

USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR
ACADEMIC LIFE OF CHRISTIAN STUDENTS IN AHMADU BELLO
UNIVERSITY ZARIA

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the use of social networking sites and its Implications for academic life of Christian students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. The objective of the study was to examine the influence of social networks on the academic development of male and female Christian students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Research question and hypothesis were formulated in line with the objective and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Survey research design was used for the study. Questionnaire was the instrument used to gather data and was analysed using statistical package for social sciences. The study revealed that the use of social networking sites have major implications on the academic life of Christian students. As the use of Social Networks by Christian students could be a double edge sword with positive and negative influence on their academic life depending on the motive and usage. The study therefore recommended the need for the University to have an internet desk officer who could help to regulate the Social Network accessible to students within the University's connectivity.

Keywords: Academic, Christian students, Implications, life and Social networks

Introduction

This research focuses on the use of social networking sites and its implications for academic life of Christian Students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Social Network sites provides users with access to source of information, promote virtual interpersonal interaction, platform for teaching and learning (Mccarroll & Curran, 2013). Social Network sites have both positive and negative influence depending on motive of usage by users. In recent years, Social networks have experienced massive growth in membership particularly among university students. Most of the young adults of university age have active profiles on social networking sites which constitute an integral part of daily communication practices for many university students (Dahlstrom, DeBoor, Grunwald, & Vockley 2011). These social networking sites enable people to get connected and also provide opportunities to learn from one another. It enables them to extend friendship from various places such as schools, religious places and organizations. Social networking sites enhance learning opportunities among the youths. This advent of social networking platforms may also be impacting the ways in which learners

engage with technology in general. A direct relationship exists between social media usage and the academic performance of students in universities. This situation of technological evolution has resulted in dilemmas such as the setback of real values of life especially among students who form the majority of users interacting through the use of social networking sites. Online social networking sites focus on building and reflecting social associations among people who share interests. With so many social networking sites displayed on the internet, students are sometimes tempted to abandon their homework and reading times in preference for chatting online with friends. Many students are now addicted to the online rave of the moment, with Facebook, Twitter among others (Adebayo 2015).

In recent years, social networks have experienced massive growth in membership particularly among university students. Most of the young adults of university age have active profiles on social networking sites which constitute an integral part of daily communication practices for many university students. These social networking sites enable people to get connected and also provide opportunities to learn from one another. It enables them to extend friendship from various places such as schools, religious places and organizations. Social networking sites enhance learning opportunities among the youths. This advent of social networking platforms may also be impacting the ways in which learners engage with technology in general. A direct relationship exists between Social media usage and the academic performance of students in universities. This situation of technological evolution has resulted in dilemmas such as the setback of real values of life especially among students who form the majority of users interacting through the use of social networking sites. Online social networking sites focus on building and reflecting social associations among people who share interests. With so many social networking sites displayed on the internet, students are sometimes tempted to abandon their homework and reading times in preference for chatting online with friends. This attitude seems to have gender (Male and Female) variations and its implications on students' academic performance as some of them use it mostly for entertainment, while others use it for communication and information purposes. Their use of social network has become rampant and has great implications on academic performance of male and female university students. Many students are now addicted to the online rave of the moment, with Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp among others to a great extent affects students' academic performance (Ezekiel, Okpanachi & Edegoh 2013; Salvation & Adzharuddin 2014). It is this development that motivated the study on "use of social networking sites and its Implications for academic life of Christian students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria".

Statement of the Problem

The world today is a global market in which the internet is an important channel/source of information. The advent of Social Networks promote interaction with friends and family; offer teachers, librarians, and students' valuable access to educational support and materials; facilitate social and political change and disseminates useful information rapidly. Social networks are also being used by teachers and students as a communication tool. It is observed

that many students are already using a wide range of social networking sites. Teachers have begun to familiarize themselves with this trend in order to leverage student interests in relation to curriculum content. Some of these include creating chat-room forums and groups to extend classroom discussion to posting assignments, tests and quizzes, assisting with homework outside the classroom setting.

