Effects of Social Media on the Academic Performance of University Students in Nigeria: A Study of the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated 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: majority of RSU students use social networking sites (SNSs) for various reasons ranging from entertainment and communication to socialization and education. It recommends that: the authorities in tertiary institutions in Nigeria should enact rules and regulations that will curtail or restrict students’ use of social networking sites during lectures and library sessions.

Keywords: Social media, social networking sites, of communication technologies

INTRODUCTION
Since the popularization of the internet in the 1990s and the emergence of social networking sites in 1994 and beyond, there is abundant evidence that millions of people across the world use social media on a regular basis for various reasons (Daluba & Maxwell, 2013). Though social media use cuts across all age groups, studies have however shown that it is predominant among young persons (Onuoha & Saheed, 2011) and students of institutions of higher education (Dahlstrom, de Boor, Grunwald, & Vockley, 2011; Al-rahmi, Othman & Musa, 2014). In fact, Rosen (2011) found that while those born between 1965-1979 (‘Generation X’), spend approximately 13 hours per day on social media, those born between 1990-1999 (‘I Generation’) however spend not less than 20 hours per day on social media. Kalra and Manani (2013) pointed out that these young people use social media for interaction, socialization and entertainment.

Given the foregoing therefore, this study seeks to examine the effect of social media on the academic performance of university students in Nigeria with the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt as a case study.

RESEARCH METHODS
This study employed a causal comparative (or ex-post-facto) research design. 400 students of the University were accidentally sampled from a population of 29,939 students. Questionnaire was given to respondents to give their response on use of social media. Data collected were analysed using frequencies and percentages.
ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Research Question 1: Why do students of Rivers State University make use of social media?

Table 1 : Purpose of use of SNSs (in frequencies and percentage).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Finding friends</th>
<th>Messaging and profile update</th>
<th>Fun and leisure</th>
<th>Academic studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>304 (76.96)</td>
<td>345 (87)</td>
<td>245 (62.5)</td>
<td>222 (56.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>79 (20)</td>
<td>43 (10.88)</td>
<td>128 (32.40)</td>
<td>171 (43.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>12 (3.03)</td>
<td>7 (1.77)</td>
<td>20 (5.66)</td>
<td>2 (0.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that 304 (76.96%) respondents agree that they use SNSs for finding friends online, while 79 (20%) respondents do not use SNSs for such purpose and 12 (3.03%) respondents are undecided. Similarly, 345 (87.34%) respondents agree that they use SNSs for messaging and profile update, while 43 (10.88%) students do not use SNSs for such purpose and 7 students are undecided. 247 (62.53%) students agree that they use SNSs for fun and leisure while 128 (32.40%) students do not use SNSs for such purpose and 20 (5%) respondents are undecided. 222 (56.20%) respondents agree that they use SNSs for academic purposes, while 171 (43.29%) students do not use SNSs for such purpose and 2 students are undecided. 198 (50.12%) respondents agree that they use SNSs for watching movies, while 178 (45.06%) students do not use SNSs for such purpose and 19 (4.81%) students are undecided. 205 (51.89%) respondents agree that they use SNSs for academic discussion, while 184 (46.58%) students do not use SNSs for such purpose and 6 students are undecided. 183 (46.32%) respondents agree that they use SNSs for dating, while 207 (52.40%) students do not use SNSs for such purpose and 5 students are undecided. 362 (91.64%) respondents agree that they use SNSs for interaction with friends, while 31 (7.84%) respondents do not use SNSs for such purpose and 2 (0.50%) respondents are undecided.

When it comes to why students of the University make use of social media, Table 1 also shows that majority of the RSUST student respondents use social media (SNSs) for various reasons ranging from entertainment and communication to socialisation and education. Thus, most of the respondents used SNSs as for: finding friends online, interacting with online friends, messaging and profile update, fun and leisure, academic studies, watching online movies, academic discussion and dating. These findings confirm Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch’s Uses and Gratification Theory in that majority of the student-respondents make use of social media sites because of the gratification/satisfaction/benefits they derive from their use as seen in Table else where many students are connected to Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, 2go, Badoo and Blackberry Messenger- SNSs that offer various satisfying services to users. The result of the study also agree with previous studies by Joinson (2008), Kimberly et al (2009), Santos et al (2009) Mehmoood and Taswir (2013), Onyeka et al (2013), and Helou and Ab.rahim (2014), who found that students make use of social networking sites for academic and non-academic reasons.

The result however disagrees with some of the findings in Ezeah et al (2013) and Eke et al (2014) to the effect that South-East Nigerian students do not use SNSs for academic purposes. The differences in the result could be a function of the disparity in time, area of study, instrumentation, sample size and technique or the population of the study.
Interestingly however, it was seen that as there was disparity in the purpose of use of SNSs as the
gender, age and faculty of the respondents changed. Thus, it was seen that while more male students
were inclined to use social media for information and academics, the females were however tilted
toward socialization and entertainment. However, as the age of the respondents (both sexes)
increased, there was more and more interest in harnessing the informational values of SNSs for
academic purposes. Similarly, more students from the Faculties of Environmental Sciences,
Management Sciences, Law and Technical and Science Education stated that they used social media
sites for academics than their counterparts from Agriculture, Engineering, and Sciences.

SUMMARY
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.

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. Most students of RSUST 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. RSUST 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.

CONCLUSION
Male students use 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Tertiary institutions should enlighten students on the positive and negative effects of social
networking sites as media of interaction on students’ academic performance.

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