ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORK USAGE AND INFLUENCE ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA. IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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ABSTRACT

The global trends in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought about growth in the usage of the internet, hence, online social network seems to be a norm among students in Nigeria, Anambra State inclusive. However, there seems to be a widespread abuse of its usage among students. This necessitated this study which sought to ascertain the usage of online social network by secondary school students and its influence on their academic achievement. Three research questions guided the study and one hypothesis was tested. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Out of a population of 15,005 senior secondary two students in the 256 public secondary schools in Anambra State a sample of 1,500 students made up of 750 male and 750 female students were involved in the study. The 1,500 students representing 10% of the population were sampled using disproportionate stratified sampling technique. Data was collected using a researcher developed instrument titled Social Network Usage and Influence on Students' Academic Achievement (SNUISAA). The instrument was validated by three experts who are all lecturers in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The Cronbach alpha was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. This yielded a high reliability coefficient of 0.81. The researchers together with six research assistants collected data for the study using the direct delivery and retrieval method. A 100% return rate was recorded. Frequencies, percentages and arithmetic mean were used to answer the research questions while the hypothesis was tested with z-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance. It was among others found out that the online social network prevalent among secondary school students in Anambra State are facebook, 2go and Twitter. It was also found out that these secondary school students are not heavy users of social network; that they use it mostly for entertainment, and that it is negatively impacting on their academic achievement. Based on the findings it was among others recommended, that, school administrators and teachers should ensure that students are educated on the responsible use of social network and also sensitized on its possible negative influence on their academic achievement. Conclusions were made and implications of the findings drawn.

KEYWORDS: Online Social Networks, Students' Academic Achievement, Secondary Schools.

Introduction

The 21st century students have witnessed advancement in information and communication technology and this has exposed them to greater varieties of the internet resulting in the popularity of social network among them. Majority of these students flock to the internet embracing these sites as ways of connecting with their peers, sharing information and showing their social lives but often without teachers and parental direction. This re-inforces the point made by Obasi (2010), that millions of students are signing up for membership in the social network sites on daily basis without adults seeming to watch over their online activities.

In Nigeria, there is a remarkable increase in internet access and usage. The invention of mobile phone technology, has given rise to popularity of social network usage. These smart phones with multiple devices for accessing the internet offer students the opportunities of chatting, browsing, facebooking and updating their status.

Online social networks are those internet based services that promote online interactions among people for the purposes of friendship and exchange of information. It is an activity done primarily on the internet with sites like facebook, whatsapp, twitter, myspace, 2go and linkedin to mention but a few. The students' usage of online network has grown significantly since the year 2000 with an estimate of nearly 80% of Nigerian youths being active users of one or more of these social network sites (Adewale, 2011). Most of these social network sites are operated at no cost and this explains why many students can afford engaging in them. The biggest edge that online social network has over other socializing media is that it provides a free networking avenue hence making it possible for a large number of people to interact with each other at the same time across the globe.

With the increase in the use of social network among students, one wonders the type of impact it would be exerting on their academic achievement. In Nigeria today, the public perception is that the widespread use of social network among students is likely to have negative influence on students' academic achievement. One of the reasons adduced for this is that the obsessive attitude of the students towards social networking has led to students' poor allocation of study time and continued poor academic achievement (Ewular, 2010). In like manner, Udemezue (2012) remarked that the current wave of indiscipline among secondary school students can be attributed to online social networks where students are practically exposed to wide range of new behaviours, principles and social values contrary to the rules given at schools. With students access to all sorts of information on the social network, it has opened the floodgates for all and is breeding a low level of morality amongst them (Ibechiozor, 2011). In the past, students read novels and their books and passing examination was not all that a hard task. In Nigeria today, the culture of reading seems to be remarkably on the decline among secondary school students. One therefore, wonders if this may be

as a result of internet technology.