Since the advent of Social Network sites in the 1990s, the academic performance of students seems to be facing a lot of neglect and challenges. The use of social networking sites seems to be a deviation, distraction and divided attention between social networking activities and students' academic work. Some students give more attention to social networks than they do to their studies. It seems students' addictiveness and exposure to social network and the influence of social network as a medium of interaction between students have imparted on their academic performance. Instead of students reading their books, they probably spend their time chatting and making friends via the social network and this could be a contributory factor that affects their academic performance negatively because when you do not read, there is no way you can perform well academically. It is a common sight to see students chatting in sensitive and highly organized places like church, mosque and lecture venues. Some are so carried away that even as they are walking along the high way, they keep chatting.

However, it is also observed by the researcher that some Christian students in federal universities seems to exhibit the habit of spending more time on social network sites that take away their attention from other relevant activities which they need to engage themselves with. These include a range of activities like going to the library or tutorial in the departments and going for fellowship in the church. Some of them also, are fond of disclosing information about themselves that ought to be private to the public such as having problems in their various relationships with boy/girl friends or spouses and uploading nude's pictures. Some go as far as saying cruel words to their fellow students and friends. It is in recognition of these problems that this study on "implications of Social Networks on Christian Students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria" sets to find out if these behaviours are benefiting in the Academic, life of the students.

Objective of the Study

The study aimed at examining the implications of social networks on the academic life of Christian students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

Research Question

What are the implications of social networks on the academic life of Christian students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference on the implications of social networks on the academic life of male and female Christian students in Federal Universities of North-West geo-political zone Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

Conceptual Clarification

This study focused on implications of social networks on the academic life of Christian students. The section reviewed literature on the concept of social network, features of social networks, and Influence of Social Networks on the Academic development of its Users.

The Concept of Social Network

Over two decades, many people have had to rethink their connections with and affinities toward others. Since the inception of the Internet in 1991, the ways in which people communicate, as well as the nature of their professional and social lives, have been constantly evolving. However, "it was not until the creation of social media interfaces like Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, and other similar applications that we see such a massive harnessing of the now-pervasive online connectivity in our everyday lives" (Rekhter, 2017).

Social network has emerged as a term frequently used (and variously defined) to describe different types of communication platforms and electronic ways of interacting. Amadi and Ewa (2018) define it as a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, it allows the creation and exchange of user generated content and depend on mobile and Web based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, create, discuss and modify user-generated content. Bryer and Zavatarro (2011) saw it as technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberations across stakeholders. Anjugu (2013) describes social network as a group of internet-based application that allows the creation and exchange of users generated content, while Ezeah *etal* (2013) define it as modern interactive communication channels through which people connect to one another, share ideas, experiences, pictures, messages and information of common interest. From the above it is clear that Social Networks implies the use of visible profiles and reveals a public display of connections, the potential for interactions, sharing of ideas, experiences and information of common interest.

Features of Social Networks

Nowadays, Social Network platforms can be a very powerful weapon for anyone who wants to explore or want to demonstrate his skills or talent. It is an integral part of the internet, and some may even argue it is the current climate of the internet as a whole. Today, there are scores of social network sites among which are WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, or YouTube. They provide different services, have different fan followings, enjoy

very distinct identity and have some basic features adopted by developers in building their social Network apps. Yet, all of them share some common characteristics such as ease of connectivity, ability to customize individual profile, ability to expand user following, choosing the right platform, easy integration with other social media platforms, privacy and security and notification and news feed (Harnil, 2017 and Sunil, 2017).

Implications of Social Networks on the Academics Development of its Users

Social network is generally used on a regular basis by millions of people across the globe for different reasons. Dahlstrom *et al* (2011) state that the highest number of social network users is made up of youths and most of them are college students. They state further that, In US 90% of college students use Facebook and 37% use Twitter. Given the popularity of social network, a number of universities are using them as marketing program and as a means of communication with current and prospective students and also the alumni. University professors are embracing the social media for effective discussions and dealing with their students in matters relating to academics and improving learning benefits through better communication within and outside the classes (Al-rahmiet *al.*, 2014).

