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Influence of Internet Utilization for Social Networking on Students Academic Studies in the University of Benin, Nigeria

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Abstract

Observations have shown that youths generally and students in particular are obsessed in social networking. This study therefore examined how social networking influence Entrepreneurship Students' academic studies in the University of Benin. Three research questions guided the study. A total number of about 300 undergraduate students constituted the study population and 100 were randomly selected as sample representative for the study. The survey research design was adopted and a 40-item structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Focus group discussion was equally used to elicit information from some respondents. The instrument was validated by 3 experts from entrepreneurship, computer and measurement and evaluation departments and it was tested to be highly reliable using Cronbach Alpha and a reliability value of 0.84 was obtained. The data collected were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and determine the homogeneity of the respondents' opinions. The findings revealed among others that the respondents use internet frequently for social networking and it promotes their information and communication skills thereby stimulates their critical and functional thinking to problem solving approach. Also that it affects the academic studies of those who are obsessed and addicted to it usage negatively. Against this backdrop it was recommended among others that effort should be made to redirect students' focus and interest on internet utilization by educating them on social media usage to promote their academic studies and in particular Educators should use it to reschedule lectures and give students assignments to ensure its purposeful usage to the students' advantage. In addition, Government should provide information and communication technology (ICT) facilities/ equipment to enable more effective teaching/ learning process in a technological driven world.

Key Words: *Internet Utilization, Social Networking, Academic Studies*

Introduction

The advent of computer technology brought about rapid development in information and communication to the whole world. The advancement has eventually made the world a global village whereby individuals and organizations can have constant interaction without distance barrier. The world is gradually reflecting digital era and internet utilization has become an integral part of man's living in all spheres of life including education. About 3.5 Billion people use the internet world wide, 25% in Africa region and about 86,436,611 people in Nigeria representing 47.44% as at 2016 (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2014). The internet service has made information available to desiring individuals and groups at convenient place and time at an affordable rate. Esene (2012) noted that

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computer internet is used to send, search and retrieve information from any part of the world. A handbook of Digital Bridge institute (ADAPTI) defines Internet as a worldwide system of computer networks where users can obtain information about any subject or topic by connecting to it. It was originally called ARPANET and first started in 1969 by U.S government to create network for research in the universities. According to the free encyclopedia, internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that use the standard internet protocol suite (TCP/IP) to link several billion devices worldwide.

Millions of people over the world access the internet daily on a regular basis and the usage is dependent on some basic factors such as purposes, available facilities, available network services and cost of subscription among others. These people access the internet to get information for different purposes such as business transaction, social interaction, academic, entertainment, health, economy among others. Camillia, Ibrahim & Bulu (2013) noted that people use internet to connect with other people for business or commercial purpose, make new friends, reawaken old friends and long lost relatives. The rate with which one access the internet is dependent on the nature of information the person requires, available time and rate of subscription. Considering these variables one would expect that frequent internet utilization is supposed to be meant for those who can spend quality time always depending on the benefit of the information accruable to both the user and his environment. The philosophy of Nigeria Education as stated in the National policy on Education section 1, sub-section 4 (d) emphasized that interest and ability are determinants of individuals direction in Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN (2004).

Observations have shown that adults and youths generally access the internet alike but youths are obsessed in using it for social networking. They have been found to be engrossed and engulfed as soon as they start until they finish and could even afford to miss their meals. Some male and female youths have been found to use their handsets for social networking regularly even sometimes while trekking with earpiece glue to their ears. Social networking could be defined as online electronic website communication through which individuals, friends, relatives, colleagues, business partners, customers, clients and organizations among others can interact to share information, chat, send messages, profiles, contacts, make funs among others. Some of the social networking site includes Facebook, Twitter, 2go, WhatsApp, Linkedin, Myspace, Bing, BBM, Badoo, Skype, E-mail, Blog, Twitter, Postcards, Instagram and YouTube among others. According to Boyd & Ellison (2007) social

networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system to share and transfer information. Ayiah and Kumah (2011) opined that social network is a web platform where people from different settings can connect and interact with each other.

