Influence of Social Networking on Students' Reading Habit in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

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Abstract
Many activities of academic life require the ability to read and write. Reading helps to develop the mind and personality of a person; it also enriches one's intellectual abilities. But, with the current popularity of social networking, it seem to be slowly and steadily taking over the mind of young people who are expected to cultivate good reading culture. This study therefore, sought to find out the influence of social networking on Ahmadu Bello University students. Survey method was adopted using questionnaire as instrument for data collection. Copies of the questionnaire were administered and retrieved from 191 undergraduate students using simple random sampling technique. Findings revealed that most of the students used social network site for non academic purpose and this often distract their reading habit. Based on these findings, the study recommended that students in tertiary institutions be given proper orientation on how to use social media as effective tool for transformation to achieve academic objectives. The authority concerned should also intensify enlightenment campaign on the negative effect of social networking site on students and their academic performances.

Keywords: Social Networking, Reading Habit, A.B.U Students.

Introduction

Social networking is the latest technological explosion in the world of information; it is an online platform or site that focuses on building and reflecting on social relation among people, who share common interest or activities. According to Adomi and Ejirefe (2012:75), "social networking refers to activities, practices and behaviour among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinion using interactive media. The interactive media are web based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in forms of text, pictures, videos and audios". Kaplan and Halein (2010:59) "define social media as a group of internet - based application that build on the ideological and technological foundation of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content. Social networking site allow users to share activities, event, ideas and interest within their individual network".

Students use the social networking for various reasons. Some use it to exchange ideas, feelings, personal information, pictures and videos (Loving & Ochoa, 2010:121). It is also used for the purpose of connecting with friends and family (regardless of location), keeping up with the latest events and happening and for academic purposes.

To consider the positive sides of social networking, Lusk (2010:173) posits that "online communities can afford students academic assistance and support. Social networking provides easy access to virtual space which students can explore with friends having similar academic needs". Brydolf (2007:4) notes that "students who may be reluctant to speak up in class find blogs and other interactive internet tools rewarding".

On the other hand, the study of Wang, Chen & Liang (2011:2) on effect of social media on college students, showed that social media use is negatively associated with academic performance. They also reported that about two-thirds of the students are found using social media while in class studying or doing home work. This multi-tasking increases distraction and becomes detrimental to student performance. According to Kalpidon, Castia and Morris (2011:183) "social media websites, such as facebook, whatsapp, youtube and twitter have gain popularity among students, they are also becoming increasingly dangerous as they create modes to students to procrastinate while trying to complete homework and assignment". In their survey of 102 students, 57% stated that social media has made them less productive.

The increase use of social networking sites among students has affected students reading habit. Reading habit is a deliberate effort towardsunderstanding and acquiring knowledge. It is also a systematic conscious task of acquiring specific knowledge geared toward a set of standards. Reading habits are behaviours that are easily manifested without conscious exertion on the part of the learner (Oloyede, 2005:56).

Many activities of ordinary life require the ability to read. Depth reading helps to develop the mind and personality of a person, it enriches intellectual abilities, provides in sights into human problems, and influences attitudes and behaviour. In other words, reading helps to mould a person's character. This depends on the type of book that is read, the book can be entertaining and educative (Behrman, 2009).

In Nigeria, there have been concerns on the possible effect of day time and sometime all night browsing on student's reading time. Many parents are worried over their children's habit on facebook and other social media sites because they are of the opinion that their children now hardly have the time to read. For instance Oji (2007:93) noted that "the growing incidence of students using the internet not necessarily for academic purposes, but for anti-social activities is at an astonishing rate. They use these websites for fraud, pornography, blackmail, racketeering and so on".

Social networking sites have proven to be universally addictive for tertiary institution students who tend to spend considerable amount of their time maintaining social connections, making new acquaintances and a broad base of friends during their years of study (Loving & Ochoa, 2010:121). These, however reduce the amount of time they will use to read books aimed at successful completion of their studies (Ofuani & Gberedio, 2009:66).

