Online Social Networking Platforms Among Undergraduate Students of Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract: **Online social networking sites have changed the way Students interact and communicate. Most students who are members to these online networking sites spend numerous hours on these sites at the expense of study time. This study investigated the use of Online social networking platforms among undergraduate students in Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria. Four research questions were raised and three null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey design was adopted. For the purpose of this research work, four schools were randomly selected out of the total number of 8 schools in FUT Minna, from each of the schools, a sample size to collect data for this study were self-administered questionnaires. The study was conducted on 320 respondents out of which 240 respondents were students and 80 lecturers. 230 questionnaires issued to the students were returned, and 74 lecturers were interviewed respectively. Therefore, the study achieved 95% response of the target. The study focused on two respondents i.e. students and the teachers and used questionnaire and interviews as tools of study. The data was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistic of mean $(\overline{x})$ and standard deviation (SD) and graphics representations. However, the findings of the study revealed the ways and manner on how students use online social networking sites, the time spent and the kind of information sought. The study also provides recommendations on how online networking can be used in order to improve academic purposes. It was recommended among others that students should be properly trained to acquire basic knowledge on the utilization of online networking sites to promote their learning achievements in most science subjects and in their various courses/programmes**

Keywords: **Social Networking Sites, Cumulative Grade Point Average & ICT: Media, Instruction, Computer**

I. INTRODUCTION

Internet has changed the way people interact, communicate and has made access to information easier. Use of internet is now not only about communication through e-mails but is also a platform on which people interact. Today it is possible to attend a classroom being taught abroad while seated somewhere in Nigeria or give evidence directly to an international court in real time without travelling there. Sunitha and Narayan (2010) observed that internet is now more about blogs, podcasts, Facebook, and Twitter – tools and technology also called social networking sites in recent phenomenon. Social network sitesare the web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

The internet has created a platform for millions of computers at numerous sites in various countries, belonging to thousands of businesses, governments, research institutions, educational institutions and other organizations to link up with one another. It provides a very rich medium for information dissemination, exchange and collaborative interaction among individuals and computers without regards for geographical limitation of space (Ugwulebo & Okoro, 2016). Social networking has become a common international trend which has spread across almost every corner of the world. The Use of Social media sites have exploded and evolved into an online platform where people create content, share it, bookmark it and network at a prodigious rate. Because of its ease of use, speed and reach, social media is fast changing the public discourse in society and setting trends and agenda in topics that range from the environment and politics to technology and the entertainment industry (Al-rahmi& Othman, 2013).

In the last ten years, the online world has changed dramatically, with the invention of social media, young men and women now exchange ideas, feelings, personal information, pictures and videos at a truly astonishing rate. The increased use of Social Networking Websites has become a social norm and way of life for people from all over the world (Boyd, 2007). Teenagers and young adults have especially embraced these sites as a way to connect with their peers around the globe, share information, reinvent their personalities, and showcase their social lives (Boyd, 2007). With these developments in technology social networking sites have become more and more popular among students and a major concern have arisen over how the use of social media sites among undergraduate students affects their academic performances. Internet is now easily accessible using mobile phones costing cheaper amount of money. Service providers have also helped provide easy access to internet by going a step further to provide special offers in order for people to access internet. Teenagers are among the most constant users of technology in general and social network sites in particular (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill& Smith, 2007).