In contrast to the aforesaid, Dennis (2012) and Merchant (2012) posited that students usage of social network has positive impact on their learning some of which are sharpening students thinking ability, improving their researching and reading skills since it exposes students to e-learning culture that is prevalent in our society today. This supports Banguil (2010) who stated that social network provides students the avenue to learn new behaviours and principles, and to discover the social world around them. This also agrees with the assertion of Noble (2012) that online social network improves students reasoning capabilities because as a large source of information supplier, students get to become active in learning. These are similar to the view of Vasalon (2012) that students' usage of online social network is not bad. He, however added that the influence of online social network on students is determined by the type of internet usage and number of hours they spend on it.

It therefore follows from the divergent views of scholars that social network might not be the direct cause of the seemingly falling standards of education but it may be contributing to it in some ways. It therefore becomes necessary to empirically examine secondary school students' usage of social network and its influence on their academic achievement. Hence, the question which presents the problem of this study, therefore is, what is the influence of online social network on students academic achievement?

Three research questions guided the study, namely:
1. What type of online social network is common among secondary school students?
2. What number of friends do students interact with on the social networks?
3. What is the students' perception of the influence of online social network on their academic achievement?

One hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance namely; there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female students on their perception of the influence of online social network on their academic achievement.

The study has its theoretical framework on the Social Learning Theory which was developed by Albert Bandura in 1914. Social Learning Theory (SLT) emphasizes the importance of observing and modeling the behaviours, attitudes, and reactions of others. Bandura observed four key factors that are crucial in learning behaviours namely; drives, cues, response and reward. SLT posits that if one were motivated to learn a particular behaviour then that particular behaviour would be learnt through observations, by imitating observed actions. The individual observer would solidify the learnt action and would be rewarded with negative or positive reinforcement. Social Learning Theory examines the impact of

media on people's behaviour. Taking cognizance of this Ornold (2010) suggested that since social media can affect its audience positively or negatively, then education which is an instrument of change can be used to educate students on the good and responsible usage of social network. There is therefore a need to fill the gap in knowledge by ascertaining the extent of usage of online social network by students as well as the influence it exerts on their academic activities.

Method
The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. According to Jackson (2013), a descriptive survey is a research design used to obtain a general overview of a subject without affecting the subject's normal behaviour and which describes a situation as it is without determining cause and effect relationship. This design is therefore appropriate for this study since the researchers collected data from the respondents through a few representatives and analyzed same in order to ascertain the influence of online social network on secondary school students' academic achievement. The study was conducted in Anambra State. The state is one of the 36 states in Nigeria. It is bounded in the north by Delta State, in the south by Abia State, in the west by Imo State and in the east by Enugu and Kogi States respectively. The study covered all the 256 public secondary schools in the six education zones in the state. The education zones are Aguata, Awka, Nnewi, Ogidi, Onitsha and Otuocha.

The population of the study comprised 15,005 senior secondary two (SS2) students. The SS2 students were chosen because they are in the age bracket (16-21 years) of students who have the highest user rate of online social network (Melvin 2012 & Raine 2013). Again they were also not involved in external examinations during the period of the study. The sample of the study is 1,500, SS2 students drawn from the population of the study using disproportionate stratified sampling technique. The stratification was based on gender.

A researcher developed questionnaire titled 'Social Network Usage and Influence on Students Academic Achievement' (SNUISAA) was used for data collection. The instrument has two parts, A and B. Part A is on the background information of the respondents while Part B is in two sections I and II. Section I is a checklist while Section II contains ten items on the influence of online social network on students academic achievement. The ten items in section II of Part B are structured on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4points, Agree (A) = 3points, Disagree (D) = 2points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1point.

The face and content validity of the instrument was established by three experts, two in Educational Management and Policy and one in Educational Measurement and Evaluation, all are lecturers in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The corrections and inputs of the experts were reflected on the final edition of the instrument.

To ensure the internal consistency of the instrument, a trial test was carried out on 20 male and 20 female students from two secondary schools in Enugu State. Enugu State was chosen for the reliability test because both States (Anambra and Enugu) are in the same south-east zone of Nigeria and also share similar characteristics in relation to management of secondary schools and are among the educationally advantaged states in Nigeria. Again majority of the students in both states are open to internet penetration. The scores obtained from the respondents were collated and analysed using Cronbach Co-efficient Alpha. A co-efficient value of 0.81 was obtained. This was considered appropriate for the study, in line with the view of Uzoagulu (2011) that a reliability co-efficient of 0.70 and above is acceptable for a good instrument.