Statement of the Problem

Students' unwillingness to read extensively these days is a worrisome phenomenon. Students reading habits these days are distracted with the persistent use of social networking (Onuoha and Saheed 2011:6). Thus, they now become passive readers who prefer to sit back, only to be entertained and not to put effort in reading. They prefer to spend the whole day chatting with friends instead of reading or studying. Some students, even when they use the social media for academic purpose do so because they rely on its information accessibility to provide direct lifting of answers for their assignments. This study investigated on how this behavior reduces students focus on learning and reading habit and whether it influences their academic performance. Schill (2011) has noted that "the social media sites encourage negative behaviour among students such as catching up with unknown friends. As such, they are exposed to frauds via e-commerce and banking, use of drugsand material that are restricted to medical prescription". Social networking sites have also become easiest point of access to pornography and other obscenities which distract student reading habits (Kur & Olisah, 2007:204). This study will also like to see how the negative act through social media affect students reading habits in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Therefore this study intends to investigate the influence of social networking on student reading habit in the faculty of social sciences of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Research Questions

To guide this study the following research questions were raised:

1. How much time do students spend browsing social networking sites?
2. What are students reasons/purpose for using social networking sites?
3. To what extent do students rely on social networking for academic purpose?
4. How does a social networking site affect the reading habits of students in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria?

Objective of the Study

In attempting to answer the above research questions, the research aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. To identify the time students spend browsing social network sites
2. To examine students reasons/purpose for using social network sites

3. To ascertain the extent to which students rely on social networking for academic purpose
4. To identify how social networking site affect the reading habits of students in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Theoretical Framework

The work is hinged on the uses and gratification theory. The theory deals with uses to which different individuals put the media and the gratifications they drive from the media.

Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (2010: 393) notes that the theory holds that people actively seek out specific media and specific content to generate specific gratification (or result). These concern the audiences who derive some level of satisfaction or reward from using particular content of particular media: that is, people are out to use media that satisfies their needs. Theorists in Uses and Gratifications view people as active because they are able to examine and evaluate various types of media to accomplish their communication goals. Wang, Fink, and Cai (2008:87) also explain that the theory presupposes that members of the public will actively select and use specific forms of media content to fulfill their interest and motives. For example, Rubin (1994: 28) found that motivation for media use clustered into the following categories: to pass time, for companionship, excitement, escape, enjoyment, social interaction, relaxation, information and to learn about a specific content.

In relation to this study, the theory suggests that students use the social network sites to derive certain gratifications which may be academic or non academic. Social networking sites, as a technological device for chatting, sending e-mail, pictures; reading etc have the subtle power to influence students' interest of usage to achieve academic or non academic purpose.

Methodology

The study adapted the survey research method, using a sample size of 191 respondents. The sample size was based on Yamane's statistical formula as cited by Israel (2012:2), this allowed 7% of respondents to be drawn from the population of 2,733 students of Faculty of Social Sciences Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (as at the 2012-2013 academic session). This population did not include post-graduate students. The decision to exclude this category of students was informed by the presumption that they are mature in their dealings. The sample size of 191 respondents was drawn from the four Departments in Faculty of Social Science (with five courses i.e. Mass Communication, Economics, Political Science, Sociology and International Studies) and out of the 191 respondents sample, 189 respondents indicated they have an account with social network site. The respondents were drawn from each department and they were selected through a simple random sampling procedure respectively.

The instrument used for data collection in this study was the questionnaire which contained close-ended items. The closed ended questions were intended to collect data that would facilitate easy analysis. Copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researcher to students while reading for their first semester examination in the Faculty Library, Departmental Libraries and classrooms, of Faculty of Social Sciences of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This was in order to ensure high response rate. Frequency distribution tables and percentages were used to analyse the data collected. This is because of the descriptive nature of the study.

Findings and Discussions

Research Question 1: How much time do students spend browsing socialnetworking sites? This question is to identify those with an account and alsoassess the time students spend to access the social network site. Table 1, 2 and3 presented the account, frequency of usage and duration of time they use toaccess the web site.

Table 1: An account with any social network site

Account	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	189	98.9
No	2	1.1
Total	**191**	**100**

The date in the above table show that students are aware of social network site and care to have an account with their choice site.

Table 2: Frequency of use of social network site

Frequency of use	Frequency	Percentage
Several times a day	125	66,1
Once a day	44	23.3
Once a week	9	4.8
Occasionally	11	5.8
Total	**189**	**100**

Table 2 above revealed that majority of the students totalling 125 (66.1%) respondents used social network site several times a day, another 44 (23.3%) respondents indicated that they used it once a day. This shows that the interest to get connected makes them use it frequently.

