Social Media Technologies, Knowledge and Utilization among Undergraduates of Nigerian Universities: A Study of Enugu State University of Science and Technology

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Abstract

In this study, he researchers set out to work on four specific research objectives. These include: determining the nexus between the undergraduate's social networking knowledge level and technological utilization ability; Identifying the major factors that prompted the use of social networking sites among undergraduate's; Examining the relationship between social networking sites usage and academic input of the undergraduates and investigating the impact of the social networking sites on the learning behaviour of undergraduates. The study used questionnaire to collect the primary data, while the secondary data were sourced from textbooks, journals, magazine, and the Internet etc. A sample of 400 people was drawn from the undergraduates of Enugu State University of Science and Technology, ESUST. The emanating data were analyzed using simple percentages, tables and charts. Four hypotheses were formulated and tested with Chi-square dependency test and correlation. The study found that the knowledge of social media technological is high among undergraduates. Also, it further discovered that knowledge not found in the classroom is a major factor contributing to the use of social media among undergraduates among other findings. It, therefore, recommended thus; that access to new media should be made available to all Nigerian Universities through provision of free Wi-Fi; those new media gadgets such as iPad, Laptops and Palmtop should be given to students at the point of registration and payable through deduction from school fees. That Nigerian Universities should incorporate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) modes of teaching and learning into the tertiary education system so as to enhance students' skills, which will enable them meet the global standard of learning.

Key Words: Social Networking Media, Technology, Knowledge, Utilization, Undergraduate.

Introduction

It is believed that communication is central to human existence. Messages are disseminated among members of the society through the tools of communication. Although, communication predates man, man has been constantly exploring the dynamic nature of communication to improve on his environment (Ogbuoshi, 2020). Scholars (ILO, 2011; Becon, 2011 and Ufuophu-Biri and Ijeh 2021) note that since the evolution of communication, man has continually created ways of passing across his feelings, thoughts, and actions to his fellow men. From the oral/folk media, to the mass media, and now to what we termed as the social networking (i.e. the new media of our time), man has developed a range of verbal and non-verbal communication methods to harness the complexities of his environment for either sustainable development and/or peaceful coexistence. It is also quite startling how social networking sites usage has grown over the past few years. While comparing the media strength in drawing followers, Hailes, (2010) states that, the radio had attracted fifty million listeners in thirty-eight years, while television took thirteen years to attract the same number of viewers. Astonishingly, it took only four years for the social networking sites to attract fifty million audiences. It is obvious and indeed noticeable today that the world has shrunk from the much talked about global village to a 'global family', primarily facilitated by social networking sites enabled communication. Baziel (2008) explains that social networking site as Internet-based technologies, "that permit people to share content, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives among themselves". More especially, it enables individuals to be the creator of their own contents as well.

The advent of the ICT has, no doubt, turned the world into a global village and the use of the Internet enabled communication has become indispensable to several people, most especially, the young adults. Social networking sites emerged as a result of this phenomena thereby, making communication among friends and relations much easier than what it used to be (Pempe, Yermolajeva & Calvert, 2008 as cited in Ezekiel, Okpanachi & Edegoh, 2013). Many of these young adults, who are mostly students, use the sites to communicate with families, friends and strangers as well. Leveraging on the advantages of this technological trend, many students have integrated these social networking sites into their daily practices. Accordingly, Dominick (2009) stated that social networking sites represent the greatest advancements in the world of the ICT thus, it has become a useful instrument in uniting the world. Scholars also share the same opinion (Ezekiel, Okpanachi & Edegoh, 2013; Ufuophu-Biri & Ijeh 2021).

