

Good or Bad Influence? Social Media Use and Academic Performance among Students in Selected Tertiary Institutions in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Chike Emma Onwe, Ogbaeja Nelson Iroabuchi, Nwakpa Ifeoma
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Abstract

The power of the social media in the social life of the younger generation seems to be very pervasive. It has also been a matter of debate whether the social media enhance or retard academic performance of students who use them. This study was therefore conceived to examine the impact of Social Media on Academic Performance of students in Ebonyi State. Two institutions were selected for the study - Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo and Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. A total student population of 59,976 in the 2020/2021 session was surveyed from which a total sample size of 398 students were selected using the simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire was used as instrument to collect data from the respondents. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage were used to analyze the demographic data while inferential statistics of Chi-square (χ^2) was used in testing the research hypotheses. The findings show that a great number of students in the two universities studied are exposed to social media. It also found that the students use the social media for social interaction more than they use them for academic purposes. This finding reveals that rather than enhance academic performance among the students, the social media affect their performance negatively. Based on this discovery, it was recommended, among others, that social media should be expanded and new pages created by curriculum developers dedicated exclusively to enhancing learning and other academic activities. Students should be monitored by teachers and parents on how they use these sites so as to create a balance between social media and academic activities of students.

Keywords: Social Media, Student, Academic Performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Academic performance, which is majorly measured by examination results, is one of the major goals of a school. Hoyle (1986) opined that schools are established with the aim of imparting knowledge and skills to those who go through them and behind this is the idea of enhancing good academic performance. This indicates that academic performance or achievement is the outcome of education, the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals. Annie, Howard & Mildred, (1996) noted that academic performance is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessments but there is no general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are most important; procedural knowledge such as skills or declarative knowledge such as facts.

The Social Media have attracted millions of Internet users, who have integrated these sites in their daily lives' routines. Different people use it for different purposes. One of the most prominent uses to which the social media are put is to enhance teaching and learning. According to Asemah and Edegoh (2012), Twitter, Whatsapp and Facebook are among the most popular social media where the students spend most of their time. LinkedIn is another example of Social Network site that is used by many students, instructors and scholars for academic purposes (Alwagait., Shahzad. and Alim, 2014). Social Media Network sites can have positive or negative impacts on students' academic performance. However, poor time management also contributes towards negative academic performance besides excessive social media use.

Social networking sites have been recognized as an important resource for education in our modern society. Given the popularity of SNSs (Social Network Sites), many professors are beginning to use SNSs for enhancing communication with and among students in their classes, class discussions, and teamwork on projects to improve learning outcomes (Alwagai; Shahzad; and Alim, 2014). Students' addiction to SNSs can negatively affect their academic performance.

However, studies indicate that students use social networking sites such as Facebook for fun, to kill time, to meet existing friends or to make new ones (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, 2007). Kuppuswany and Shankar (2010) corroborated that social network websites grab attention of the students and then divert it towards non-educational and inappropriate actions including useless chatting. Furthermore, Olubiyi (2012) noted that nowadays, students are so engrossed in the social media that they are almost 24 hours online, even in the classrooms and lecture halls; it has been observed that some students are always busy pingping, 2going or

facebooking, while lectures are in progress. This ugly trend has resulted in times that ought to be channeled towards learning, academic research and new innovations to be crushed by the passion for meeting new friends online. Distractions from these sites could cause academic setbacks. Obi, Bulus & Sala'at (2012) observed that the use of these sites also affects students' use of English and grammar since it exposes the students to use of short forms of writing words in their chats rooms, they forget and use same in the classroom.

Statement of Problem

The world today is a global market in which the internet is the most important sort of information. Since the emergence of social media sites in the 1990s, it is argued in some quarters that the academic performance of students is facing a lot of neglect and challenges.

Besides, in recent times, social media have been a major stay in the minds of students and the world at large thereby causing a lot of drastic changes in students, teachers and even educational administrators at large. It is, therefore, of great importance to explore some of the trending issues facing students' academic performance as a result of social media. According to other research studies, students at all levels of learning now have divided attention to studies, as a result of available opportunities to be harnessed from social media. Whether these opportunities promote studies is a question that needs to be answered. Thus, the problem this study investigates is the influence of social media networks on the academic performance of the students in Ebonyi State.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the impact of social media on academic performance of students in Ebonyi State. Flowing from this, the specific objectives of the study include:

- i. To determine the frequency of social media use by students of Tertiary Institutions in Ebonyi State.
- ii. To determine the dominant purpose in the use of social media network by students of Tertiary Institutions in Ebonyi State.
- iii. To ascertain the impact of the use of social media on the academic performance of students of Tertiary Institutions in Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

- i. What is the frequency of social media use by students of Tertiary Institutions in Ebonyi State?
- ii. What is the dominant purpose in the use of social media network by students of Tertiary Institutions in Ebonyi State?
- iii. Does the social media have positive or negative impact on the academic performance of students of Tertiary Institutions in Ebonyi State.