Table 3: Time spent on the social network site per visit

Frequency of use	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 5 minutes	50	26.5
15-30 minutes	53	28
30minutes-l hours	70	37
1-2 hours	16	5.8
Total	**189**	**100**

The above table reveals the time students spent when they visit their social network site of interest. Majority 70 (37%) respondents spend between 30minutes-lhour. This means that each time they log on to the site they spend not less than 30minutes-l hour. So, when related to data in table 2 it will be clear evidence that the spending of more time on social media has a tendency to reduce the time students spend on their personal readings.

Research Question 2: what are students' reasons for using social network sites? This research question will serve as a guide to identify student's reasons for using social networking sites, finding out which of the site they preferred to use, the number of site they registered and the source they used to access the sites. Table 4-7 was therefore used to assess students' opinion. For explicit understanding, the items in table 4 .was categorized into "a" and "b" (i.e. for academic purpose and non academic purpose respectively)

Table 4: Reasons for using social network site

Reasons	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(a) For Reading/Academic Purpose	30(15.9%)	40(21.2%)	-	69(36.5%)	50(26.5%)
For reading of newspapers/magazines					
To share and exchange academic information and ideas with friends for writing an assignment, exam, or test	54(28.6%)	70(37%)	10(5.3%)	30(15.9%)	25(13.2%)
For getting latest world/local information	60(31.7%)	52(27.5%)	17(9%)	38(20.2%)	22(11.6%)
To communicate with lecturer	10(5.5%)	20(10.5%)	5(2.6%)	91(48.1%)	63(33.3%)
(b) For Non Academic Purpose					
Chatting with friends	58(30.7%)	91(48.1%)	5(2. 6%)	20(10.6%)	15(7.9%)
Photo sharing	52(27.5%)	64(33.9%)	8(4.2%)	35(18.5%)	30(15.9%)
Online dating	57(30.2%)	56(29.6%)	26(13.7%)	30(15.9%)	20(10.6%)
To create groups of likeminded individual	50(26.5%)	60(31.7%)	22(11.6%)	29(15.4%)	28(14.8%)

The data in the table revealed students reasons for using social network sites and it is clear that students used the social network site more for non academic purpose than for academic purpose. This assertion is because not less than 50% respondents indicated that they strongly agree and agree respectively for each of statement. While the most indicated reason for using social network site for academic purpose is either when they have an assignment or test and the needed an answer which often is direct without wide consultation of other information sources to gather information or ideas, 54(28.6%) and 70(37%) respondents stated strongly agree and agree respectively.

Table 5: Preferred social network site by respondents.

Social network site	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	42	22.2
Blogs	6	3.2
Myspace	10	5.2
Youtube	40	21.1
Twitter	30	15.9
Friend ster	13	6.8
Ryze com	3	1.6
Siz degrees.com	4	2.1
Whatsapp	41	21.6
Total	**189**	**100**

The data from table 5 above, indicated that most of the respondents preferred facebook, they constitute 42 (22.2%) respondents, followed by whatsapp and youtube with 41 (21.6%) and 40 (21.1%) respondents respectively. Other social media sites are also in use but the above stated three social network sites received higher popularity among students.

Table 6: Number of social network sites registered

Number of registered sites	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Only one site	7	3.7
Two sites	62	32.8
Three sites	68	35.9
Four sites	33	17.5
Above four sites	19	10.1
Total	**189**	**100**

The above table shows that majority of the students with social network account have three registered sites, they constitute the highest number with 68 (35.9) respondents.

Table 7: Means of accessing the social network site

Means	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Cell phone	93	49.2
Personal computer	66	34.9
Cyber cafes	20	10.6
All of the above	10	5.3
Total	**189**	**100**

This indicates that most of the students used cell phone to access social media sites.

Research Question 3: To what extent do students rely on social networking sites for academic purpose?

Relating this question to table 4 and to the item which stated that students share and exchange information and ideas with friends for writing an assignment, exam or test, it is clear that students rely on social networking to a great extent for their academic purpose. Thus, 54(28.6%) and 70(37%) respondents strongly agree and agree respectively.