Generally most students are youths and researches revealed that male and female students have been found to use their handsets to access the internet regularly and that in most cases they access it on a regular basis not minding the time. It is appalling that students who are supposed to be actively engaged in their academic studies could afford to spend their precious time accessing the internet using their Smart phones or laptops. Enikuomihin (2011) posited that youths have obsessive attitude towards social media, therefore waste much of their quality time that ought to be spent on academic research. Jorge et al (2003) noted that male and female students use ICT both at home and in the university but men tend to have wide knowledge of the different types of software because they use it more frequently. In the same vein, Bolarinwa & Adeola (2012) posited that the rapid change in technology pose challenges to education system and serious implication to business education in particular. Entrepreneurship studies cum business education aim at preparing students to acquire entrepreneurial skills in order to become self-reliant. Entrepreneurship education is an off-shoot of Business Education.

Social networking could have both positive and negative influence on the users depending on the purpose and rate of usage. Social networking facilitates easy communicate and enhances information but the rate and purpose of usage determined the benefit accruable to the user. Observations have shown that students who social network are better socially informed, alert and smart. The knowledge they gain could promote their functional critical thinking to become assertive and boost their self confidence in approach to problem solving. Pearson learning solution (2013) in Oladipo, Mamman & Saba (2014) posited that the use of social media in teaching has grown to 41% in 2013 from 34% in 2012 and that the interactive nature of online and mobile teaching creates better environments more so that digital communication has increased communication among students. Apparently, social networking for academic purpose could stimulate students and impel their ingenuity in active participation and engagements in the teaching/learning process depending on the application. Several studies have revealed that social networking promotes teaching/learning unless abused. It could also make positive impact on students to outwit their contemporaries relative to information and

communication skills. Camilia, Ibrahim & Bulu (2013) opined that social networking promotes students' academic studies if well utilize. It could equally be detrimental to the students if they become addictive to the usage at the expense of their academic pursuits. Olowu & Seri (2012) posited that students spend too much time on social networking sites at the expense of their academic studies.

Since close observations show the high rate with which students generally access the internet, particularly their obsessive nature in social networking using smart phones and tablets, it therefore calls for serious concern. Specially, one wonders what information they could be accessing from the internet on regular basis not minding the time spent and whether the information is relevant to their academic studies or just mere social networking for pleasure. More worrisome is whether the information they access from the social networking sites is enhancing their academic studies. Apparently, it becomes doubtful whether these students mortgage their studying time to access the internet for social networking at the expense of their academic pursuit and greatly feared whether entrepreneurship students in the University of Benin also use internet frequently and how it influence their academic studies. Observations of these magnitudes call for proper investigation, hence the study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the influence of internet utilization for social-networking on entrepreneurship students' academic studies in the University of Benin, Benin-City. Specifically the study ascertained;

- (a) The frequency of internet utilization for social-networking among Entrepreneurship Students in the University of Benin.
- (b) Whether internet utilization for social net-working promotes entrepreneurship students' academic studies.
- (c) Whether internet for social-networking affects entrepreneurship students' academic studies.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

- a) How frequent do Entrepreneurship Students in the University of Benin use internet for social-networking?

- b) How does frequent internet utilization for social-networking promote entrepreneurship students' academic studies in the University of Benin?
- c) In the opinions of the students how does social-networking affect their academic studies?

Methodology

The study employed the survey research design. Nworgu (2006) posited that survey research design is useful when gathering information from a large population without manipulating them. The study population consists of about 300 Entrepreneurship Students in the University of Benin, Edo State as at April 2017. The sample size was 100 students who were randomly selected using random sampling technique. A 40-item structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Focus group discussion was equally used to elicit information from some respondents. The instrument was validated by three experts from Entrepreneurship Studies, Measurement and Evaluation and Computer Science Departments and it was pilot tested for its reliability using Cronbach Alpha and a reliability co-efficient value of 0.84 was obtained. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section 1 contains the demographic information of the respondents while section II contains the questionnaire items which were further divided into three sub sections. Sub-section 1 of the instrument contains items 1-14 and were rated as Highly Frequent, (HF (4-6 Hours Daily), Frequent, (F (2-4 Hours Daily), Fairly Frequent, (FF (below 1-2 Hours Daily), Not Frequent, (NF (2-4 Hours Weekly). Sub-section 2 contains items 16-30 while sub-section 3 contains items 31-40 of the instrument and were rated as strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The nominal values for all the items range from 1-4. The data was collected personally by the researcher and with the help of a research assistant. The data collected were analysed using the mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and determine the homogeneity of the respondents' opinions. The average mean score was 2.5; any value equal to or above 2.5 was acceptable while those less than 2.5 were unacceptable.

Research Question 1: how frequent do the Respondents use internet for social-networking in the University of Benin?