The researchers collected data with the help of six research assistants, using direct administration and retrieval method. A 100% success rate was recorded in the administration and collection of the instruments. The data collected were analyzed using frequencies, percentages and arithmetic mean to answer the research questions. A mean score of 2.50 and above was taken to mean that the respondents are in agreement with the item while a mean score of 2.49 and below showed disagreement to the item. The z-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. In relation to this, the hypothesis was accepted if the calculated z-score is less than the tabulated z-score at 0.05 level of significance and vice versa.

Results
The results are presented here under in line with the research questions, and hypotheses.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of the Social Network Common Among Secondary School Students.

Social Network	Male Students		Female Students		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Facebook	(280)	18.7%	(320)	21.3%	(600)	40%
2go	(121)	8.1%	(229)	15.3%	(350)	23.4%
Whatsapp	(89)	5.9%	(61)	4.1%	(150)	10%
Twitter	(60)	4%	(10)	0.7%	(70)	4.7%
Linkedin	(22)	1.5%	(8)	0.6%	(30)	1.9%
Non-users	(178)	11.9%	(122)	8.1%	(300)	20%
Total	(750)	50%	(750)	50%	(1500)	100%

Results in Table 1 show that the online social network commonly used by the students are facebook, 40% (600 students), 2go, 23.4% (350 students) and whatsapp 10% (150 students). Further analysis shows that whereas 20% of them representing 300 students do not use online social network, 80% of them representing 1200 students use online social network. A cursory look on the table also indicates that more females use online social network than the males. This is shown by 11.9% and 8.1% representing males and females respectively who make up the 20% of students who do not use online social network. Also, out of the 80% (1200) of the students who use online social network whereas 41.9% (628) are females, 38.1% (572) are males.

Table 2: Percentage of Students' Network of Friends

Number of Friends	1-20 Friends	21-40 Friends	41-60 Friends	61-80 Friends
	%	%	%	%
Male	26.5	16	0.8	0
Female	31.5	23.5	1.7	0
Total	58	39.5	2.5	0

Results in Table 2 reveal that 58 percent of the students interact with 1 to 20 friends on social network, 39.5 percent with 21 to 40 friends. 2.5% with 41- 60 friends and 0% i.e. none with 61-80 friends. This translates to 97.5% interacting with 1-40 friends and only 2.5% interacting with more than 40 friends. This implies that secondary school students in Anambra State are not heavy users of social network since most of them interact with a few friends.

Table 3: Mean Rating of Students on Influence of Online Social Network on their Academic Achievement.

S/N	ITEMS	X	DECISION
1.	Social Network is associated with divided attention	3.41	Agree
2.	Using social network affects the time for your studying activities	3.04	Agree
3.	Social network enables you to post articles to your friends and this sharpens your creative writing skills	3.54	Agree
4.	Your social network page is always open when you are studying your books	3.86	Agree
5.	Addiction to social network is a problem because it is affecting your academic achievements	3.86	Agree
6.	Your use of social network enables you share information/resource materials which improves your academic achievement	1.56	Disagree
7.	Your engagement in social networks has led to a decrease in your performance in most subjects	3.71	Agree
8.	Using social network has positively affected your studying habit	1.51	Disagree
9.	Social network does not affect your English language usage	2.13	Disagree
10.	Using social network improves your computer skills	2.13	Disagree

Data presented in Table 3 reveal that items 1,2,3,4,5, and 7 attracted positive responses as shown by their mean ratings of 3.41, 3.04, 3.54, 3.86, 3.65 and 3.71 respectively which are all above the cut-off mean of 2.50. On the other hand items 6,8,9 and 10 attracted negative responses with their mean scores of 1.56, 1.51, 2.13 and 2.13 respectively all below 2.5. This shows that the students perceive that social network has more of negative influence on their academic achievement than positive influence.

Table 4: z-test on Influence of Online Social Network on Students' Academic Achievement Based on Gender.