Hypotheses

- i Exposure to social media is high among Ebonyi tertiary institution students.
- ii. There is no dominant purpose in the use of social media networks by student of tertiary institutions in Ebonyi state.
- iii Social media affect the academic performance of Ebonyi tertiary institution students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Students' Addictiveness to Social Media

Several researches over the years, have thrown up interesting amount of literature on social media impacts. Works on this area insist that students at higher levels of learning now have divided attention to studies, as a result of available opportunities to be harnessed from social media. Kuss and Griffiths (2011) note that students engage in a variety of activities, some of which may be potentially addictive.

The mass appeal of social media on the Internet could be a cause for concern, particularly when attending to the gradually increasing amount of time students spend online. Undergraduates spend more time on Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and other social media platforms through smartphones that are now in abundance among the youth. Many students cannot go for two-three hours without checking and updating their profiles on these social networks even to the detriment of other activities such as educational and career pursuit. Morahan - Martin and Schumacher (2000) explain social media addiction as the excessive use of the Internet and the failure to control this usage which seriously harms a person's life.

There is an alarming rate of social networking obsession among students today, a trend that could affect their academic, social and spiritual lives negatively if not properly controlled. Many concerned parents have expressed grave concern that they could hardly get the attention of their children and wards, as they seem to have been carried away by the fascinating world of social networks. Some youths are such social freaks that they have now carved out for themselves a world of fantasy and illusion far detached from reality. It is a

common sight to see a youth 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. Attention has been shifted from visible to invisible friends, while important ventures like study and writing are affected in the process. Bello (2012) of the *Sunday Observer*, observes that if the dangerous trend of social media network “obsession” is left unchecked, (it) could further affect an already collapsing education system in Nigeria.

Moon (2011) in a study on “Impact of Facebook on undergraduate academic performance”, observes that social media have negative impact on students. According to the result, the more students use Facebook, the more it affects their academic performance. Similarly, Oye (2012) notes that most students use social networking sites mainly for socializing activities rather than for academic purpose. Oye (2012) further asserts that most of the students feel that social networking sites have more positive impact on their academic performance. This notwithstanding, the fact still remains that the academic component of social networks are not rightly utilized by majority of students. This is evident in the way they deliberately abuse the social media platforms, even to the extent of “utilizing” them for pornography and other related obscene or indecent acts among themselves in an academic environment.

In another study conducted by Shana (2012), it was revealed that students use social media mainly for making friends and chatting. The result showed that only 26 percent of the students (respondents) indicated that they use social media for academic purpose. In fact, the foregoing clearly indicates that social media can have both positive and negative impact on the academic performance of students. This is in line with one of the objectives of this study. Young (2006) in a study titled “The effect of Internet use and social capital on the academic performance of students” observes that the Internet expands its reach to teenagers’ school life. Young further notes that students are more reliant on the Internet to access information that is involved in school life as well as entertainment.

The widespread use of social media by tertiary institution/college students may compromise academic performance. The study is one of the first to explore mechanisms of media effects on academic outcomes. Investigators determined that use of media, from texting to chatting on cell phones to posting status updates on Facebook may lower grades for freshman students (Nauert, 2007). This study, therefore, seeks to provide more in-depth perspectives on the use of social media by not just the freshmen, but every other student of the selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria with a view to determining the extent of the impacts such usage has on the academic performance of the students.

Theoretical Framework

The theory considered most appropriate for this study is the Media equation theory. This theory was propounded by Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass (Asemah and Edegoh, 2012). The theory proposes that media are equal to real life and that electronic media in particular are being given human attributes. In most cases, people talk to computer as if they were talking to human beings. More so, in most cases, you talk to your television as if you are discussing with human beings, hence you talk to television sets as if you are discussing with people. That is, people have personalized the media of mass communication to the extent that they now see them, just the way they see human beings. Proponents of this theory believe that media are equal to real life.