Table 1: Respondents’ mean rating and standard deviation on the frequency of internet usage for social-networking

Frequency of Entrepreneurship Students’ Internet Utilization for Social Networking				
		X	StD	Remark
1	Students use internet for social networking	3.8	0.89	Frequent
2	Students use blackberry messenger (BBM)	3.6	0.87	“
3	Students use internet for e-mail (electronic mail).	2.9	0.74	“
4	Students use internet for facebook	3.8	0.89	“
5	Students use internet for blogging	1.9	1.27	Not Frequent
6	Students use internet for twitter	3.7	0.88	Frequent
7	Students use internet for WhatsApp	3.7	0.84	“
8	Students use internet for Badoo (Online Dating)	3.1	0.85	“
9	Students use internet for downloading and watching of Podcasts.	2.8	0.72	“
10	Students use internet for Bing.	1.8	1.43	Not Frequent
11	Students use internet for LinkedIn	1.2	1.68	“
12	Students use internet for orkut.	3.0	0.86	Frequent
13	Students use internet to play games	3.3	0.84	“
14	Students use internet for 2go	3.2	0.83	“
15	Other social-networking sites	2.7	0.73	
Average Mean		2.9	0.95	Frequent

Items 1,2,3,4,6,7,7,8,9,12,13 and 14 met the average mean score but 18, 19 and 23 did not meet the score and the average mean score is 2.9. This indicates that the students use internet frequently for social networking.

Research Question 2: How does social-networking promote Entrepreneurship students’ academic studies in the University of Benin?

Table 2: Respondents’ mean rating and standard deviation on how Social-Networking promote their academic studies.

How Social-Networking promotes Entrepreneurship Students’ academic Studies		\bar{X}	StD	Remark
16	Students use internet for academic purpose	3.6	0.82	Agree
17	Students do not use social-networking to do their assignment	3.2	0.84	“
18	Social networking promotes students acquisition of new knowledge about events around the world.	2.9	0.71	“
19	Social networking promotes students acquisition of new skills	1.4	1.79	Disagree
20	Social networking strengthens students’ ability to review elaborate literature	1.7	1.68	“
21	Social networking promotes students’ communication skills.	2.8	0.71	Agree
22	Students do not use social-networking for their private study	3.6	0.83	“
23	Students do not use social-networking for research purpose	3.4	0.84	“
24	Students use social-networking to study for their exams.	1.2	1.78	Disagree
25	Social networking promotes collaborative learning among students.	3.5	0.86	Agree
26	Students use social networking to share information relating to their academic studies	3.8	0.84	“
27	Social networking do not stimulates students’ critical thinking to have better approach to problem solving	1.6	1.84	Disagree
28	Students who access the internet frequently are dull	1.8	1.69	“
29	Students who access the internet for social networking frequently are Smart and assertive	3.7	0.84	Agree
30	Social networking build students self confidence	2.9	0.75	“
Average Mean		2.7	1.12	Agree

Items 15,16,17,20, 21 and 22 met the standard mean score while 18, 19 and 20 do not meet the mean score while the average mean score is 2.7. Therefore, social-networking promotes students’ academic studies.

Research Question 3: In the opinions of the students how does social-networking affect their academic studies?

Table 3: Respondents’ mean rating and standard deviation on how Social-Networking affects Students’ Academic Studies

Social-Networking Effect on Students’ Academic Studies		\bar{X}	StD	Remark
31	Social networking does not affect students’ academic studies	1.7	1.52	Disagree“
32	Social-networking distract students from their academic studies	3.2	0.82	Agree
33	Some Students devote too much time to social-networking	2.9	0.79	“
34	Some students do not become obsessed in social-networking to neglect their private studies.	1.7	1.54	Disagree
35	Some students academic performance can drop as a result of being obsessed with social net-working	2.6	0.79	Agree
36	Students sometimes mortgage their lectures for social networking	2.3	1.23	Disagree
37	Some students use too much of their leisure for social networking	3.3	0.87	Agree
38	Some students who become addicted to social networking are crafty.	2.8	0.71	“
39	Some students who are addicted to social networking could fail their exams.	3.4	0.89	“
40	Student learn immoral things from Social-networking sites.	3.7	0.85	“
Average Mean				
Average Mean Score		2.7	1.0	Agree

In Items 24, 25, 27, 29, 30 and 32 respondents met the standard mean score while in items 26 and 27 they did not meet the standard mean score while the average mean score is 2.7. Therefore frequent usage of internet for social-networking affects students’ academic studies negatively.

