



# **Social Media and the Academic Performance of University Students in Nigeria: A Study of the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This work is on the effects of social media on the academic performance of Nigerian university students using Rivers State University (RSU) as a case study. The study used the causal comparative research design. 400 students of the University were accidentally sampled from a population of 29, 939 students. The study found that male students used social media for information and academics while females used SNSs for socialization and entertainment, but, as the age of the respondents (both sexes) increased, they generally use SNSs for information and academic purposes, than for socialization and entertainment; majority of RSU students spend not less than 6 hours on SNSs daily surfing the websites and interacting with other users for academic and non-academic purposes. It recommends that students should endeavor to use social media for academic purposes mainly.

**Keywords:** university students, academic performance, social media, Nigeria

## **INTRODUCTION**

Given the popularity and dominance of social media among students of higher institutions, stakeholders in the educational sector across the world have been gravely concerned about its possible effects on students' academics (Shah, Subramanian, Rouis, & Limayem, 2012; Miah, Omar & Allison-Golding, 2012; Ezeah, Asogwa & Edogor, 2013). This is because studies have shown that social media has both positive and negative effects on students (Yahya, Olalekan, Afolabi, & Ayelaagbe 2013).

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of social media on the academic performance of university students in Nigeria using Rivers State University as a case study. In specific terms, the study aims to determine how often students of Rivers State University make use of social media

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Study design**

This study employed a *causal comparative* (or *ex-post-facto*) research design.

**PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

**Research Question :** *What is the number of hours each day spent by students of Rivers State University on social media?*

**Table 1 : Hours spent on SNS daily (in frequency and percentage)**

Hours	Frequency	Percentage
1-3 hrs	92	23.29
4-6 hrs	200	50.63
7-10 hrs	53	13.41
Always	50	12.65
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100</b>

Table shows that the hours spent by students daily on social networking sites: 92 (23.29%) spend 1 to 3 hours daily, 200 (50.63%) spend 4 to 6 hours daily, 53 (13.41%) spend 7 to 10 hours daily, while 50 respondents (12.65%) are always connected to social networking sites throughout the day

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

As reflected in Tables, it is evident that 92 (23.29%) student-respondents spend 1 to 3 hours daily on SNSs, while 200 (50.63%) spend 4 to 6 hours daily, 53 (13.41%) spend 7 to 10 hours daily, while 50 respondents (12.65%) are always connected to social networking sites throughout the day. The time spent did not significantly differ when it comes to the gender of the students: both males and females spent disproportionate hours online daily. But, as the age of the students increased (i.e. as a student gets older) time spent decreased which agrees with Tham (2011).

The result of the study generally agrees with Rosen (2009) cited in Kirschner and Karpinski (2009) Lin *et al* (2010), Ahamed and Qazi (2011), Jagero and Muriithi (2013), Onyeka *et al* (2013), Anjugu (2013), and Akubugwo and Burke (2013) who have found in studies carried out in different parts of the world (Nigeria inclusive) that students spend from 1 to 6 hours daily on SNSs. That majority of the respondents in the present study spend not less than 6 hours daily on SNSs not only points to the fact that students derive immense *gratification* and satisfaction from SNSs, but also the possible *displacement* effects of the social media on students' academics.

**SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS**

Findings from the study are summarized as follows:

Majority of *RSUST students use SNSs for various reasons* ranging from entertainment and communication to socialization and education. Students have, as it were, incorporated social media into their academic lives. Majority of *RSUST students spend not less than 6 hours on SNSs* daily surfing the websites and interacting with other users for academic and non-academic purposes.

**SUMMARY**

The study found that: *RSUST students use SNSs for various reasons* ranging from entertainment and communication to socialization and education. Male students used social media for information and academics while females used SNSs for socialization and entertainment. But, as the age of the respondents (both sexes) increased, they generally use SNSs for information and academic purposes, than for socialization and entertainment. In the same vein, more students from the Faculties of Environmental Sciences, Management Sciences, Law and Technical and Science Education used social media sites for academics than their counterparts from Agriculture, Engineering, and Sciences.

RSU students like their counterparts across the world, *spend not less than 6 hours on SNSs* daily surfing the websites and interacting with other users for academic and non-academic purposes.

Most *students of RSU believe that the use of SNSs negatively affect their academics* in that SNSs reduce the time they spend on their studies, distract them during lectures and library sessions as well as directly affect their cumulative grade point average.

## CONCLUSION

Nigerian university students use social media for various reasons ranging from entertainment and communication to socialization and education. This implies that social media has become part and parcel of everyday life of Nigerian university students who have, as it were, incorporated social media into their academic lives.

Majority of RSU students like their counterparts across the world, spend not less than 6 hours on SNSs daily surfing the websites and interacting with other users for academic and non-academic purposes. This is aggravated by the use of smart phones that are connected to the internet and SNSs sits 24 hours a day. This has the implication of making some students spend more time on SNSs than on their academic activities.

## RECOMMENDATION

The authorities in tertiary institutions in Nigeria should enact rules and regulation that will curtail or restrict students' use of social networking sites during lectures and library sessions.

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