Recent reports find that youth spend more than 12 hours per day using some form of technology and socially networked media playing a large role in their daily lives (Mark, 2016). Neelamalar & Chitra (2009), state that members of social networking sites can easily form groups (called communities) and share their opinions among themselves through discussions trends, forums and polls. Studies have shown that adolescents often believe social networking sites reference can be accurate which may influence their own perception and actions (Moreno & Kelb: 2012. Most learning institutions have gone a step further and blocked access to SNS through their networks but it is important to acknowledge that student's own phones and other gadgets can be used at home. It is therefore necessary for both educators and parents to recognize the fact that there is high usage of SNS by school students and it is vital to find out the effects of these online communities on students learning performance, Kamaku & Mberia (2014) however posited that recent empirical studies indicate that the role of the social environment may be underestimated, as classmates can greatly influence one another's behavior and academic success (Dimofte, 2015 & Mark, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Technological shift from analogue to digital has immensely changed the way people communicate in society. Many teenagers have joined and many more are still joining Social Networking Sites (SNS).Katcha, Babagana, Jibril, Ndagi and Idris (2018), observed that social networking has become part of the daily life experience for increasing number of youth. They further raised concerns such as how do these SNS fit into the lives of these teenagers and what they are learning from their participation. Is whatever being learnt and shared on these social networking sites serve for academic purposes? These questions are very important for parents and educators to ask themselves. It is also very important for both the parents and educators to know what type of information their children seek on these sites. A considerable number of educators and children's advocates worry that electronic communication might be damaging —the basic unit of human thought. Many students have lost their interest in their studies as they spend most of their time on these sites (Kalra&Manani, 2013). Wushishi, (2019) came up with a conclusion that social networking sites do affect one 's academics adversely and cause a gradual drop of grades of students. It is on this background that this study sought to find out how social networking sites usage can be used to promote quality instruction in tertiary institutions.

Purpose of the study

The main aim of this study is to investigate how online social networking can be used to improve student's academic performance in tertiary institutions, particularly, FUT Minna. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Find out the kind of information tertiary institution students seek on online social networking sites.

2. Establish what other purpose, apart from communication, students use social networking sites for.
3. Establish how online social networking sites can be used by instructors to promote quality instruction.
4. Find out how online social networking sites can be used by students to improve their academic performance.

Research Questions

1. What kind of information do students seek on the online social networking sites?
2. What other purpose apart from communication do students use social networking sites for?
3. Are online social networking sites used by students to improve their academic performance?
4. How has the use of social media influence the academic performance of the students in FUT Minna?

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were generated and tested in this study:

Ho_1: Use of social media has no significant influence on the academic performance of the students in FUTMINNA.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference between male and female students usage of social media network.

II. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was employed. This study aimed at collecting information from lecturers and students of Federal University of Technology, Minna on the impacts of online social networking on academic performance. Primary sources of data were used which include questionnaires and interviews. The target populations of the study were students and lecturers of FUT Minna. There are eight schools in FUT Minna with the population of 16,000 students. Undergraduate students were the key respondents in this study as they are the ones using social networking sites which are the main concern of this study. The institution is a technology based university, thus, the students have more access to internet. The study employed non probability sampling method. The sample size for this study was 240. Using purposive sampling, 8 departments were picked and in each school 30 students were drawn. The researcher used academic performance to pick the students. Therefore, each school produced 30 students. The researcher picked four best performing students, two average performing student and four poor performing students from each level in the schools sampled. Also through purposive sampling the researcher interviewed 10 lecturers from each school picked totaling to 80 lecturers. This study used self-constructed questionnaire, Use of Online Social Networking Platforms Questionnaires (UOSNPQ) and structured interview as instruments of the study which were validated by the research experts in the University. To ensure the reliability of the study the tool was pre-tested with ten randomly selected students of science education department, Federal University

of Technology, Minna. The researcher visited all the departments under study and administered questionnaires to students picked through purposive sampling. The questionnaires were then collected by the researcher for data analysis. The researcher also interviewed teachers and parents and recorded the findings. With the questionnaires and the interviews, findings were then carefully analyzed. The feedback collected from the respondents for questionnaires was coded, entered and analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean $(\bar{x})$ and standard deviation (SD) and pie charts/graphics representations using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 22.0). Findings from the interviews conducted were also used to answer the research questions for the study.