According to Matney and Borland (2009) Facebook is the most popular social tool used by almost 85 to 99% of college students for different purposes. Based on this, curriculum developers have been examining the learning environments and different activities with the aim of internationalizing learning and teaching in the way that will recognize, respect and also usefully engage the ethnic and cultural diversity of students. Social network communication and collaborative technology capabilities such as threaded bulletin boards are used to support internationalized teaching and learning and have been found to be effective in this case (Amadi & Ewa, 2018). The value of interactive social network technologies in high institutions of learning is now recognized in the way that teaching and learning strategies is in an increasingly globalized process. One of the most commonly cited benefits of social media by scholars is their ability to facilitate collaborative learning and communication among peers and with people outside academia (Collins and Hide, 2010; Rowlands, Nicholas, Russell, Canty and Watkinson, 2011).

Bukvova, Kalb and Schoop (2010) state that, social networking has a remarkable advantage in its ability to facilitate information distribution by using Social Networking Sites like blogging tools which are used by many students to disseminate information within their area, their peers and also to everyone globally. The ability to explore unasked questions inside a less formal atmosphere, getting a strong voice through web technology, and getting a location to go over issues within an open, public format are other provisions of social media. Other than communication, scholarly Twitter users cite information distribution among the primary advantages of social networking and have proven to become popular especially in academic conferences (Ross, Terras, Warwick & Welsh, 2011).

Social networking is playing a big role in boosting academic lives of students' especially in social sciences and in education systems as a whole. Many studies have addressed different aspects of using social networking at various academic and social levels. Social network may be applied by schools in various ways, like the Facebook was recommended as a way of communication for getting together with students that will improve their academic success (Amadi & Ewa, 2018). Some students in higher institutions of learning wish their institutions to change their means of communication to social networks for strengthening class instruction because it is where they spend most of the time. Social network usage enhances educational access and interaction and it fills the learning gap informally between students and the instructors (Bull, Thompson, Searson, Garofalo, Park, Young & Lee, 2008).

Cao and Hong (2011) state that it is common among students in higher level of education to Integrate social network for both entertainment and learning. College students use various social network applications to the extent that it is now an indispensable part of their everyday life for personal and learning purposes. Mobile technologies and smart phones interweave social networking sites in their palms and at their simple and customized command (Dahlstrom 2012). In view of this, Moran, Seaman, and Tinti-Kane (2012) state that time spent on social media is beyond the required time, this may lead to plagiarism and privacy issues and in most cases contribute minimally to actual student learning outcomes. They often view the use of social network as not conducive for better learning outcomes. In the same vein, Makena (2014) states that most students invest time and efforts on social networks in building relationships around on shared interests and on same grounds. These attitudes have led to incorporate social network towards the conventional interaction and dialogue between students and teachers causing most of the difficulties faced in education. Some students even welcome the capability of social network services to provide teachers a forum for simple networking and positive networking with students.

However, there are challenges accompanying the use of social network for Academic purposes. Rowlands *etal* (2011) reported that one of the problems associated with using social networking sites for scientific studies is the possibility of students spending a lot of time on them and denying other important aspects the time they deserve. Rithika and Selvarag (2013) also pointed out that even though social network can increase student learning through interactions, but challenges also arise when social network Media are incorporated into an academic course.

From the aforementioned, the believe that students are familiar with and agree to using certain types of social networking sites can cause educators to inadvertently fail to provide the resources necessary to support student usage and learning. When social network is used for an educational purpose, students incorporate the technology into their lives in a way that may differ from the intentions of the course instructor. For example, off-topic or non-academic discussions occur on social media because of its primary design

as a social networking tool. Further, as a student's age increases, the frequency of off topic discussions also increases. This indicates that while social media may encourage broader discussions of course content, older students may spend more time than younger students engaging in unrelated discussions (Amadi & Ewa, 2018).

In line with the above, Rutherford (2010) opines that, the key advantage of using social network to aid learning and teaching can only be fully achieved with the existence of clear rules that stipulate the dos and don'ts so as to ensure that whatever students engage in are aimed at gaining the educational benefits of social media. In most cases the prospective benefits have been achieved where institutions of higher learning regulate to a certain level the use of social media (Kear, 2011). However, due to the rapid growth of usage of social networking sites many institutions of learning have not created strategies for using social networks this is dangerous and should be revisited.