Research Question 4: How does a social networking site affect the readinghabit of students in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Table 8: Effect of social network site on students reading habit

Effect of social networking site	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Distract while reading or in class	61(32.3%)	67(35.4%)	13(6.9%)	40(21.2%)	8(4.2%)
Increase socialization contact with friends	60(31.7%)	118(62.4%)	10(5.3%)	1(0.5%)	-
Reduce time for reading	74(39.2%)	68(35.9%)	15(7.9%)	24(12.7%)	8(4.2%)
Easily make one late to class or miss lecture	61(32.3%)	50(26.5%)	32(16.9%)	36(19%)	10(5.3%)
Exposure to illicit act	49(25.9%)	35(18.5%)	41(21.7%)	41(21.7%)	23(11.5%)

Table 8 above, shows that social networking sites have an effect on the reading habit of students. The first indication is that they get distracted when friends communicate with them while they are reading. They constitute 67 (35.4%) respondents which is the highest number that agree to this. It is also clear that because they want to make friends, their social contact increases daily, they constitute the highest number of 118 (62.4%) respondents that agree. Others 74 (39.2%) respondents strongly agree that social network site reduce time for reading. Also 61 (32.3%) respondents strong agree that their concentration on social network site can make one forget time and go to class late or even miss lecture. While 41 (21.7%) respondents could not make their position known if actually social network site expose them to illicit acts, but the fact still remain that those that agree and strongly agree constitute the highest number of 49(25,9%) and 35(18.5%) respondents respectively.

From this table, it can be easily deduced that, these are all factors that influence reading habit of students.

Discussion of Findings

The findings were related to research questions earlier mentioned, so as to have an insight into the study, as follow:

The findings show that the time spent on social network site as indicated in Tables 2 and 3 is worrisome as it makes them spend less time reading. According to Shabi and Udofia (2009), reading habit is quite clearly diminishing these days among youth. This is an ugly trend which has been reported globally and is quite disturbing (Uche & Udo-Anyanwu 2009:63).

The findings also show that the reason for most students' involvement in social network is for non academic purpose thought, they sometime use it for finding solution to assignment. The reason for students using social networksite for non academic purpose is in line with Adomi and Ejirefe (2012:75) who stated that majority of students use facebook for connecting with friends/relatives and others, also as a platform for keeping in touch with close acquaintance.

Most of the students rely on social networking for their academic purpose only when they have an assignment to write, or test or exam, table 4 depicted these as their reason for using it academically. This means that they specifically use it to provide answer and not learning.

Findings on effect of social network site on students' reading habit clearly show that despite the positive academic advantage of social network site many students use it mostly for non academic purpose. Table 8 depicted that most students are distracted while in class or reading because of their involvement in using the social media. This study can be related to Jacobsen and Forste's (2011:151) finding which indicates that social media use is negatively associated with lower grades.

The study realizes that, most of the students use social media as an entertainment media that is attractive and which provides a good way to release pressure. To some extent this reduced their focus on learning and reading time. Ofuani and Gbenedio (2009:66) noted that "reading empowers the mind, broadens the reader's vision and deepens his mind. It widens students' horizon, thought and knowledge and wisdom are obtained among others. However, a student that does not read extensively may be narrow minded and thought less"

Conclusion

Most of the student' respondents in Ahmadu Bello University have taken advantage of social networking sites to enhance their social relationship with friends, relations and others. They also use the social media to share and exchange academic information. Despite these benefits derivable from social network sites, some of the students are of the opinion that the social media site has distracted them in classroom and their reading habit because of the time spent chatting.
Since technology is the main order of the day, the study therefore concluded that social networking could be used wisely to source for vital information that would be of great benefit to the student and the society of large.

Recommendation

The following are recommended based on the findings of this study:

1. Proper orientation on when and how to operate social network sites such as facebook, Whatsapp and so on should be given to students in tertiary institutions by the guidance and counselling unit.
2. Since most of these students are fond of using social networking sites, lecturer should engage students with more assignment that will make them have less time for browsing the social network sites.
3. The social media, being an effective tool of transformations, should be used to intensify enlightenment campaign on the negative effect on student as future leaders. This campaign should be reinforced by way of interpersonal communication among individuals and groups in schools and gathering places, the message should be disseminated through music, drama, lectures displays and other forms of interaction.

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