The above assertion aptly captures how the audience members now tend to engage the media in a discussion as they do to human beings. The relevance of the theory to the paper cannot be overemphasized. People treat the media like human beings, so whatever people see in the media, they tend to believe because they respond to the new media, the way they will respond to human beings. Applied to this study, the theory provides an explanation as to how and why social media can have impact on students’ academic performance.

Research Design

The research design adopted for the study is descriptive survey. This design is considered apt because it enables the researcher to generate data through the standardized collection procedures based on highly structured research instrument(s) and well defined study concepts and related variables.

Population of the Study

The population of this research is all the full time undergraduate students in Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo and Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki in the 2020/2021 session. From the available records of the two universities, the schools have a student population of 59,976 undergraduate full time students.

Sample Size

Therefore, to determine the sample size of the study the Taro Yamane’s formula was used thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = expected sample size
 N = total population
 1 is constant
 e = coefficient (margin) of errors (0.05)

solution

$n = \frac{59,976}{1+59,976 (0.05)^2}$
 $n = \frac{59,976}{1+149.9}$
 $n = \frac{59,976}{150.9}$
 $n = 397.5$ approximately 398

Sampling Technique

The researcher adopted the simple random sampling technique in this study. This is because, this sampling technique gives every member of the entire population equal chance of being selected, and it encourages objectivity and eliminates bias on the part of the researcher. 199 copies of the questionnaire were distributed in each of the two universities. This approach ensured that all the elements in the population had equal chance of being selected.

Research Instrument

A well-constructed and self-developed questionnaire titled “Social Media and Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire (SMAAPOS)” was used to get the desired information from the students. The questionnaire was divided into two sections (A and B). Section A was for collection of information on personal data of respondents while Section B consisted of questions that elicited responses from the respondents on the research topic.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher collected the needed data through the use of questionnaire and its administration in the selected campuses. The administration of the questionnaire was carried out by the researcher. A total of 398 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to elicit responses from the students and retrieved on the spot by the researcher. Only three (3) copies of the questionnaires were not returned.

Method of Data Analysis

Responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using the descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage, and inferential statistics of Chi-square (χ^2). Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used in analyzing demographic variables and research questions while the inferential statistics of Chi-square(χ^2) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The primary data collected were presented and analyzed for possible validation of the research hypotheses. Chi-square was used to test the hypotheses formulated for the research.

Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to three hundred and ninety-eight (398) persons randomly selected from the Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike and Ebonyi State University. Out of the 398 distributed questionnaires, 395 were returned and analyzed using SPSS version 16 with a view to providing answers to the research questions as shown below:

Research Question 1:What is the frequency of social media use by students of Tertiary Institutions in Ebonyi State?

Table 1a: Frequency of social media use by students of Tertiary Institutions in Ebonyi State

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very often`	272	67.2	68.9	68.9
Often	91	22.5	23.0	91.9
Less often	21	5.2	5.3	97.2
Seldom	11	2.7	2.8	100.0

Total	395	97.6	100.0
Missing System	10	2.4	
Total	405	100.0	

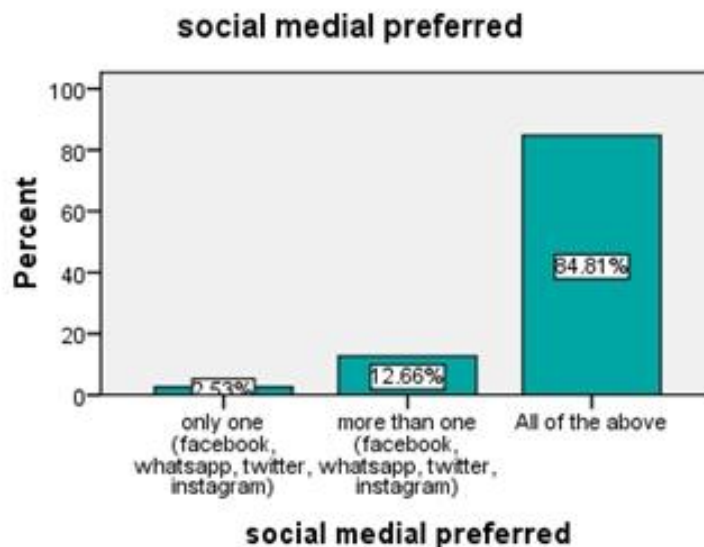
From the above table, there is high usage of Social Media Network (SMNs) among undergraduates in Ebonyi State as majority of the respondents 272 (68.9%) attested to using the social media very often; 91 (23%) use it often, while 21 (5.3%) use it less often. However, only few of the respondents 11 (2.8%) indicated that they seldom use social media networks.