Udeze (2005) citing Marshall Mcluhan described the term "global village" as the smallness of a village setting that allows everybody to know what is happening to every other person. It is generally known that the Internet offers many opportunities to seek, process, share, and store information. Agba (2001) argued that social networking sites makes information seeking, processing, and sharing easy, by making it possible to present messages in ways that is easy for the eye to grasp, using graphics, pictures, and film strips. Social networking function on Web 2.0 platform and this Web 2.0 software supports group interaction and allows people to communicate with each other often on these sites irrespective of their geographical locations (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007; Crook & Harrison, 2008). Social media resource can be divided into three categories. The first category emphasizes content sharing and organizing sites like Delicious, Flicker, YouTube, and readers. The second category encompasses content creation and editing websites such as Bloger, Google Doc, Wikipedia and World Press. The third category includes social network sites (SNS) like Facebook, Ning, Myspace, and Orkut, etc. that serve as online communities, which enable users to connect with old and new friends, and or share ideas and resources.

The recent proliferation of social networking site has increased the number of its users, hence, accommodating more youths, who are largely university undergraduates. Its use is so engulfing that virtually all students gives in their attention to the social media activities. Most times, so many students could easily get distracted by the social media contents while lectures were going on in classes, laboratories or lecture theatres. Likewise, students complement the use of social networking sites with their study as well as incarrying out all sorts of school activities. Pinging and chatting is also not also left out among the youths even in the middle of spiritual activities in churches or mosques. All these rigours are aimed at bringing to view the heavy use of social networking sites among the youths, especially the university undergraduates. Hence, one would wonder about the influence of the social networking sites on the learning behaviour of university students.

Statement of Research Problem

The rate at which we hear or know about social networking sites ought to have translated into high technological knowledge and academic impact. However, available evidence seem not to have reflected this. Notwithstanding, as at April, 2022, social networking users figure stood at: Facebook (2.912 billion monthly users world-wide); LinkedIn (100 million users per day); Twitter (465 million

tweets per day); YouTube (2.562 billion viewers per day); WhatsApp (2 billion monthly active users) and Instagram (1.452 billion active monthly users). The highest patronage of these sites lies in people between the age of 18 and 29 years (see https://datareportal.com/social-media-users). It is a known fact today that Nigerians are among the top users of social networking sites. Contemporarily, the mobility nature of the Internet enhanced devices makes it possible that the individuals always have access to this facility, anywhere, any day and any time.

In any case, all the social networking platforms ranging from YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, Linkedln, Black Planet, Friendster, and Live Journal, among others, are in fierce competition. The university undergraduates, being the youths, are part of the major users of these social media platforms. Notwithstanding, is there any relationship between social networking knowledge level and technological utilisation by the students? Also, what could be the major factor that prompted students to use social networking sites? In a nation popularised with half-baked graduate syndrome one wish to ask of the impact of social networking on students learning behaviour among others. The problem statement of this study is informed by our attempt to provide answers to the few questions raised above.

The main objective of this study was to determine the Nigerian undergraduates' knowledge level of social networking sites and their technological abilities to utilize it.

Conceptual Literature Review

People, especially scholars, see things from different perspectives and this is likened to the blind man's perception of the elephant as the trunk of a tree (when he felt the legs of the animal); a big fan (when he felt the ear of the animal) as a wall (when he touched the body of the elephant). The term social media keeps changing and as such it is difficult to assign a fixed definition to it. This differentiation was recognized by Jacka and Scott (2011), who argued that there is no single recognized definition for social media. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of Internet-based applications that is built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which enables allow the creation and exchange of user-generated contents. Another definition of social media is that it is a communication channel which is very popular, extremely fast and broad. It has proven to be highly effective as well as trusted by billions of people to share and discover content concerning individuals, brands, information, entertainment and knowhow (Dearborn, 2014).

The central message in all these definitions underpin the fact that social media involves some form of communication between individuals over the Internet. Social media began in the late 1990s with the first recognized social media network called "Six Degrees" in 1997. This technology had enabled people to upload profiles and make friends. Social media is considered to be the fastest growing web application in the 21st century and this rapid development is being backed by technological advancement (Heyam, 2014). Mankind has enormously benefited and continues to benefit from it and as such cannot underestimate its importance as far as communication is concerned. Today, social media has taken a new dimension and has encouraged more participation through the introduction of mobile phones that support social networks applications.

