EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ACADEMIC–RELATED USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DEKINA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KOGI STATE

Amaka Charity Okoye (Ph.D)
amakaokoye2020@gmail.com

And

Samuel A. Olonikawu (Ph.D)
Department of Educational Foundations
Faculty of Education
Kogi State University
samuelolonikawu@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
The study explored academic-related use of social networking sites by senior secondary school students in Dekina Local Government Area Kogi state. The study had three specific objectives which were translated into three research questions. The design of the study was descriptive survey and 7,540 students in 54 secondary schools constituted the population of the study. A total of 10 schools were selected through simple random sampling from the 54 secondary schools and 12 students were randomly chosen from each school, giving a sample size of 120. A questionnaire titled "Social Networking Sites for Academic Purpose Questionnaire (SNSAPQ) was used for data collection. The SNSAPQ was validated by three experts. Using Cronbach Alpha, the reliability of SNSAPQ was found to be 0.76. Frequency, percentage and mean were used in the analysis of data collected. Findings revealed that the students have account with all the identified social networking sites and employ them in their academics. It was therefore concluded that students in Dekina Local Government use social networking sites for academic purposes. It was suggested among others, that since the virtual world has found its way into education and the present generation of students is a technology savvy one, the existing school curriculum be re-designed by relevant authorities to officially accommodate online pedagogy, thereby making every teacher to adopt same.

Keywords: Exploratory, Academic related use of social networking sites.

INTRODUCTION
The advent of digital technology in the 21st century birthed new forms of communication in education. One of them is the social media. Social media is a virtual space where people interact by creating, disseminating and receiving information in text, image, video and audio formats using social media applications (Boyd, 2008). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) view social media as a new form of communication that consists of a variety of communication tools such as, blogs, collaborative projects, social networking sites, content
communities and virtual world. These sites according to Correa, Bachmann and Hinsley (2013) provide unlimited opportunities to interact, socialize and share with one another, and in the view of Goeghan in Oriji & Amadi (2016) are today changing the previous means of communication and collaboration. According to Al-rahimi, Othman and Musa (2013), social media has become an extremely important means of communication in the present age and connect people with similar interest in sharing activities. Social media exist so as to provide communication among people regardless of distance, making it easy for people to share information, files, pictures, videos, create blogs, send messages and conduct real time conversations (Boyd, 2008). It is a social structure made up of individuals or organizations called nodes which are connected by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, dislike, knowledge or prestige, relationship, beliefs, financial exchange, among others. (Boyd, 2008). These social fora are playing a large and influential role in decision making in global economy, social and educational ventures. The driving factors for adoption of social media are progressively ubiquitous access, convenience, functionality and flexibility of social technologies. Social technologies provided on the internet are usually free or require marginal investment, eliminating a potential barrier to adoption (Fatokun, 2019).

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are social media tools. SNSs are “web based services that allow individuals to construct a 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 other users within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Selwyns (2009) view SNSs as personal and personalisable spaces for online conversations and sharing of content based typically on the maintenance and sharing of ‘profiles’ where individual users can represent themselves to other users through the display of personal information, interests, photographs and so on. Social networking websites were popularized by Facebook and Myspace (Selwyns, 2009) and are currently being used regularly by millions of people. Other SNSs include, but are not limited to WhatsApp, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube and 2go. The features of social networking sites include, but are not limited to the following:

i. Free web space: Each member is provided free web space to publish content.

ii. Free web address: Each member gets a unique web address that becomes the identity of that individual or business. Members can then use their web address or URL to promote themselves or their business.

iii. Building profile: Members are provided web space to build their profiles thereby allowing friends or contacts to identify members from their profiles.
iv. Uploading of content: The social networking sites allow members to upload text messages, photographs, audio and video files free of cost. All posts are arranged in descending order with the last post coming first. Further, all contents are published in real time and become visible instantly.

v. Building conversations: Content posted by members can be browsed and commented upon by all members who form part of the community. Content can also be tagged from third party sites on subjects that interest the group.

vi. Chat Client: Most social networking sites have chat clients and members can chat with one another in real time.

vii. Page creation: Members are allowed to create pages where they can post articles or photographs related to a theme. The pages can also be used to promote business.

All the features discussed apply to all the social networking sites considered in this study.