Eke *et al* (2014) has noted that social networks have positive impacts on the academic's life of users. In a world where online engagement is important for businesses, social networks helps users to become experts at developing a sense of internet presence, knowing how to interact with others on the internet and how to use basic and even complex functions of the internet, people use social networking sites to interact with their peers and even teachers about class-related subjects; Social Networking sites can facilitate learning and skill development outside formal learning environments by supporting peer to peer learning, skills collaboration and diverse cultural expression. The knowledge and skill young people are learning through are directly relevant to the 'participatory web' in which 'user generated content is now integral in a rapidly developing online business model that capitalizes on the social networks, creativity and knowledge of its users; and this means that new business models are expected to emerge. Eke *et al* (2014) further states that Social networking sites help in schools and universities programs. Such social networking sites for example, blogs help to leverage or complement formal educational activities and enhancing outcomes. These sites are also used to extend opportunities for formal learning across geographical contexts. Thus, social networks can enhance the interactions of marginalized young people with their teacher and increase their confidence in educational activities.

Moon (2011) states that social network has negative impact on users. According to him, the more people use social networking sites like facebook, the more it affects their academic performance. Similarly, Oye (2012) notes that most of the younger students use social networking sites mainly for socializing activities, rather than for academic purpose. Oye (2012) further observed that most of the people do feel that social networking sites have more positive impact on their academic performance. In the same vein Shana (2012), states that students use social network mainly for making friends and chatting, only few of the students use social network for academic purpose. Salvation and Adzharuddin (2014) state that much time spent on Social Network has displacement effect on academic activities since majority of students use social networking sites for socializing purposes, they therefore tend to spend

more time for socializing rather than learning. Thus, excessive use of Social Network Sites reduces academic performance since time meant for studies is used on non-academic issues like chatting and making friends. In the same vein with Yang, Salvation and Adzharuddin (2014), Ezekiel, Okpanachi and Edegoh (2013) assert that students' access and exposure to social networking sites like Facebook is to a very great extent affecting students' academic performance negatively due to their usage of time meant for studies on sending irrelevant messages and chatting with friends.

Rather (2013, p. 69) avers that:

The Social networking sites and blogs which are being used today with tremendous passion and zeal have transformed the way of using internet in recent years by describing online tools and utilities which allow users for communication, participation and collaboration of information online. Today's young generation, especially teens and youth are using technology through innovative ways due to which they are referred to as Millennials and have changed the ways we think, work and communicate even though they are in formative years of their life. Today's youth because of these social networking sites have become technology addicts and are quite introverted.

From the above it is clear that widespread use of social network among students may compromise academic performance thereby affecting students' academic outcomes due to too much time spent texting, chatting on cell phones to posting status updates on social networks.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design and the target population was Christian students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. A sample population of 356 respondents out of the population of 3,555 was used for the study. Structural questionnaire was the instrument used for collection of data. 356 copies of vetted questionnaire were distributed to the respondents randomly selected and 327 representing 91.9% were duly filled and returned. The data was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20. The mean score for the items were based on a four point scale and the midpoint average for decision was fixed at 2.5. A mean score of 2.5 and above implies that the respondents agreed with the notion of the item, while a mean score lower than 2.5 suggest that the respondents did not agree.

Results

From the data collected, the perception is that the implications of Social networks on the academic life of Christian students are both positive and negative depending on the motive of usage.

Research Question

What are the implications of social networks on the academic life of Christian students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria?

Table1: Opinions of students on implications of social network on their academic life

Sn	Influence of social network on academic development	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1	Frequent use of Social Networking results in lower grades among students.	110	144	52	21	3.05
2	Engagement of students in academic discussions on social networking sites improves performance.	113	181	23	10	3.21
3	Students' engagement on social networking sites distracts them from studying.	102	133	65	27	2.95
4	Students who spend more time on social networking sites are likely to perform poorly in their academic activities than those who do not.	80	147	75	25	2.86
5	Social networking sites usage has increased the rate at which students participate in class group discussions	86	180	49	12	3.04
6	Social networking sites usage promotes the use of shorthand writing which affects students writing of good grammar	118	152	49	8	3.16
7	Students' involvement in Social networking sites improves their communication	94	168	49	16	3.04
Aggregate mean						3.04

(Decision mean = 2.50)

Table 1 shows that the respondents agreed with items that the use of social networks by Christian students have both negative and positive implications on their academic life as it promotes the use of short hand writing which affects their writing of good grammar, frequent usage results in lower grades among students, some students spend more time on social network which causes distraction from their studies leading to poor performance in their academic development, and use of social networks have increase the rate at which some students participate in class group discussions leading to improvement in their academic performance and communication.

