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

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ABSTRACT
Here is a study on the effects of social media networking 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 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. It recommends that students should use more time on their studies than on social media because of the negative effects and use wikis (a type of social media) like Wikipedia that promote learning and academic research.

Keywords: academic performance, cumulative grade point average,

INTRODUCTION
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.
Social media presents such benefits as encouraging greater social interaction via electronic mediums, providing greater access to information and information sources, creating a sense of belonging among users, reducing barriers to group interaction and communications such as distance and social/economic status, and increasing the technological competency levels of frequent users of social media, among others, (Connolly, 2011; Zwart, Lindsay, Henderson & Phillips, 2011).
METHODOLOGY
Study design: This study employed a causal comparative (or ex-post-facto) research design.

RESULTS
Research Question: What is the effect of social media networking on the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of students of Rivers State University?

Table 1: Effect of Social Media on CGPA (in frequencies and percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Positive effect on studies</th>
<th>Distracts students from studies</th>
<th>Displaces time on studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8.8 (22.27)</td>
<td>325 (82.27)</td>
<td>205 (51.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>289 (73.16)</td>
<td>57 (14.43)</td>
<td>171 (43.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>18 (4.55)</td>
<td>13 (3.29)</td>
<td>19 (4.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Reduce time spent on SNS</th>
<th>Distraction during lectures</th>
<th>Distraction during library sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>352 (89.11)</td>
<td>196 (49.62)</td>
<td>201 (50.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40 (10.12)</td>
<td>198 (50.12)</td>
<td>180 (45.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>3 (0.75)</td>
<td>1 (0.25)</td>
<td>14 (3.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>SNSs improve my grades</th>
<th>SNS negatively affect my grade</th>
<th>Avoid SNSs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>178 (45.06)</td>
<td>249 (63.03)</td>
<td>364 (92.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>203 (51.39)</td>
<td>81 (20.50)</td>
<td>28 (7.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>14 (3.54)</td>
<td>65 (16.45)</td>
<td>3 (0.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
<td>395 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CGPA of respondents</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00-2.49</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>50.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50-3.49</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>27.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.50-4.49</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>13.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50-5.00</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that 88 (22.27%) respondents agree that SNSs have positive effect on their academic studies, while 289 (73.16%) students do not believe such and 18 (4.55%) students are undecided. 325 (82.27%) respondents agree that SNSs distract them from their academic studies, while 57 (14.43%) students do not believe such and 13 students are undecided. 205 (51.89%) respondents agree that SNSs displace the time they spend on their academic studies, while 171 (43.29%) students do not believe such and 19 (4.81%) students are undecided. 352 (89.11%) respondents agree that university students must reduce time spent on SNSs to succeed in the university,
while 40 (10.12%) students do not believe such and 3 students are undecided. 196 (49.62%) respondents agree that SNSs distract them from their lectures, while 198 (50.12%) students do not believe such and only 1 student is undecided. 201 (50.88%) respondents agree that SNSs distract them during library sessions, while 180 (45.56%) students do not believe such and only 14 (3.54%) students are undecided. 178 (45.06%) respondents agree that SNSs help to improve their grades, while 205 (51.39%) students do not believe such and 14 (3.34%) students are undecided. 249 (63.03%) respondents agree that SNSs negatively affect their grades, while 81 (20.50%) students do not believe such and 65 (16.45%) students are undecided. 364 (92.15%) respondents agree that their younger ones must avoid SNSs to succeed in the university, while 28 (7.08%) students do not believe such and 3 (0.75%) students are undecided. The Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of the respondents thus: 198 (50.12%) of the students had 1.00-2.49; 110 (27.84%) students had 2.50-3.49; 52 (13.16%) students had 3.50-4.49; and 35 (8.86%) students had 4.50-5.00 CGPA.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
In terms of the effect of social media on the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of the respondents, Table showed that a majority of 73.16% of the respondents believe that SNSs do not have positive effects on their academic performance. Similarly, 325 (82.89%) respondents believe that SNSs distracts them from their studies and another set of majority of respondents believe that social media displaces the time they spend on their academic studies: a confirmation of the time displacement theory. Expectedly, many students would advise avoiding the use of SNSs if they must do well academically. A majority of the respondents believe that SNSs distract them from their lectures, during library sessions and from their academics generally. In terms of students grades, it is evident that majority of the RSUST students believe that SNSs negatively affect their grades such that they not only believe that to improve their grades, they need to reduce their use of SNSs, but also, that without SNSs, their grades will be better than they are presently. The foregoing result of the study agree principally with Bogart and Robert (2006), Grabmeier (2009), Kirschner and Karpinski (2009), Tamayo and Cruz (2014), Enikuomehin (2011), Anjugu (2013) and Okereke and Oghenetega (2014) where it has been found consistently that the use of social networking sites negatively affects students academics in various ways. The finding however disagrees with Pasek et al (2006), Linda et al (2006), Roblyer et al (2010), Onuoha and Shaeed (2011), Mehmood and Taswir (2013), Moralo (2014) and Helou and Ab.Rahim (2014) which have found on the other hand that SNSs improve students’ academic performance. The differences in the results could have something to do with the individual user and the intensity of usage such that despite using SNSs some students could still perform well academically as noted by Ahmed and Qazi (2011), Kalra and Manani (2013), and Jagero and Muriithi (2013).

SUMMARY
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. 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.

CONCLUSION
Most students of Nigerian universities 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. This has had some displacement effects on the academic routines of some students, while others have been able to balance the use of SNSs with the academics.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Students should try to use more time in reading their books than social media surfing, because of the negative effects.
2. Students should use wikis (a type of social media) like Wikipedia that promote learning and academic research.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
The work was limited to the analyses of the use of social media from the standpoint of the uses and gratification and time displacement theories. The work was also limited to effect of social media on academic performance, recognizing that academic performance is a multi-dimensional construct that involves many variables that include individual intelligence, home environment, availability of study materials and so on.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES
This study on the effect of social media on the academic performance of students was done within a short time, within 12 months. It is suggested that:
1. Further longitudinal studies that will follow students from their first year into their final year in the university should be carried out to determine what effect social media has had on the subjects’ academics as the years go by.
2. Subsequent research might be able to determine with certainty the effect of social media on students academics by using the qualitative (and not quantitative) study design via interview of subjects to be able to find out the effects of social media on students academics.

REFERENCES


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