III. RESULTS

Major findings and results of the study

Table1: General demographic information Distribution of Respondents

Groups	No of Respondents	Percentage
Students	240	50
Lecturers	80	50
Total	320	100%

Response Rate

The study was conducted on 320 respondents out of which 240 respondents were students, 80 lecturers. 23 questionnaires issued to the students were returned, and 74 lecturers were interviewed respectively. Therefore, the study achieved 95% response of the target. This response rate was considered appropriate for analysis and reporting as supported by Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), indicating that a response rate of 70% and above is excellent.

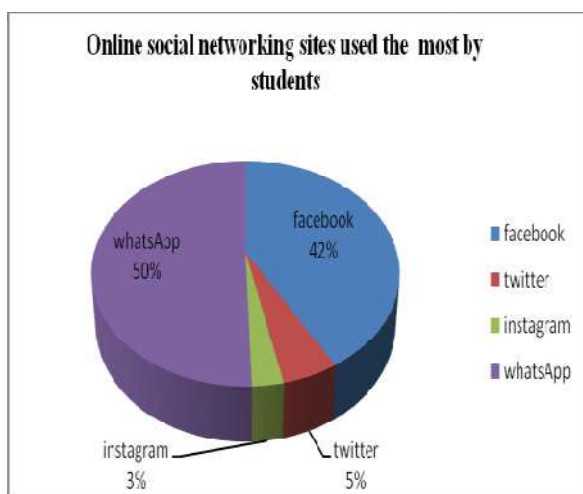Table2: Online social networking sites used the most by students

Figure 1: Showing online social networking sites used the most by students.

From the above pie chart, most students are using WhatsApp with a 50% response rate followed by Facebook with a 42%

response rate. The popularity of WhatsApp is attributed to its being an instant messaging application that runs on mobile phones and can be used while one is on the go and thus allowed multitasking which students are known for. The researcher found out that students felt WhatsApp is more interactive than the other sites. Facebook has a substantive percentage because it is an application that has been there for a while and enables students to tag each other especially pictures. In addition, it allows connectivity with many users without necessarily having their contact numbers. Twitter and Instagram had 5% and 3% response rate respectively with many students finding the two sites less interesting and a bit monotonous.

Table 2: Showing student favorite online social networking site

	EO		VO		O		R	
SNS	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Facebook	22	12.1	32	17.6	13	7.1	5	2.7
Twitter	2	1.1	4	2.2	8	4.4	2	1.1
Instagram	0	0.0	3	1.6	2	1.1	4	2.2
WhatsApp	46	25.3	30	16.5	4	2.2	5	2.7

KEY: EO-Extremely often, VO- Very often, O- Often, R- Rarely

WhatsApp was found to be the most preferred followed by Facebook while Instagram and twitter was found to be rarely used as illustrated by the table above.

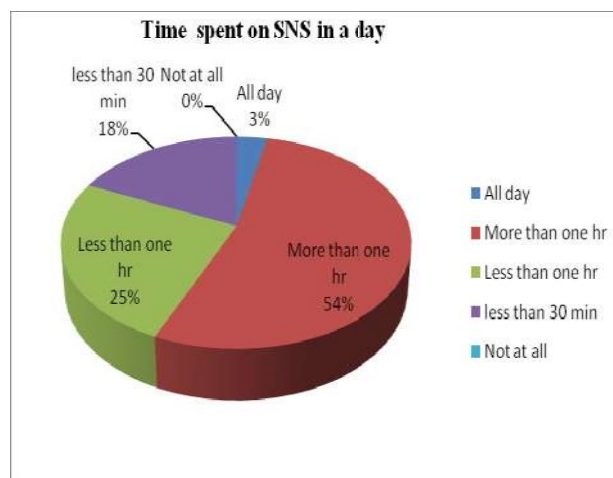*Time spent on SNS by students in a day.*

Figure 2: Showing time spent by students on online social networking sites in a day.

