free time. After superseding the means of correspondence, they replaced the understudies' leisure activities and verbal communication.

They began to view the informal organization as their primary study partner in advance of tests, rather than the textbook and the teacher. Many times, students are pressed for time and cannot fully process the material covered in class. Ultimately, there are far more engaging things to do with a phone or tablet screen than YouTube videos, news recordings, social networks of all types, and interaction with peers.

Furthermore, the entire amount of free time a student has to spend online. He will spend time on social media instead of playing sports, reading a book, having "live" conversations with classmates, getting ready for class, or even going for a stroll. Naturally, this has a detrimental effect on their intellectual and physical growth. There are undoubtedly other resources on social networks that are beneficial to a student's growth, such as the numerous educational Facebook groups and instructional YouTube videos. Furthermore, interacting with peers via social media platforms can facilitate socialization, friend-finding, and study-related discussions. Furthermore, social networks Findings suggest that social media plays a significant role in students' lives, with many integrating it into their academic activities. However, concerns regarding its negative impact on academic performance are evident.

DISCUSSION

The implications of this study are multifaceted and extend to various stakeholders in the realm of higher education. Firstly, educators and administrators can utilize the findings to inform their pedagogical approaches and curriculum development. Understanding the pervasive influence of social media on students' academic lives enables educators to incorporate digital literacy skills into their teaching methodologies, preparing students for responsible and effective engagement with online platforms.

Moreover, institutions can develop targeted interventions to support students in managing their social media usage and maintaining a healthy balance between online and offline activities. This may include implementing time management strategies, promoting digital wellness programs, and providing resources for navigating the complexities of online interactions. Furthermore, policymakers and regulatory bodies can use the study's insights to advocate for the development of guidelines and policies that address the intersection of social media and education. By fostering collaboration between educational institutions, technology companies, and government agencies, policymakers can create a framework that promotes responsible social media usage while safeguarding students' academic interests.

Additionally, the findings of this study have implications for students themselves, empowering them to reflect on their social media habits and make informed decisions about their online behavior. By raising awareness of the potential impacts of excessive social media usage on academic performance, students can take proactive steps to mitigate distractions and prioritize their educational goals.

Overall, the implications of this study underscore the importance of addressing the complex relationship between social media and education. By acknowledging the influence of social media on students' academic lives and implementing targeted interventions, stakeholders can foster a supportive learning environment that maximizes students' academic success while promoting responsible digital citizenship

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that social media has become an integral part of students' lives, occupying a substantial amount of their leisure time. The findings indicate a dual impact on academic performance, highlighting the need for responsible use.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Promote Digital Literacy:** Institutions should prioritize digital literacy programs to educate students on responsible social media usage, critical thinking, and online safety. These programs should equip students with the skills needed to navigate social media platforms effectively while discerning credible information from misinformation.
2. **Encourage Time Management Strategies:** Educational institutions can offer workshops or seminars on time management techniques specifically tailored to social media usage. Students can learn how to allocate their time effectively, balancing academic responsibilities with social media engagement to enhance productivity.
3. **Foster Offline Interactions:** Encourage students to engage in offline activities and face-to-face interactions to complement their online social interactions. Organizing campus events, group study sessions, or extracurricular activities can provide opportunities for students to connect in person and develop interpersonal skills.
4. **Implement Social Media Guidelines:** Institutions should develop clear guidelines and policies regarding social media usage, outlining acceptable behavior, privacy considerations, and consequences for inappropriate conduct. These guidelines can serve as a framework for promoting responsible social media use within the academic community.
5. **Collaborate with Social Media Platforms:** Educational institutions can collaborate with social media platforms to implement features that promote healthy usage habits among students. This could include tools for monitoring screen time, setting usage limits, or providing educational resources within the platform.
6. **Support Mental Health Services:** Recognize the potential impact of excessive social media use on mental health and well-being. Institutions should prioritize mental health services and resources to support students struggling with issues related to social media addiction, stress, anxiety, or depression.
7. **Encourage Peer Support Networks:** Foster peer support networks where students can share experiences, strategies, and resources for managing social media usage and academic responsibilities. Peer-led initiatives,

support groups, or online forums can provide valuable peer-to-peer support and guidance.

8. **Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regularly monitor and evaluate the impact of social media usage on students' academic performance and well-being. Collect feedback from students, faculty, and other stakeholders to identify emerging trends, challenges, and areas for improvement in social media policies and practices.

Furthermore, students must recognize the potential negative consequences of excessive social media use and prioritize academic responsibilities.

In conclusion, while social media offers opportunities for communication and engagement, its impact on academic performance underscores the importance of balanced usage and responsible behavior. Future research should explore strategies to mitigate the negative effects of social media on students' academic endeavors

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