Speaking on the New Media and University Education advancement, it was clear by the mid-2000s that social networking sites such as Facebook allow students to develop campus-based social capital and social support networks which facilitate their integration into university life (Dominick, 2011), thus enabling new forms of community-based collaborative learning (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007). Indeed, Vanden-Boogart (2006) in their opinion they "called it community learning; communicative learning or collaborative learning, at its heart, learning is a social process". Crook (2008) argues that a dynamic sense of community is formed from the solidarity of belonging to the same educational group because each member shares one common learning goal or purpose. Indeed, it is well documented that social software supports group interaction toward establishing communities, creating and exchanging content (Haefligeret al., 2011; Von Krogh, 2012 in Wolters, 2018). Additionally, Wauter (2018) research conducted by Schroeder et al. (2010) details how social software helped students to build valuable relationships within a course or programme. This raises the question: is Facebook indirectly creating a learning community connecting students with students? According to Wauter (2018) "Facebook fosters micro-communities of people who share interests or partake in similar activities, and the question is whether this kind of effective social networking might be similarly extended from the personal, into the realm of the academic" (p. 193).

The Concept of Learning Behaviour among Students was thus established as there are different approaches to learning behaviours by many psychologists based on their perception of the concept. Hence, Murphy (1967) talks about learning behavior when he states that learning is any activity that can develop an individual in any respect (good or bad) and makes his/her other behaviour and

experience different from what that would have otherwise been. It is evidenced that learning brings or introduces progressive change in the behaviour of an individual who is involved in the learning process. Mangel (2011) defines learning as a process that brings relatively permanent changes in the behavior of a learner through experience or practice. Learning is not absolutely permanent since the habits we pick up, the interest we develop, the skills we acquire, the knowledge we gain as a result of learning at different accessions can be unlearned, modified or replaced by some other set of differently acquired behavior (Mangal, 2011, p. 143; Obiageli and Ngozi, 2011, p. 105). On the average, a quite number of scholars appear to base their explanations and agreement on few issues, which are learning is adaptation or adjustment. One knows how to relate with a new environment such as new culture, new people, and new values. Another agreement is that they see learning as an improvement. When one learns anew thing, they never remain the same, rather they improve from the old way of doing things to the new way of life. Thus, learning is an all-time process. Everything we do requires learning. In a nutshell, given the propositions above, scholars projected that learning is universal, continuous and covers all living creatures.

Wolters (2018) is opinion that when it comes to social media and groups participation, it is easier for groups to self-assemble and for individuals to contribute to group effort without requiring formal management. Social media has furnished people with tools for gathering people together and getting things done. In other words, the new technology enables new kinds of group forming. In contemporary society, Facebook groups facilitate easier formation of groups for people. People collectively advocate creating digital spaces so as to harness participation of a group of people with similar interests. University students' social media use and purpose as well as social media use by undergraduate university students has increased rapidly in the past 10 years. The availability of high-speed Internet broadband connection, with massive use of desktop computers, laptops, e-readers, tablets and smart phones, has enabled millions of undergraduates to creatively engage in social media, text messaging, blogging, content sharing, online learning, and much more. Among adults living in the United States of America (USA) aged between 18 and 29 years, social media use has grown from 12% in 2005 to 90% in 2015, consistent with the adoption of smartphone technology (Perrin, 2015).

A study conducted across 15 countries identified students in higher education as being responsible for increasing the use of mobile computing devices, such as

tablets and smartphones, with 67% attributing the technologies as being a factor in their academic success (Dahlstrom, Walker & Dziuban, 2013). Recent survey has revealed that a growing number of today's undergraduates often referred to as "Net-Generation" students consume approximately 9 hours of social media per day with most of them using social network sites (SNS) with Blogging and Microblogging tools (Ezekiel, Okpanachi & Edegoh 2011). The students also consume more time on social media particularly on chatting platforms such as Facebook Chat, 2go, WhatSAPP and Google chat than they do face-to-face with their friends.

