SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AMONG NIGERIAN STUDENTS: ISSUES ARISING AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

C. J. C. AYATALUMO
Department of Computer Science,
Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana,
Ebonyi State.

And

C. C. UKEGBU
Department of Computer Science,
Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana,
Ebonyi State.

Abstract

The emergence of social media network has created platforms for social interaction with boundless potentials in terms of information sharing and exchange. The only snag is naivety of usage and the possible problem of addiction. This paper aimed to analyze social media addiction among Nigerian students and to proffer possible solutions. Oral interview using structured questions, observation of students' behavior were used for data collection. Findings are that up to 78% of the student population interviewed and monitored spent from 3 to 5 hours of their study time on social media which affects their academic performances within the period reviewed. The remaining 22% who do not spend much of their time in the social media were as a result of their inability to own smartphone. This paper has established that social media has addictive tendencies on students and recommended that students should devote more time on innovative endeavors. Furthermore, social media apps should present more vocational contents, all of which would contribute to meeting the needs of sustainable development in Africa.

Keywords: Social Media, Smartphone, Addiction, Vocational Contents, Facebook, Gender Distribution.

Social media sites are forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos) Webster (2017).

In this era which is called the *digital age*, computer and internet have gained central importance in human life, and social media has a prominent role in this picture (Kirik, Arslan & Gul, 2015). People of all age brackets, especially the young folks are indeed using the social media platforms to entertain, inform, relate and communicate with friends and colleagues without boundaries of distance and time constituting barriers. There are several social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, LinkedIn, Snap Chat, and so on that exist in the social media space.

In the recent past, students are normally seen going to libraries to read with little or no electronic gadgets, acquiring knowledge and pushing the frontiers of academics through informed research and other forms of academic exercises. Conversely, in recent times, students go about with electronic gadgets from computers to smartphones, doing all sorts of activities with the aid of these gadgets within their various institutions. One of the foremost things they do with these gadgets is the use of social media applications (*apps*). The amount of time they spend on these platforms increase on geometric proportions capable of leading to social media addiction and reduced academic performance in the affected students. Amidst all the perceived gains of the internet and its imports, one of which is the pervasive social media platform, the following research questions were formulated to guide this study, namely:

•   Can one ascertain the level of possible addiction or otherwise on students?

•   Does its effect on students vary from one place to the other, for example in the Western world and in Africa?

•   Does it have anything to do with the attitude of the students?

•   Does it affect students' performance in academics over time?

These are the main thrusts of this study with the target population as the students of the Department of Computer Science, Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Unwana, Afikpo, Ebonyi State. Qualitative research approach using discourse analysis and relational analysis was adopted; oral interview and observation of students' behavior in class were used as the methods of data collection.

Review of Related Works

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are virtual communities where users can create individual public profiles, interact with real-life friends and meet other people based on shared interests. They are seen as a 'global consumer phenomenon' with an exponential

rise in usage within the last few years. It is a good thing to socialize: make friends, share feelings and chat via the social media, but the addiction can ruin a student's chances of achieving academic excellence. Social Network Addiction (SNA) is a psychological disorder that affects all people in the world; it is also considered the same as alcoholic addiction or any other human habit. Social Network Addiction (SNA) signs may be detected when the person connected to the social network website starts to lose track of the time, over past their sleep time, and ignores work or any important assignment from school. A solution to social networking can be to set a schedule, or to see a psychologist. According to Pamaoukaghion (2010) Social Network Addiction was known as a psychological disorder around the world. Also, internet addiction leads to social network addiction. According to Young (2009), social networking can be likened to being addicted to drugs or alcohol. Internet addiction is big cause of social network addiction, because people started to explore the internet and by that started visiting social network websites, and, consequently, people went from internet addiction to social network addiction.

Social network addiction leads to many problems such as problems with your family, work, friends, and so on. According to Pamaoukaghion (2010), Facebook is one of the most famous visited social network websites. There are many levels of social network addiction; some of the levels are for emotional low self-esteem and being afraid to be socially exposed.

People with low self-esteem are most likely to fall into social network addiction, because of the unstable social expose with people. According to Pamaoukaghion in a study from the University of Athens, psychiatrists discuss about a woman who lost her job because of being online on a social network website. The discussion was about the situation of the women; that it could be a sign of social network addiction.