Table 1b: Exposure to social media

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid maximum exposure	296	74.9	74.9	74.9
limited exposure	94	23.8	23.8	98.7
no exposure	5	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	395	100.0	100.0	

Table 1b above shows the level of Ebonyi students exposure to social media. Result from the table reveals that there is high exposure among the students as majority of the respondents 296 (74.9%) have maximum exposure to social media, while 94 (23.8%) have limited exposure. However, only 5 (1.3%) of the total respondents indicated not being exposed at all to social media.

Figure 1: Social media mostly used by respondents



As shown on the above chart, majority of the respondents indicated that they use all the social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram for their academic and other purposes.

Research Question 2:What is the dominant purpose in the use of social media network by students of Tertiary Institutions in Ebonyi State?

Table 2: Purposes respondents mostly use the social media for

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Academic discussions with other students	120	29.6	30.4	30.4
For sharing social activities/ interactions	100	24.7	25.3	55.7
To hook up with family and friends	92	22.7	23.3	79.0
All of the above	83	20.5	21.0	100.0

Total	395	97.5	100.0
Missing System	10	2.5	
Total	405	100.0	

In table 2 above, it is pertinent to view that the use of social media networks cut across many purposes with little difference. Although a significant few (30.4%) are of the view that they use them for academic discussions, some use them for social interactions (25.3%), while others (23.3%) use them to hook up with friends and peers.

Research Question 3: Does the social media have positive or negative impact on the academic performance of students of Tertiary Institutions in Ebonyi State.

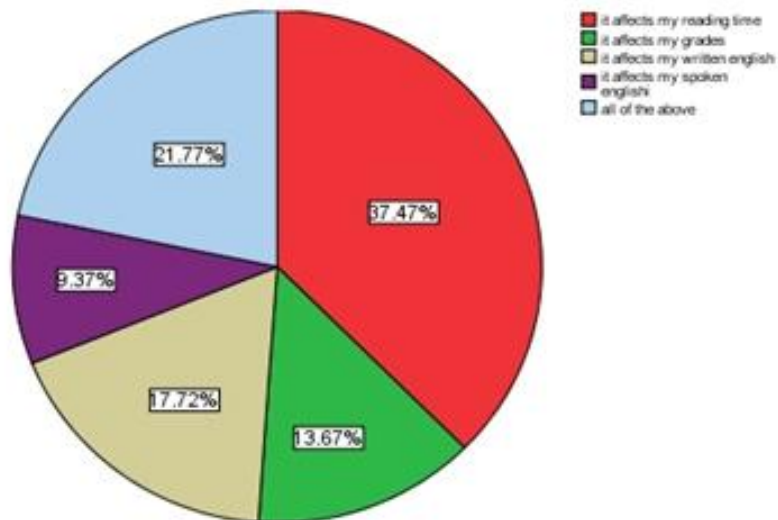
Table 3: whether social media affects academic performance of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid it affects my academic performance negatively	270	68.4	68.4	68.4
it does not affect my academic performance	114	28.9	28.9	97.2
can't determine it's effect	11	2.8	2.8	100.0
Total	395	100.0	100.0	

Majority of the respondents indicated (68.4%) that social media have negative impact on their academic performance. And by implication, social media are not helping the educational careers of undergraduates in Ebonyi State and Nigeria at large. Only few (28.9%) answered to the positive that they are not affected negatively by social media in their academic performance. However, the remaining 2.8% of the respondents could not determine its effect.

Figure 2:

effect of social media use on academic performances



Result from the pie chart above indicates that the negative effects of SMNs are diverse. Many(37.47%) stated that it affects their time of studies most. Some indicate thatSMNs affect theirwritten English (17.72%), spoken English (9.37%), academic grades (13.67%), while others are of the view that SMNs affect all the above (21.77%).

Test of hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Exposure to social media among Ebonyi tertiary students is high. This hypothesis is tested using table 1b: Exposure to social media.

Variables	Fo	Fe	Fo-fe	(Fo-fe) ²	(Fo-fe) ² /fe
Maximum	296	131.7	164.3	26994.49	204.969
Limited	94	131.7	-37.7	1369	10.395
No exposure	5	131.7	-126.7	15876	120.549
Total	395				335.911

$X^2 = 335.911$. The tabulated value of the above calculated chi-square table under 0.5 level of significance is 5.991.