Discussion of Findings

Respondents agreed that although they use internet for academic purpose but they use it frequently for social networking. They equally agreed that using internet for social networking could affect their academic studies if abused but could improve their knowledge about events around the world and

stimulate their critical thinking to have better approach to problem solving. The study equally revealed that when students become obsessed in internet utilization for social networking it could have negative effects on their academic studies. So, the study revealed both the positive and negative influence of social networking on students' academic studies. This is in agreement with Olowu & Seri (2012) who posited that students spend too much time on social-networking sites at the expense of their academic studies. Kacie (2009) posited that students are tempted to abandon their homework and reading times for chatting with friends online through social networking sites. This disagrees with Azuka (2014) who posited that schools have the option of educating students for safe media usage to prepare them for the literacy they would encounter in the wider society. Educating the student through the right path would make social networking have more positive impact on the students. Therefore the onus lies on the Entrepreneurship educators to become acquainted with the knowledge and usage of the social media sites to boost their effective instructional delivery e.g. YouTube, Potcards among others. They could download information from those sites to aid teaching/learning and could also use it to send assignments or messages of rescheduled lectures to the students.

The respondents equally agreed that they use internet for academic purpose but they do not use social networking to do their assignment and exams and it enhances their knowledge. This is in agreement with Oyeniyi & Adetimirin (2013) who posited that undergraduate students have to search for information on the internet to complete assignment, project and study to have good academic result achievement. It also agrees with the view of Ololube (2006) who asserted that, access to library information through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) increases the information accessible to individuals to support them in trying new strategies that are reflective to make new innovations. Although the study revealed that students do not use social networking for academic studies but it can enhance their acquisition of new knowledge about events around the world and can also stimulate their critical thinking for better problem solving approach. It is a common adage that says 'knowledge is power'. In this jet age of advancement in knowledge, people and youths in particular need current information around the globe to excel. Through social media, students could be educative and informative to decipher their pathway to career advancement and success. It could develop students' informative and communicative skills and also could encourage their collaboration and cooperation in the learning process by sharing idea or information with one another through social networking site like WhapSap, Facebook, E-mail among others which could develop their academic knowledge and functional skills. This conforms to David, Idowu, Rahim, (2012) whose study revealed

that students use social networking site to communicate with lecturers, supervisors, classmates and friends for academic reasons and are abreast with current information. Couros (2011) posited that social media facilitates interpersonal relationship between students and teachers, between teachers and administrators, between teachers and parents and amongst educators.

The current dynamic social changes which emanated through computer technology into the society are being embraced by all and sundry but youths seem obsessed in their embrace. This could be as a result of youthful exuberance and could have adverse effect on their academic studies if not controlled. This was revealed in a focus group discussion with some students who attested to the fact that they get distracted whenever they received messages through WhatsApp while studying. More so, some attested to the fact that their academic performance dropped when they devoted too much of their time to social networking. Onwueme & Ugbor (1994) posited that education is both a conservative and a social institution which preserves and transmit the culture of the society to the younger generations and as well integrate the younger generation into the dynamic of social change in the society. The social change entrenched into the society through the internet; especially social networking which must be sustained should be tailored to make much desirable positive impact on the students rather than the negative.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the study revealed that students access the internet frequently for social-networking. It also revealed that though social networking can facilitate the dissemination of information but could be detrimental when students become obsess and addicted to its usage which could affect their academic studies. Since the interest and ability of most students are geared towards social networking as youths, lecturers should develop strategies to promote their teaching/learning process using social media. They could download video clip information from YouTube to teach students using multimedia projector and screen. They could send assignments or date of rescheduled lectures through WhatsApp. They could be given series of assignments that will require them to search and get relevant information from social networking sites or internet in general. Therefore, effort should be made to redirect students' focus and interest on internet utilization by educating them on social media usage to promote their academic studies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion the following recommendations were made

- a) Lecturers should engage students with series of assignments that will involve the use of internet and social media in particular.
- b) Students should chat more with their classmates on academic related issues through social networking sites.
- c) Students should not be addicted to social-networking because it could jeopardize their academic studies and ruin their academic career.
- d) Lecturers should communicate with their students through social networking site e.g. send messages of rescheduled lectures through WhatsApp or any other site.
- e) Lecturers should download relevant information from social networking sites such as potcards or YouTube to aid teaching/learning using multimedia projector and screen.
- f) Project supervisors should communicate with their supervisees via the internet using e-mail address.
- g) Government should provide information and communication technology (ICT) facilities/equipment to enable more effective teaching/learning process in a technological driven world.

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