Gender	Number	x	Sd.	df.	z-cal	zcrit	P	Decision
Male	572	55.9	11.5	1,198	-3.3	1.960	>0.05	Accepted
Female	626	53.6	10.9					

The results in Table 4 indicate that the calculated z-value -3.3 is less than the critical z-value, 1.960 at 1,198 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. Thus, there is no significance difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the influence of online social network on their academic achievement.

Summary of Findings

Based on data analysis, the following findings were therefore made:

1. The usage of social network such as facebook, 2go and whatsapp are common among secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria.

2. A large number of these students are not heavy users of social network since they have a small number of network of friends ranging from 1-40 on the social network.

3. Online social network has negative influence on the academic achievement of students and these include divided attention, addiction to social networking, distraction, decline in studying habit and usage of poor English language.

4. There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students on the influence of online social network on their academic achievement.

Discussion of Results

Facebook, 2go and whatsapp were found to be the social network prevalent among secondary school students. The findings also indicated that most of the students interact with few numbers of friends and cannot be said to be heavy users of social network. Social network has negative impact such as addiction, loss of concentration, decline in studying culture and poor English language usage. The findings agree with Freshman (2011) who found out that students are among the highest users of social network especially facebook and whatsapp because it has an interface where students can carry out various activities ranging from pinging, posting comments, pictures, messages and sharing of information. It also agrees with the findings of Akunnia (2008) that students are excessively using social network and that it is increasing the wave of indiscipline among them such as distraction, loss of concentration, poor studying habits, poor English language usage, truancy and cultism.

Again, the above finding is in agreement with Campbell (2010) who found out that students' exposure to social network is high and has negative impact on their studies as well as Oye (2010) who found out that social network has more of negative influence on students academic achievement distraction being the major influence. The findings of this study further corroborates the findings of Udemezue (2012) that the wave of indiscipline especially examination malpractice among secondary school students is linked to their explosive usage of social network which practically exposes them to a wide range of social vices.

However, the study disagrees with the findings of Hartshone (2013) that social network positively impacts on students academic achievement because social network is providing multiple collaboration tools for students to take advantage of and that it aids information and knowledge distribution. There are huge educational benefits in social network such as providing students with the e-learning skills needed for improvement in their academics. The disagreement in the findings of the previous work by Hartshone and the current study could be attributed to the population and area of study. While the former was conducted using undergraduate students as respondents, the current work used secondary school students. Again, Hartshone conducted his study outside the country. One may, not expect a research conducted outside the country to yield the same result with the one conducted locally because overseas countries are well advanced in information and communication technology.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have a number of implications for principals, teachers, guidance counselors, parents and students. The first implication of the study is for the principals and teachers to know that students are using online social network for variety of activities and even without their direction. It draws their attention on the need to pay attention to online network use by students because unless they monitor students' online activities and advice them on good and responsible usage of these networks, it will continue to exert negative impact on their academic activities since they use it purely for socialization and not for accessing educational information. The result of this will be low level of performance of schools.

The study also exposes parents, of the need to closely watch and monitor the online activities of their wards because they may be unduly affected by negative ideas especially by peers. This is even more so given the great effects of peer group pressure on adolescents. For the students, knowledge of the expositions in relation to negative and positive influence of online social network on their academic achievements will enable them to be watchful of their activities. This will ultimately result in improvements in their academic endeavours.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of the study, it is concluded that facebook, 2go and whatsapp are the most commonly used social network among students, who also chat with a small network of friends. The use of social network also has negative influence on their academic achievement. Such negative influence include addiction, poor studying habit and encouraging wrong English language usage. All these negatively affect students learning outcome, hence, if students continue to use social networks unchecked and unmonitored their academic achievement will continue to be poor.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. The Anambra State government should post more guidance counselors to secondary schools to counsel the students on how to overcome the disadvantages of social network.

2. The government and agencies in charge of secondary schools should also formulate policies that will ensure that students' usage of social network is monitored by parents and teachers and the activities limited to academic purposes.

3. The use of social network should be encouraged only for solving problems in education and writing good educational articles by school administrators.

4. Parents should monitor what their children do online, whom they are chatting with and assist in advising them on the need for responsible usage of social network.

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