Primarily, and as the name implies, social networking sites are designed for social interaction and this makes SNSs highly appealing to youngsters, especially university students. In fact, Facebook was initially designed to facilitate communication among university students. The use of SNSs has trickled down to students in lower educational institutions, like the secondary schools, especially students in the senior classes. One would think that these secondary school students are still children given that some of them are below 18 years of age, and as such should be engrossed in their academics, being deliberately deprived the use of smart phones by their parents and guardians to enable them concentrate on their studies. But this is not the case, as these youngsters are seen using smart phones. What actually do these youngsters do with smart phones? What is the online behaviour of such young and inexperienced minds? Could it be that there are educational related uses to which these phones are put, or that they are just used for wild and aimless internet surfing by these young users?

Chai-lee (2013) and Al-rahmi (2014) posit that social media tools like SNSs are highly beneficial to students of higher education as it makes modern the process of student learning, interaction, collaboration and sharing. Goehan (2012) reported that the essence of social networking is that the users generate the content and this content, the author emphasized has implications for education. Other features that make SNSs attractive to students in high school and university settings are the orientation of SNSs towards self-presentation, the viewing of others’ personal information and multiple means of communication and exchange. Livingstone (2009) is of the view that younger users often use social networking in the micro-management of their social lives and as an arena for social exploration and to develop networking skills. Oriji and Amadi (2016) report that social media is easy to adopt and appeals to digital natives
as it enhances data and resource sharing. Some other researchers have also highlighted the use of social networking sites in education. Prior to the advent of digital technology, educational communication between the learner and the instructor and even among students was achieved through face to face interaction. Selwyn (2009) report that a growing number of educators celebrate the potential of social networking to (re)engage learners with their studies, that is, it supports lifelong learning; Mason (2006) claims that social networking applications share many of the desirable qualities of good ‘official’ education technologies – permitting peer feedback and matching the social contexts of learning such as the school, university or local community while Maloney (2007) is of the view that the conversational, collaborative and communal qualities of social networking services are felt to ‘mirror much of what we know to be good models of learning, in that they are collaborative and encourage active participatory role for users. On his part, Ziegler (2007) contends that SNSs offer ‘the capacity to radically change the educational system to better motivate students as engaged learners, rather than learners who are primarily passive observers of the educational process. Bugeja (2006) on the other hand posits that SNSs are also celebrated for promoting a ‘critical thinking in learners’ about their learning, which is one of ‘the traditional objectives’ of education’

In the view of Adeyanju in Famutimi (2013), the use of social media should be encouraged at all levels of the Nigerian Education system. The author encouraged educational institutions to build their instructional framework around social networking sites as this will expose students to diverse digital media technologies and prepare them for the demands of the digital media-inclined economy. The author added that integrating social media in educational experiences of students will help them nurture a positive attitude towards the use of technology, not only in their education but in their lives. The author went ahead to suggest that in this digital age, teaching, learning and various educational activities should revolve around social media. In this vein, a teacher or lecturer as the case may be, can create a social media platform which he regularly updates and posts assignments, tutorial questions, suggestions for further reading and also receive feedback from the students. In addition, apart from helping learners stay updated with school assignments and projects, and starting discussions around their school work, replicating this on various social media platforms will help create an engagement which helps students learn better and help them develop the 21st century skills needed for a successful career after school.

Concerns that have been raised about the use of social media in education include the thinking that social networking may distract learners from their studies. Cassidy (2006), for instance, observed the heightened disengagement, alienation and disconnection of learners from education, the detrimental effect that social networking tools may have on ‘traditional’
skills and literacy (Brabazon, 2007), and the fears that SNSs could contribute to the intellectual and scholarly de-powering of learners making them incapable of independent critical thought (Ziegler, 2007).

The place of SNSs in education has sparked off a debate among scholars on whether or not SNSs is a curse or a blessing to students’ learning. It is based on the foregoing that the researcher explored secondary school students’ education related use of social networking sites in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study explored secondary school students’ education related use of social networking sites in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the social network sites popular with secondary school students in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State.
2. Investigate how secondary school students relate use of social networking sites to educational purposes.
3. Identify the challenges of social networking among secondary school students on their education in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To guide this study, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the social networking sites popular with secondary school students in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State?
2. What is the education-related use of social networking sites of secondary school students in Dekina local government area of Kogi State?
3. What is the challenge of social networking on secondary school students’ education in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State?