Empirical Review

Research has examined the general impact of technology on academic achievement. Positive and negative effects of technology on achievement have been documented. Mensah and Nizam (2016) carried out a survey with the aim of examining "the impact of use of social media on students' academic performance in Malaysian Tertiary Institutions". Sample of 102 students from Erican College were served copies of questionnaire and the result revealed that there is correlation between the use of social media and positive impact on their academic performance.

Abdulahi, Samadi and Gharleghi (2014) carried out a study to identify "the negative effects of social network sites such as Facebook among Asia Pacific University scholars". A total number of 152 questionnaires was distributed to students of the chosen university to examine and study the effects. The results show that there are positive and negative effects of Facebook on academic performance of the students. Owosu and Afua (2016) examined "social media impact on students' academic life". The study implored a qualitative approach in assessing these impacts. 10 participants were conveniently sampled and interviewed within a period of two weeks. After studying the phenomena that were of interest to the study, the results reveal that social media contribute a significant quota to the development of the student's academic life. Hence, the emergence of social media is significantly influencing the academic life of students.

Odoh, Eke and Enuma (2015) explored the use of social media with respect to the Nigerian academic/learning environment. The study implored a qualitative approach in assessing these impacts. 420 participants were conveniently sampled and interviewed within a period of two weeks. After studying the phenomena that were of interest to the study and transcribing the various responses of the

participants, the results revealed that social media have great potential for academic and learning purposes.

Theoretical framework found most appropriate for this study is the uses and gratification theory. Ohaja (2003) argues that knowledge does not exist in a vacuum. In every discipline, there is a body of theories that provide the explanation for observable phenomena in that field. This was why Denis McQuail (1983) argues that a theory consists of a set of ideas of a varying status and origin, which seeks to explain or interpret some phenomenon. The theory, as propounded by Katz (1970), placed emphasis on how and why the audience use the media. The theory addresses questions such as why do people use media and what do they use them for? He presupposes that an individual also may use the media for related purposes such as personal guidance, relaxation, adjustment, information and identity formation. The uses and gratifications theory has relevance to this study because the use of social media channels by the students under study depends largely on the specific satisfaction they derive from it. The import is that the students pay attention to media productions or services strictly on the bases of satisfactions they derive from such contents.

Methodology

The present study adopted quantitative research method (survey) and evaluative questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection to verify the level of the new media technology knowledge and utilization among undergraduates of Enugu State University (ESUST). ESUST has the population of 34, 769 students. Taro Yamani sample size formula was adopted and a sample of 400 was drawn. The questionnaire was randomly distributed across the ten (10) faculties and 48 departments, one department was selected from each of the faculties therein. After the hypothetical test, the emanating data was analyzed using chi-square (X^2) tests of dependency and correlation through Special Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) which was used for the electronic analysis.

Data Presentation analysis and result:

Table 4.3: Summary of questionnaire distributed and returned

Distributed	Returned	Percentage Returned
400	395	98.75%

Source: Field survey: 2022

Out of 400 copies of questionnaires distributed, the indication on Table 4.3 shows that 395 respondents returned their questionnaires, representing 98.75% response rate. Therefore, the analysis is based on the 395 copies of questionnaires duly completed and returned.

Table 4.7: if you have access to social networking site, through what gadget in particular

Variable	No of respondents	Percentage %
Phone	280	70.8%
Ipad	72	18.22%
Laptop	36	9.11%
Windows	7	1.77%
Total	395	100

Source: Field survey: 2022

Table 4.7 shows that those who have access to social networking site through phones are higher as they represent 280 respondents corresponding 70.8% of the total respondents, 72 respondents use Ipad which represents 18.22%, 36 respondents use their laptop which corresponding to 9.11% while 7 respondents use their normal office desk top or window system to access new media.