According to Cheever (2009), there are five signs which may signal that one has a type of social network addiction. The ones with more relevance include when one is losing sleep over spending hours on social networks; when a person spends more than an hour in social networking; when one ignores work and this could be also school work; and also if the thought of having a day without visiting a social network creates a stress. This is one of the most popular signs of social network addiction, because it is then you start to break your ordinary schedule and start to miss school, work or any other important engagement. This information may sound alarming, or others may find it totally normal for their daily living. According to Hardie & Tee (2007), high internet use was related to high levels of emotional loneliness, but low levels of social loneliness. What this means is that a great number of people who suffer from emotional distress tend to be addicted to social networks. The popularity of the social media made it irresistible for even non users and those who have no idea what it is to begin to be attracted to it, as friends will introduce it to them. This is due to the fact that it costs nothing to register. Awake (2011) acknowledged that it took 38 years for radio signal to

reach 50 million people, 13years for Television to attract same number of viewers and 4years for the internet to do so, but it only took Facebook 12months to have 200million users.

The solution to this problem of social media addiction amongst students can only be effective when certain measures are taken. Eke, Omeukwu, Obiora & Odoh (2014) suggested the following as solutions to social network addiction among Nigerian students:

• Students who are heavy users should moderate the use of social networking sites to avoid addiction and also to create a balance between their offline and online lives.

• Since most students access the various social networking sites through their mobile phones, it is advisable that tertiary and secondary institutions should enact a law making students' use of phones during classes an offence which shall attract drastic punitive measures for the defaulters.

• Tertiary institutions should organize seminars to enlighten students on the not too good aspects of using social networking site as means of interaction. This can be done by exposing students to the importance of face to face communication in the creation of real communication or message sharing. Students should also be exposed to the dangers associated with social media addiction.

• Social media users should know the level of information they share on each of the social media platforms that they are subscribed to. This will help stop the problem of identity theft.

• Provision of laws on the content of social media: students should have a law guiding them on how they use the social media and information they disseminate through the social media.

Materials and Methods

The methodology adopted for this study is Qualitative research approach using discourse and relational analysis respectively. The target population is the students of Department of Computer Science in Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Unwana. The method of data collection was oral interview using structured questions and classroom observation of students. The reason for the adoption of these methods was as a result of how unstructured the issue under study was and how personal and psychological the issues were. So, oral interview will be better for it lends itself to observation of the interviewee with body languages and other nuances that add to the information that could be extracted from the interviewee, unlike when questionnaire is used. Classroom observation afforded the opportunity to see the real state of students' activities in class as it pertains to the subject under study. The population size for the oral interview was 100, while 220 students were observed and monitored in the classroom. The oral interview, like any other qualitative data collection method, was analysed by coding (selecting repeated keywords and phrases) and categories were formed and grouped

into students who owns smartphones and those who do not. Inductive/Deductive analytical approach was used. Using observation method, the 220 students were randomly observed within a period of one week without their knowledge to see if they used social media while in class.

Results

Table 1 shows the distribution of responses by the interviewees in the two known categories. This result is a summary, as space would not allow the presentation of the full interview record. The observation table is shown also (results were estimated)

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Population Sample Table

Oral Interview				Classroom Observation		
Gender	No	%		Gender	No	%
Male	60	60%		Male	109	47.4%
Female	40	40%		Female	121	52.6%
Total	100	100%			230	100%

Table2: Oral Interview Summarized Transcript Table

Questions	Responses									
How many social media apps do have in your phone?	Male					Female				
	None		1	2	3	4	None	1	2	3	4
	56(2 and above) 4(has but don't use them						38(1 and above) 2(has but don't use them				
How many hours do you spend chatting or using the apps in a day (estimated)?	Male				Female			
	At most 2hours	At most 4hours	At most 6hours	At most 8Hours or more	At most 2hours	At most 4hours	At most 6hours	At most 8Hours or more
	55(more than 4hours and above) while 5(almost 2hours)				40(more than 4hours and above)			
Do you combine social media interaction	Male				Female			
	Yes	%	No	%	Yes	%	No	%
	57	95%	3	5%	37	92.5%	3	7.5%

Do you study more when your phone is down or when you did not have a phone	Male				Female			
	Yes	%	No	%	Yes	%	No	%
	60	100	0	0	39	97.5	1	2.5

Do you think you're getting used to these apps to the point that you seem not to do without using them each day whenever your phone is up?	Male				Female			
	Yes	%	No	%	Yes	%	No	%
	47	78	13	22	31	78	9	22

Since you started using the social media apps has it affected your academic performance negatively?	Male				Female			
	Yes	%	No	%	Yes	%	No	%
	48	80%	12	20%	35	87.5%	5	12.5%

Table3: Result of a Structured 7day Observation of Students in the Classroom/Lecture Hall

Day 1	No. Using Social media	Percentage	No. Not Using Social media	Percentage
	150	68%	70	32%
Day 2	No Using Social media	Percentage	No. Not Using Social media	Percentage
	154	70%	65	30%
Day 3	No Using Social media	Percentage	No. Not Using Social media	Percentage