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference on the implications of social networks on the academic life of male and female Christian students in Federal Universities of North-West geo-political zone Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

Table 2 shows a two sample t-test procedure on implications of Social Networks use on academic life of Christian students

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	t-value	Df	p-value
Male	159	3.05	0.468	0.037	0.268	325	0.789
Female	168	3.04	0.465	0.036			

(t-critical = 1.96, $p > 0.05$)

The result in Table 2 did not reveal significant difference in the influence of Social Network utilization between male and female Christian Students. The observed t-value in the test was 0.268 with a p-value of 0.789 ($p > 0.05$) at $df = 325$. With this observation, the null hypothesis that stated, there is no significant difference in the implications of Social Networks use on academic life of male and female Christian students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria is therefore retrained. The result implied that there is no gender effect on whatever influence of Social Network use relating to academic life of students in the University.

Findings

From the survey work, bellow are the findings in this research.

1. Frequent use of social networks affects some students writing of good grammar, causes distraction from their studies leading to lower grades and poor performance in academic development.
2. Use of social networks have increase the rate at which some Christian students participate in class group discussions leading to improvement in their academic performance and communication.

Discussion of Findings

Implications of social networks on the academic life of Christian students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria

From the analysis of data collected, this study found that Social Network usage has major implications on academic development of male and female Christian students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. The implications as obtained in the study were both positive and negative. For example, it was found that students were of the view that use of Social Network sites results in reduction of some students grades through distraction, use of substandard grammar and spending more time on non-academic related activities in such Social Network sites. At the same time the students were found to have agreed that use of Social Network sites have positive implications in improving their academic performances through access to information and sharing with colleagues in the Social Network sites. No significant difference on the level of implication of Social Network usage on the academic development of the male and female students in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria was found.

The finding here reflected the report of Al-rahim *et al* (2014) that a number of universities are using social network sites for effective discussions and dealing with their students in matters relating to academic and improving learning benefits through better communication within and outside the classes. Similarly, Selvarag (2013) reports that social networks can improve students learning through interactions, but challenges also arise when social network media are incorporated into academic course as some students spend a lot of time on social networking sites thereby denying other important aspect the time they deserve. The findings also agree with Makena (2014) that most students invest time and efforts on social networks in building relationships around on shared interests and on same ground. These

attitudes have led to incorporate social network towards the conventional interaction and dialogue between students and teachers causing most of the difficulties faced in education. In the same vein Salvation and Adzharuddin (2014) state that much time spent on Social Network has displacement effect on academic activities since majority of students use social networking sites for socializing purposes, they therefore tend to spend more time for socializing rather than learning. Thus, excessive use of Social Network Sites reduces academic performance since time meant for studies is used on non-academic issues like chatting and making friends.

Conclusion

From the study, it may be concluded that frequent use of Social Networking sites have major positive and negative implications on the academic life of Christian students depending on the motive of usage as it increases the rate at which some Christian students participate in class group discussions leading to improvement in their academic performance and communication. But it also promotes the use of short hand writing which affects students writing of good grammar, causes distraction from studies leading to poor performance and lower grades in academic development.

Recommendations

1. There is need for the university to have an internet desk officer who could help to regulate the Social Network accessible to students within University's connectivity sites.
2. The University might consider harnessing on this engagement with social networks and think of ways to creatively engage students with class content and create awareness for students to address the social network addiction issue.
3. The University could update its application materials to include Social Networking Sites as one of the referral choices, incorporating specific "boxes" for most popular Social Networking Sites, like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. The Professionals who work with SNSs should be able to develop and maintain consistent content.

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