Table 4.10: Do you use social networking sites for academic purposes?

Response	**Number of respondents**	**Percentage (%)**
Yes	245	62%
No	150	37.9%
Total	**395**	**100**

Source: Field survey: 2022

Table 4.10 shows that 245 respondents representing 62% of the respondents uses social networking technology mainly to improve their academic knowledge while 150 respondents representing 37.9% of the respondents do not use it only for academic related issues.

Table 4.11: How often do you use social networking sites for various purposes?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Very Often	98	24.81%
Often	191	48.35%
Not often	69	17.47%
Not Very often	37	9.37%
Total	**395**	**100**

Source: ***Field Survey: 2022***

Table 4.11 answers the question on how often does the respondent visit social networking sites for other purposes and it shows that the respondents visit online often, this is represented by 191 respondents representing 48.35%. 98 respondents answered that they visit very often, this is represented by 24.81% of the respondent, 69 respondents representing 17.47% said not often while 37 respondents representing 9.37 said not very often.

Table 4.12: **Do you agreed that there is relationship between the undergraduate students social networking knowledge level and the extent of its technological utilization?**

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agreed	224	56.7%
Agreed	43	10.8%
Disagreed	101	25.5%
Strongly Disagreed	27	6.8%
Total	**395**	**100**

Source: Field Survey: 2022

Table 4.12 seek to answer the question on whether the respondent agreed that there is a relationship between the undergraduates social networking knowledge level and the extent of its technological utilization. 224 respondents representing 56.7% strongly agreed, 43 respondent representing 10.8% also agreed while 101 respondents representing 25.5% disagreed, 27 respondents representing 6.8% strongly disagreed. This implies that 67.5% responses are positive on the issue while 32.5% responses are negative.

Table 4.13: **Do you think there is relationship between the use of social networking site and academic input of undergraduate students?**

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	224	56.7%
Somehow	101	25.5%
Not at all	43	10.8%
Can't say	27	6.8%
Total	**395**	**100**

Source: Field Survey: 2022

Table 4.13 seeks to elicit answers on the purpose of using social networking sites by the respondent. The result shows that 224 respondents representing 56.71% answered yes, this implies that they use social networking sites to solve academic related problems, 101 respondents representing 25.57% answered somehow, 43 respondents representing 10.8% said not at all while 27 respondents representing 6.84% couldn't give their opinion on the issue.

Table: 4.19: Do you think social networking knowledge level and its technology have impact on your learning behaviour as undergraduate students?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	294	74.4%
No	7	1.7%
To Some extent	86	21.7%
Can't say	9	2.2%
Total	**395**	**100**

Source: Field survey: 2022

Table 4.19 shows that good number of the respondents representing 294 (74.4%) are those whose social networking knowledge level and its technology have direct impact on their learning behaviour, 7 respondents representing (1.7%) says No, 86 respondents representing 21.7% said to some extent, while 9 respondents representing 2.2% says they can't really say.

Discussion of Results

In research question one, which seek to investigate the relationship between undergraduates' social networking knowledge level and the extent of its

technological utilization. 224 respondents representing (56.7%) strongly agreed and 43 respondents representing 10.8% also agreed, this implies that 67.5% of the total respondents responded positively on the issue. This data was supported by literature reviewed on *University Students' Social Media Use and Purpose.* It argued that social networking knowledge, technology and utilization by undergraduates of university has increased rapidly in the past 10 years due to the availability of high speed Internet broadband connection with massive use of desktop computers, laptops, e-readers, tablets and smart phones enable millions of undergraduates to creatively engage in social networking sites, text messaging, blogging, content sharing, online learning, and much more (Perrin, 2015).