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study is descriptive survey. The population for this study was 7,540 students in 54 secondary schools in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State. A total of 10 schools were selected through simple random sampling from the 54 secondary schools in the study area. Twelve students were randomly chosen from each school from among users of SNS bringing the sample size to 120. The research instrument used is a questionnaire titled "Students’ Educational Use of Social Networking Sites Questionnaire (SEUSNSQ). The instrument comprised of 30 items designed to elicit students’ responses on their education – related use of social networking sites. The instrument had two sections: A and B. Section A comprised the respondents’ background information which include name of school, class, age.
of respondent. Section B had items designed to elicit information from the students on their education related use of social networking sites. Section B had three clusters. Cluster one comprises 10 items designed to elicit information on the social networking sites (SNSs) students belong to. Cluster two contains 10 items designed to elicit information on the level of usage of social networking sites by students for education while cluster three also had 10 items designed to elicit information on the challenges encountered by students using social networking sites for academic purposes. The SNSAPQ was validated by two experts; one in Measurement and Evaluation, and the other in Educational Technology. Using Cronbach Alpha, the reliability of the SEUSNSQ was found to be 0.76. Frequency, percentage and mean were used to answer the research questions. Research question 1 was answered using frequency and percentage of respondents that consented (agreed) to having or not having an account with any of the identified social networking sites. Mean was used to answer research question 2 and 3. For research question 2 and 3, a four - point response options of Strongly Agree (3.50 – 4.49), Agree (2.50 – 3.49), Disagree (1.50 – 2.49) and Strongly Disagree (0.00 – 1.49) was used in rating the responses to the questionnaire items. Any item with a mean response value of 0.00 – 2.49 was regarded as Disagree while any item with a mean response value of 2.50 and above was regarded as Agree.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the social networking sites popular with secondary school students in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State?

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Responses on the Social Networking Sites Students Have Account With

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/n</th>
<th>SNS</th>
<th>Agree Frequency</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
<th>Disagree Frequency</th>
<th>Disagree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2go</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Myspace</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Orkut</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Linkedin</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>86.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Google</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Yahoo</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>You Tube</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that 93 (77.5%) students have account with Facebook, 88 students (73.3%) have 2go account, 50 students (60%) have WhatsApp account while 77 students (64.2%) affirmed that they have Google account. It was also revealed that 33 students (27.5%) have Yahoo account, 32 students (26.9%) use YouTube, 16 students (13.3%) have Linkedin
account, 16 students (13.3%) use MySpace, 14 students (11.7%) have Twitter account and 12 students (10.0%) indicated that they have Orkut account.

**Research Question 2:** What is the education-related use of social networking sites of secondary school students in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/n</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Search for learning materials for assignments and projects</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>To get study partners</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Making appointments with teachers for academic discussions.</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Accessing e-newspapers and e-magazines.</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>To access educational pages for latest information regarding academics</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Chatting, viewing of profiles of other members and just catching fun</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Viewing assignments posted by teachers on their pages</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Keeping in touch with class and school mates</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Provision of feedback on assignments posted by teachers</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>To motivate other students to learn on the platforms provided by SNSs</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 had mean score of 3.28, 2.62, 2.69, 2.80, 2.87, 2.95, 2.76, 3.26 and 2.88 respectively. On the other hand, only item 6 had a mean score of 1.93. It then means that students use social network sites for all the academic purposes identified, except for item 6 which was rated low (1.93) which is an indication that the students do not just browse SNSs for chatting, viewing profile of others or just to catch fun online.

**Research Question 3:** What is the challenge of social networking on secondary school students’ education in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State?
Table 3: Mean Rating of Responses on the Challenges of Social Networking on Secondary School Students’ Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/n</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Difficulty in concentrating on school work due to frequent visit to social network sites.</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Drop in academic performance due to unrestrained social networking.</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Diversion of attention from learning</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Joining groups on SNSs that engage in cybercrimes, which can stall my educational pursuit if discovered.</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reduced ability to write effectively without relying on the computer’s grammar and spell-check feature.</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Devoting more time to chatting with friends on SNSs than engaging in academic activities.</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>High cost of technological devices, like smartphones</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lack of seriousness in studying due to lack of supervision by a teacher</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>.831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>High cost of data for browsing.</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Poor internet connectivity when browsing.</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>.9452</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 reveals that item 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 have mean score of 1.92, 1.85, 1.36, 1.87, 1.95, 1.47 and 1.61. This is an indication that all the items identified do not pose as challenges to students in their usage of social networking sites for academic purposes. The mean score of 2.54, 2.52 and 2.67 in respect of item 1, 9 and 10 respectively, show that students are faced with challenges of frequently visiting SNSs to the detriment of their studies, high cost of browsing and poor internet connectivity when using social network sites for academic purposes.