From the pie chart above, it was established that most students spend more than an hour on SNS with a 54% response, less than one hour 25% response and 18% less than 30 minutes. The 3% that spends all day on SNS were found to be those with continuous internet connectivity and may not be necessarily active all day but were logged in.

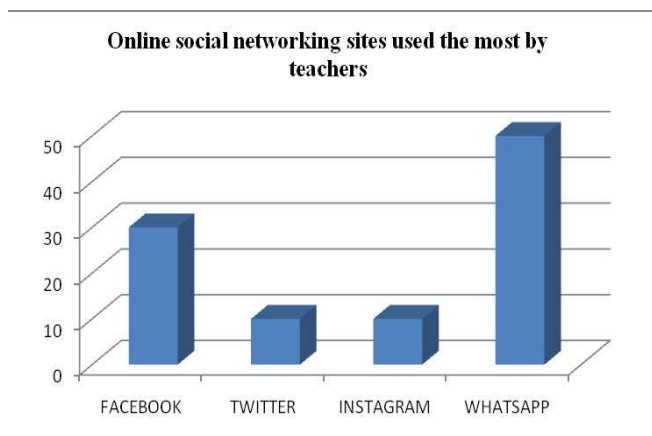*3 Online social networking sites used the most by teachers*

Figure 3: showing online social networking sites used the most by lecturers.

Most lecturers were found to be using WhatsApp with 50% followed by Facebook with 30% and Instagram and twitter with 10% each. It was established that WhatsApp had more users because of the same reasons as indicated above for the students. The study also found out that some teachers do not know about Instagram and those on twitter are passive users. Most of the Facebook users (teachers) admitted that they opened their accounts during the teenage years and used the site to connect with longtime friends and families.

What kind of information do students seek on the online social networking sites?
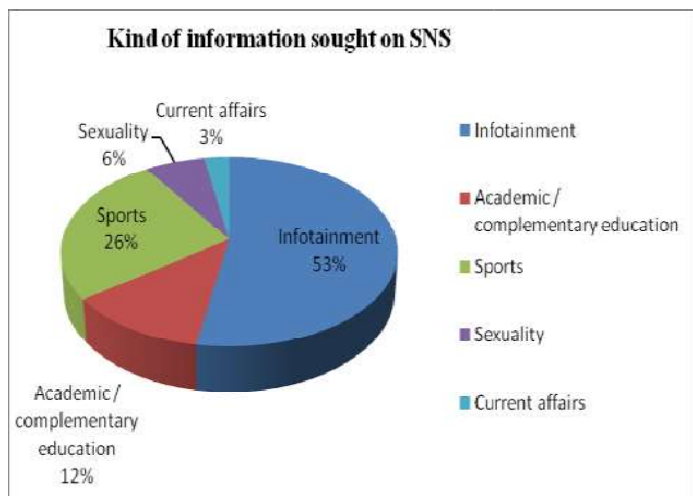

Figure 4: Showing the kind of information sought on online social networking sites.

From the questionnaires it was established that most students seek information on entertainment with a 53% response. Infotainment content entailed material which is intended to both entertain and inform. Information about music artists and movie stars on their latest endeavors can be considered infotainment. The research found out that such information was highly sought by the students due to the need to know the latest music that has been released by their favorite musicians and the need to keep up with the changing trends in clothing and fashion.

On the sports aspect, the research meant information about games, teams and athletes.

Sport was ranked second with a 26% response saying they seek sports information on SNS. Many of the respondents follow their favorite teams in the English and Nigerian premier league. In this research current affairs meant news and information that was trending and making headlines at the particular moment.

Current affairs had the least response with 3% which implies that very few students if any seek information of this subject matter on SNS. The lower response on current affairs could be attributed to the lack of interest in matters relating to politics, governance, conflict resolution and environmental issues that are less interesting to the students.