Decision rule:

The calculated chi-square value 335.911 is greater than the tabulated value 5.991. Hence the alternate hypothesis should be accepted and the null hypothesis rejected, in that, there is high social media exposure among Ebonyi tertiary students.

Hypothesis 2: there is no dominant purpose in the use of social media networks by students of tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State. This is tested using table 6: purposes respondents mostly use the social media.

Purpose	Fo	Fe	Fo-fe	(Fo-fe) ²	(Fo-fe) ² /fe
Academic discussion with other students.	120	98.75	21.25	451.5625	4.573
For sharing social activities/interaction	100	98.75	1.25	1.5625	0.016
To hook up with family and friends	92	98.75	-7.75	60.0625	0.608
All of the above	83	98.75	-15.75	248.0625	2.512
Total	395				7.709

$X^2=7.709$. The tabulated value of the above calculated chi-square at 0.5 level of significance is 7.815.

Decision rule:

Since the calculated chi-square value 7.709 is less than the tabulated value 7.815, the alternate hypothesis which states that there is dominant purpose in the use of social media networks among Ebonyi tertiary institutions students is rejected. However, there are set of main purposes that dominate social media usage among undergraduates in Ebonyi State, ranging from academic purpose, socialization, to hooking up with family and friends.

Hypothesis 3: Social media affect the academic performance of Ebonyi tertiary institution students. This is tested using contingent table 8: Effect of social media use on academic performance of respondents.

Purpose	Fo	Fe	Fo-fe	(Fo-fe) ²	(Fo-fe) ² /fe
It affects my reading time	148	79	69	4761	60.266
It affects my grade	54	79	-25	625	7.911
It affects my written English	70	79	-9	81	1.025
It affects my spoken English	37	79	-42	1764	22.329
All of the above	86	79	7	49	0.620
Total	395				92.151

$X^2= 92.151$. The table value of the above calculated chi-square under 0.5 significance level is 9.488.

Decision rule

The alternate hypothesis which states that social media affects the academic performance of student is accepted since the calculated chi-square value 92.151 is greater than the tabulated value 9.488. Generally, as indicated in the table, the effects are positive ranging from academic performance to language usage.

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings show that the undergraduate students of Ebonyi State University Abakaliki have access to social media and that the extent to which the students have access to social media is high. This is evident in the majority of the respondents who agreed to that effect. The implication of this is that the students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki and Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo are exposed to social media. This is mainly because they use social media for various purposes. This usage of SMNs are not mainly for better purposes. This is in line with the uses and gratifications theory which says that audience members use the media to satisfy various purposes.

Findings further show that the Facebook and WhatsApp are the social media networks that are most used by the undergraduate students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. This could be caused by the high socialization and interactivity in the aforementioned social networks. This is evident in the majority of the respondents who agreed that Facebook and WhatsApp are the social networks mostly used by them. This aligns with that of Asemah and Edegoh (2013) who found that Facebook is the most used new media by students.

The findings further show that exposure to social media negatively affects the academic performances of students of tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State. Social media have negative influence on the academic performance of the undergraduate students of Ebonyi State tertiary institutions which include reduction in the rate of understanding of the students, affects their written English and academic grades; consequently, it consumes academic time and distracts the students from focusing on their academic studies. Moon (2011) in a study on "Impact of Facebook on undergraduate academic performance", avers that social media have negative impact on students. According to the result, the more students use Facebook, the more it affects their academic performance

From all indications, it appears that students who spend more time on social media are likely to perform poorly in their academics. This is because, instead of reading their books, they spend their time chatting and making friends via the social media and this will definitely have negative effect on their academic performance, because when you do not read, there is no way you can perform well academically.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the collected and analyzed data, it can be concluded that exposure to social media by undergraduate students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki and Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo is high and this has negative impact on their academic performance. The paper, therefore, makes the following recommendations:

- i. Students should be educated on the impact of social media on their academic performance and the need for good time management and balance by the school management.
- ii. Students should be monitored by teachers and parents on how they use these sites.
- iii. Teachers should ensure they use the social media as a tool to improve the academic performance of students in schools.
- iv. Social Networking Sites should be expanded and new pages should be created to enhance academic activities and avoid setbacks in the students' academic performance.
- v. The students should create a balance between chit-chatting and academic activities. More attention should be directed to research.
- vi. The use of social media network by students should focus on the academic relevance of those sites instead of using them for negative purposes

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