DISCUSSION

Findings revealed that most secondary school students have Facebook, 2go, Google and WhatsApp accounts, while few have with the other networking sites identified. It is believed that they do so because they can easily interact with one another on these platforms which are common among students, aiding faster dissemination of school and social information. The finding is in line with that of Ibezim (2013) that most undergraduates at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka have Facebook, 2go and WhatsApp accounts and few have with the other networking sites.

Findings also revealed the education related use of social networking sites of students to include, searching for learning materials for assignments and projects, to get study partners, making appointment with teachers for academic discussions, to access online newspapers and magazines, get latest information regarding academics and for keeping in touch with class and
school mates. Other education-related uses to which SNSs are put include provision of feedback on assignments posted by teachers and to motivate other students to learn on the platforms provided by SNSs. These findings agree with the works of Omekwu, Eke and Odoh (2014) that most students use social networking sites for connecting with their classmates for online study. On the other hand, Ibezim and Asogwa (2014) found that students abandon their studies for online meetings and chat on social media.

Findings of the study also revealed the challenges encountered while using social networking sites for educational purposes to include, difficulty in concentrating on school work due to frequent and unrestrained visit to social networking sites, high cost of data for browsing and poor internet connectivity. This finding corroborates an earlier finding by Ogedebe (2012), whose research on the use of Facebook and its effects on academic performance of students revealed that, the more time students spend on Facebook, the lower Grade Point Averages (GPA) they have. Furthermore, the study showed that the more students update their Facebook status, the less likely they have a good class attendance and the longer the time spent by students on Facebook, the less they participate in class and finally when a student has more friends on Facebook than offline, he spends more time on the platform. On the other hand, Boyd (2004) earlier opined that there is a difference between students who do social networking and those who don’t, adding that social networking is used by the students, so that they can be capable of coping with learning culture as it is changing rapidly leading to the changes in the attitude of students to knowledge seeking. The change in attitude according to the author is that they are paying more attention and importance to sharing information in groups and interacting with one another than learning individually.

CONCLUSION

From the data, it can be concluded that secondary school students in Dekina Local Government Area use SNSs for education purposes and so social networking sites have come to stay. Being online based, SNSs have capacity to increase access to education. It could ease learning by providing access to varieties of learning resources for completing assignments and projects, while encouraging collaborative learning. The utilization of SNSs in the educational sector is yet to be significantly embraced. Nigeria institutions can exploit the platforms made available by SNSs by integrating every form of it, to improve her educational standards and thereby reduce the level of technological illiteracy in the society, and arm her youngsters with the tools for meaningful living as global citizens of the 21st century. Technology holds the key to the future and to a large extent will determine the prosperity of individuals and nations. The Nigerian child cannot therefore afford not to learn like his contemporaries the world over, considering that the world of work favours the better equipped. The youngsters as they employ
social networks in their studies. There is need for discipline of purpose in social networking for academic reasons, as there is the strong temptation to veer into socializing (e.g. chatting and viewing pictures) when prompted by the notification features of these sites. On the other hand, if properly applied, social networking will be of immense value in the Nigerian education space.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

1. The existing school curriculum should be re–designed by the relevant school authorities to officially accommodate online pedagogy, thereby making every teacher to integrate social networking sites in the learning process.

2. When online learning is domesticated in secondary schools in Nigeria by the Federal Ministry of Education, it is expected that computer laboratories would be established and equipped by respective schools, to serve the needs of students and teachers.

3. Nigerian government should equip secondary schools with computers by creating computer laboratory in each school and financing education adequately to enable schools procure and install information and communication technology infrastructure that can enhance internet connectivity to serve students.

4. Parents and guardians should be encouraged to get smart phones and data subscriptions for their children and wards, and monitor their usage of these phones.

5. Schools should retrain teachers not only to become computer literate but to accept and assimilate technology oriented innovations, to enable them teach and guide their students,

6. Students should be exposed to acceptable online ethics and desired behaviour to guide their social networking.

**REFERENCES**