Academic entailed information that is meant to enhance their education and complement what the students had learnt in school. Academic/complementary education had 12% response. It was established that students would rarely seek Academic/complementary education through online SNS but rather would opt for group discussion and reliance on class notes and teachers. The research established that the 12% was very little time spent online in relation to academic thus showing the very little devotion to academic matters when on SNS.

Sexuality meant information on matters ranging from sex, sexual habits and escapades.

On the sexuality, the research found out that a few students opted to seek information on SNS for curiosity purposes giving a response of 6%. The lower percentage was attributed to some sites having limited access to minors according to the research. Students highlighted the fear of asking their colleagues and thus opted to find information on sexuality on SNS online.
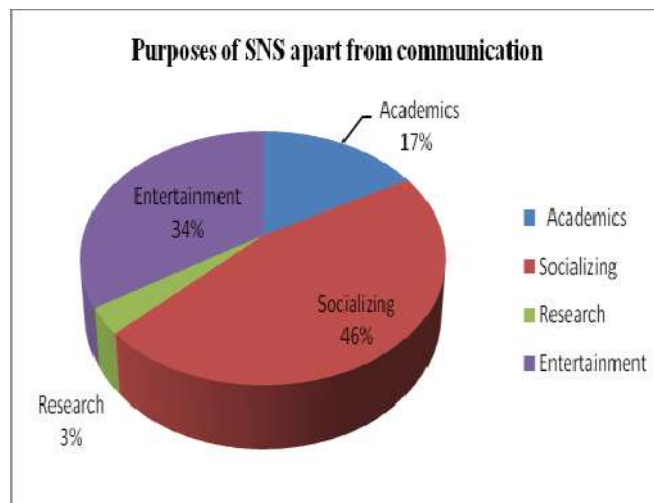

Figure 5: Showing other purposes of online social networking sites apart from communication

Other purpose, apart from communication, student use social networking sites for Socialization according to the research

entailed making new friends and keeping in touch with fellow students, family and teachers. Entertainment as per the research entailed the sharing of video, music pictures amongst the students. Socializing was established to be the main reason as to why many students visit SNS with 46% followed by entertainment 34%, academics 17% and finally research 3% response rate. Most student were found to spend more time chatting, sharing pictures, twitting and re-twitting thus the high number of those engaged in socializing.

The high numbers were also attributed to the many groups formed on platforms like WhatsApp where the students engage in endless conversations. Academics had 17% which is a relatively low percentage. The research found out that this was because the networks that the students have may not necessarily have the same academic need for them. In addition, most students were found to disassociate themselves with academic matters while online and just concerned about keeping in touch with each other and following up on matters such as fashion trend and music.

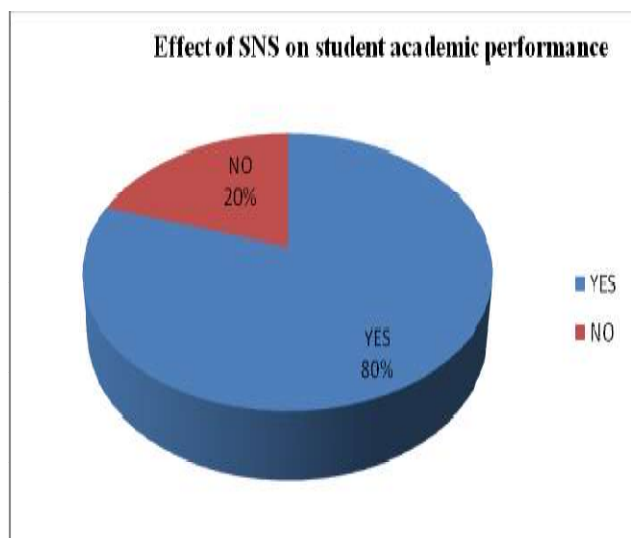*Question 4:* Are online social networking sites used by students to improve their academic performance?