Research question two seeks to address the issue on major factor that prompted the use of social networking site among undergraduates. The data gathered from table 4.10 and 4.11 respectively shows that undergraduates use social networking sites for various purposes however, 245 respondents representing 62% said they use it mainly for academic purposes. 150 respondents representing 37.9% said they use it for general purposes. The correlation test rejects the alternate hypothesis and upholds the null hypothesis since the test yielded significant result on the purposes/factor that prompted the use of social networking site by the undergraduates.

Research question three was focused on the relationship between the use of social networking sites and academic input of undergraduates. 224 respondents representing 56.7% of the total respondents responded 'Yes', 101 respondents representing 25.5% also responded somehow. This implies that a total of 82.2% responses are positive. This means that there is a relationship. This was supported by the literature review in 2.6. A study conducted across 15 countries identified students in higher education as being responsible for increasing the use of mobile computing devices, such as tablets and smartphones, with 67% attributing the technologies as being a factor in their academic success (Dahlstrom, Walker & Dziuban, 2013). The dependency test conducted on this shows that increase in social networking site usage leads to an increase in academic in put at significant level of $p< 0.01$.

Research question four which seeks to address the question on how the use of social networking technologies impact on the students learning behaviour. The data gathered in table 4.19 shows that social networking technology impact on students learning behaviour as undergraduates. 294 respondents representing

74.4% says 'Yes' that it has impact on their learning behaviour, 86 respondents representing 21.7% also said it is to some extent; 7 respondents representing 1.7% said 'No', it has no impact while 9 respondents representing 2.2% could not say anything on that whether it has impact or not. The result of the one-sample, therefore, shows that there is a significant impact between social networking site usage and students learning behavioural change which implied that social networking usage influences students learning behaviour. Therefore, the present study rejects null hypothesis and accepts the alternative.

Conclusions

This empirical study has investigated social media technologies, knowledge and utilization among undergraduates in Nigerian universities. Specifically, the study is focused on the undergraduates of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUST). It was noted from the survey that a lot has to be done to improve the technical support (availability of free Wi-Fi in the campuses of Nigerian universities). This will not only enhance the academic performance alone but will prepare Nigeria's undergraduates to compete with their counterparts in other parts of the world. Comparatively, social networking sites availability and usage provides students with the opportunity to interact with scholars in their area of expertise and have access to numerous materials to upgrade their knowledge. Subsequently, this development within their study areas prepares them better for future academic related challenges. Finally, accessibility and effective usage of social networking sites will bring down the cost of education in Nigeria since **₦3,000** to **₦4,000** worth of data can comfortably download a full semester study materials and **₦1,500** to **₦2,000** data maintain their monthly usage. When made available, therefore, it will boost knowledge capacity per individual student, which will lead to high productivity index and thereby enhance national development.

Recommendations

Following the findings in this study, the following recommendations were put forward.

1. From the foregoing, since high knowledge level of social networking increases the technological utilization and academic performance, this study recommends that there is a need for undergraduates to have access to the Internet, which is the heartbeat of all social networking connectivity within the campuses of Nigerian universities so as to enhance undergraduates' academic performance.

2. That the undergraduates should use social networking technology available to close knowledge gaps that exist in their various fields of specialisation through constant surfing of the Internet, especially, with focus on their respective discipline since closing knowledge gap is a major factor that prompted their social networking usage among others.
3. University managements should strive to transcribe social networking knowledge and technology into effective usage.
4. That ICTs gadgets such as Ipad, Laptop, Palmtops etc. should be provided to students at the point of registration and be made payable through student's school fees in all Nigerian universities to enhance access and use. Undoubtedly, its impact in students learning behaviour would not be over emphasized.
5. That students should be active users of social networking sites with a sort of control to enable them stay focused within the academic purview.
6. Issuance of assignment and submission of same should be made electronically. That will to incorporate ICTs based learning in tertiary education system (blended learning) and, by extension, it will enable Nigeria's undergraduates meet up with the global demands in terms of skills and performance.

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