	172	78%	48	22%
Day 4	No Using Social media	Percentage	No. Not Using Social media	Percentage
	200	91%	20	9.1%
Day 5	No Using Social media	Percentage	No. Not Using Social media	Percentage
	88	40%	132	60%
Day 6	No Using Social media	Percentage	No. Not Using Social media	Percentage
	143	65%	77	35%
Day7	No Using Social media	Percentage	No. Not Using Social media	Percentage
	147	67%	73	33%

Discussion of Results

The results obtained from the interview show that both the male and female students used social media apps. Students were seen to have more concentration on their studies when they observed a break, as a result of low battery, on the use of social media apps. The average number of students who were getting addicted to the use of social media due to the amount of time they spend on such platforms are well over 78% (estimated from the interview record table), while 68.3% of students through observation were the ones who used their social media apps in lecture classes. The use of these gadgets while the class is in session reduced a student's ability to comprehend the nitty-gritties of the lecture being presented. The number of hours spent online by 100 students that were interviewed was shown on the interview table. 55 male students spent 4 or more hours daily on social media, especially on the one called *Whatsapp*, although most of them have about 4 or more social media apps installed in their smartphones. On the other hand, the whole 40 female students interviewed agreed that they spend 4 or more hours online daily. All these students, however, were of the opinion that if more of vocational lectures that will impart skills on them were taught, the tendency of practicing those skills will absorb their time, thereby making it rather impossible to use the social media apps. Others attributed their addiction to lack of sufficient equipment in their various school laboratories that can adequately serve the needs of the students during practical. This frequently leads to the grouping of the students, and those not participating stay outside the laboratory with no option than to seek what to keep themselves busy with. In that circumstance, social media sites then were their next point of call.

Out of the 100 students interviewed, 48 male students representing 80% of the male students agreed that their recent academic performances have been short of their original expectations, as the use of social media apps affected their preparation for examination and studies, generally. While studying, the sound of an incoming chats

usually attracted them to their phones, and from then spent minutes to hours chatting, before returning to their studies. This hindered their academic performance. Also, the paper observed that the stake of those who do not own smartphones was different from those who have, as they agreed that they do better with little or no distraction from their studies. This enhanced their academic performance better than those of their counterpart who had smartphones. More so, those whose academic performances declined, due to the addiction to their phone and the social media, acknowledged that when they had no smartphones they performed better academically. From the results, the paper observed that the effects of social media addiction statistically skewed towards the female students. Evidently, there is a gender factor to social media addiction, the paper established.

Conclusion

This paper has established that social media networking addictive tendencies on students and affects their academic performances negatively. The paper has shown that over 78% of the observed and monitored students spent from 3 to 5 hours of their active time on the social media, and, from its findings, it lead to addiction which, of course, made it difficult for students to focus on their studies, thereby reducing their academic performances.

Recommendations

Against the backgrounds of these gloomy developments, this paper, therefore, recommended that:

1. Lecturers should hand in more assignments to the students, especially assignments that have vocational contents, as this would give them very little time to spend on the social media.
2. Government should make available more laboratory equipment which will cater for the increasing number of students to avoid batching them into groups.
3. Application developers should be encouraged to develop educational social media *apps* that will present more vocational contents that will engage the students in productive use of their time.
4. Such innovation in education, the paper expects, will surely contribute to meeting the needs of sustainable development in Africa.

References

Awake (July, 2011). What should I know about social networking? Part 1, *pp. 24.25.*

Cheever, J. (2009). Signs of addiction to online social networking. *Retrieved February, 2011 from Life123: http://www.life123.com/parenting/tweens teens/social-networking/online-social-networking.shtml.*

Eke, Helen N., Omeukwu, Obiora, Charles & Odoh, Jennifer Nneka (2014). The Use of Social Networking Sites among the Undergraduate Students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *Library of Philosophy and Practice (e-journal). Paper 1195. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280048639.*

Hardie, E. & Tee, M. (2007). Excessive internet use: the role of personality, loneliness, and social support networks in internet networking. *Australian Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society. 5 (1), 34-47.*

Pamoukaghion, M. A. & Veronica (2005-2010). Social network addiction-a scientific no man's land? *Topics from Multidimensional Biopsychosocial Perspectives in Young, K. (1998). "Internet addiction: the emergence of a new clinical disorder". Cyber Psychology & Behavior, 1 (3), 237-244. Retrieved November 4, 2017 from DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1089/cpb.1998.1.237.*

Social network addiction. *Retrieved November 4, 2017 from http://carolina-socialnetworkaddiction.blogspot.com.ng/p/literature-review.html.*

Young, K. (1998). internet addiction: the emergence of a new clinical disorder. *Cyber Psychology & Behavior, 1 (3), 237-244 DOI: Retrieved November 4, 2017 from DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1089/cpb.1998.1.237.*