Figure 6: Showing effect of SNS on student academic performance

The research found out that according to the parents and teachers, the use of SNS affects the academic performance of students negatively on a greater scale. This was attributed to the time they spent online whether at school or at home. To the use of SNS for research and complementary education while the ones who felt it doesn't were the ones who use the SNS for socializing among other uses apart from academics.

Hypothesis

Test for hypothesis 1 Ho_1: there is significant influence between students' addictiveness to social network and their academic performance.

Table 3

	Value	df	p-value
Pearson Chi-square	8.065**	6	.045*
Likelihood Ratio	8.517	6	.074
Liner-by-Linear Association	3.547	1	.065
N of valid cases	120		

From table 3 we can see that the p-value is .045 which is lower than the 0.05 level of significance. Based on the result, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that, there is significant influence between students' addictiveness to social network and their academic performance.

Test for hypothesis 2 Use of social media has no significant influence on the academic performance of the students in FUTMINNA

Table 4

	Value	df	p-value
Pearson Chi-square	8.698**	6	.024*
Likelihood Ratio	8.370	6	.079
Liner-by-Linear Association	8.002	1	.005
N of valid cases	120		

From table 4 we can see that the p-value is .024 which is lower than the 0.05 level of significance. Based on the result, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that, there is significant influence between students' usage of social network and its influence on the academic performance of the students.

Test for hypothesis 3 Ho_2: There is no significant difference between male and female students usage of social media network.

Table 5

	Value	df	p-value
Pearson Chi-square	7.872	6	.248*
Likelihood Ratio	9.737	6	.136
Liner-by-Linear Association	2.073	1	.150
N of valid cases	120		

From table 5 we can see that the p-value is .248 which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Based on the result, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that, there is no significant influence between male and female students' usage of social media network.

IV. DISCUSSION OF RESULT

From the result of the analysis, it can be deduced that students uses Facebook and WhatsApp the most as their social network media, to most of them it has become their favorite site. The

result also shows that most of the students spend more than 10 hours in a day. The result also indicated that most of the students sought out infotainment in social network sites as 55% represented the number of students. There are other purposes that social networking sites can be used for other than communication which includes research, and entertainment. The result also shows that social networking sites have effect on academic performance of the students. Result from the hypothesis tested shows that there is significant influence between students' addictiveness and usage of social network and their academic performance

V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of online social networking on students 'academic performance in tertiary institutions. On the kind of information students seek on online social networking sites, it was observed that students frequently seek infotainment on SNS, followed by sports, academic/complementary education, sexuality and lastly current affairs. The infotainment content included latest information on music released by their favorite musicians and the changing trends in clothing and fashion. The study ascertained that the main reason why many students visit SNS is to socialize with fellow students, family and teachers. Apart from that, the study found out that students use SNS for entertainment purposes. The students engage in sharing of videos, chatting, sharing pictures, twitting and re-twitting among others. They also use the SNS for academic purposes and this entailed the sharing of academic content with fellow students and also acquisition of new knowledge. From the respondents, both parents and teachers felt that the SNS negatively affects the academic performance of students while the students themselves felt that their academic performance was not directly affected by the SNS influence. According to the parent and teachers this was attributed to the long hours that the students spent on SNS as compared to time spent on academic work.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made from the findings of the study include:

1. The study recommends creation of awareness by the lecturers on applications that are academic oriented so that the students can utilize them whenever they are online such as lecturers google drive, drop box, eBooks among others.
2. The lecturers should be encouraged to embrace the use of technology aided devices like tablets so that students can emulate them, positively using technology for academic purposes as the main objective of the devices.
3. Lecturers should be encouraged to interact with the students on SNS, for instance having a group on WhatsApp platform where they exchange views about a particular subject even when they are on holidays. This will in turn encourage the use of SNS to improve students' academic performance.
4. The students need to be informed through talks and forums on the need to manage their time especially while visiting SNS sites since most of them become so much addicted at the expense of study time.
5. The University Management should also monitor the students

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