

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF EDUCATION, NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY AWKA

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Abstract

In today's digitally interconnected world, social media use has become an integral part of the lives of students worldwide, students of the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University inclusive. The study assessed the impact of social media use on the academic engagement and performance of Faculty of Education students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. Three research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 2022/2023 session, 300 and 400 level regular undergraduates of the faculty. Sample size comprised of 750 of the undergraduate students sampled using convenient sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a 15-item questionnaire constructed by the researchers. Three experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka validated the instrument. The reliability of the instrument which was obtained with Cronbach alpha yielded a coefficient of 0.70, 0.71 and 0.70 were obtained for clusters 1, 2 and 3 respectively while an overall alpha coefficient of 0.70 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using arithmetic mean. The findings revealed that social media use has a positive impact on both academic engagement and academic performance of undergraduate students of the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that social media is a veritable tool for learning among undergraduate students of faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. It was recommended among others that students should devote greater part of their times on social media to attending to academic activities.

Keywords: Social media use, academic engagement, performance, undergraduate students.

Introduction

In this digital and contemporary age, social media has evolved as an influential and all-important platform that its impact cuts across various facets of individuals' lives and the society at large (Bhat, 2024). The expansion in technology has affected internet software, thus leading to chatting sites known as social media (Asemah, Okpanachi & Edegoh, 2013). Globally, social media has become a very important aspect of people's lives, students inclusive (Yan, 2021). Such social media platforms which include WhatsApp, Youtube, Facebook, X, Instagram, and Snapchat have become integral parts of the daily routines of students worldwide (Tayo, Adebola & Yahya, 2019). Social media refers to internet-based platforms and technologies that enable individuals and communities to create, share, and exchange content, information, ideas, and engage in digital communication. It facilitates online interaction, networking, and the formation of virtual communities. Social media platforms are designed to enable users share text, images, videos, and other multimedia content with others in real-time or near-real-time (Mosharrfa, Akther & Siddique, 2024).

The use of social media among university students in Nigeria is prevalent. Anierobi (2021) reported that undergraduate students in a federal university in Anambra State use social media often while Asemah et al (2013) showed that undergraduate students make use of social media to a very great extent. In their study using university students in western Nigeria, Akinwalere and Adeosun (2022) observed that 87.0% of the students use social media very often while 80% of them access social media platforms for information update. Students use social media platforms for various purposes ranging from academic, entertainment, business, information, to connecting with online friends (Tayo et al, 2019). This implies that social media when properly used can provide a springboard for socializing with peers, sharing academic-related information, accessing educational resources, staying updated on campus events, and networking with fellow students and professionals.

Social media could, therefore, be said to be playing a paramount role in shaping students for self development which can also facilitate their engagement in academic activities. However, Asadullah and Yeasmin (2023) reported that social media can have positive and negative impact on users and by implication, on student users. Although, social media use can serve as a way of sourcing materials for academic purposes, it can also be a source of distraction from students when misused. Mangden and Diyoshak (2023) reported that although the students use different social media on daily basis for different purposes such as to connect with other people for academic or commercial purposes; it also served as a distraction to them. Distractions from social media use can affect students' academic behaviour including their academic engagement of students.

Academic engagement involves students' cognitive, behavioural, and psychological commitments to their learning and a crucial determinant of students' success and actualization of their academic goals (Anierobi et al, 2024). It encompasses active participation in learning activities, interaction with peers and instructors, and the willingness to invest time and effort into academic tasks. Contextually, behavioural engagement involves such overt academic behaviours as attendance to school/class, participation in school/class activities, conduct, ability to take part in academic tasks; psychological engagement are emotional and affective commitments and passion which enable the student take delight and become enthusiastic over his academic responsibilities, while cognitive engagements refer to the mental and intellectual efforts of students towards studies. Cognitive involves paying attention, interest and thought processes towards understanding curricular experiences the student is exposed to (Bowden et al, 2021).

Literature reveals that social media usage can have either positive or negative impact on students. For instance, while Landa-Blanco et al (2024) reported that TikTok users experienced higher levels of addiction, anxiety, and depression more than non-users and has indirect inverse effects on their academic engagement. Scholars such as Manu, Oduro, and Antwi, (2023) showed that use of social media improved the engagement of Chinese students in school activities through sharing of academic related information. Onwu, Ononaiwu, Jombo-Mba and Akaneme (2021) carried out a study that examines the influence of social media usage on academic engagement of university undergraduates in Enugu State of Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that social media usage negatively influence the academic engagement of undergraduates while female undergraduates' social media usage is equal to their male counterparts. Scholars have argued that when students actively engage in their studies, they would be disposed for good academic resilience (Anierobi et al, 2024) which could promote their engagement in academic tasks. Academic engagement also has been fingered as a factor in performance (Asanre, Ifamuyiwa, & Abiodun, 2024)

Academic performance implies the level of achievement a student made on curricular and extra-curricular activities available for them in school. Academic performance is broader in scope than academic achievement which is limited to grades obtained in class works. Students' academic performance reveals the extent to which a student has achieved their educational goals. Contextually, performance and achievement are used interchangeably. Lamas in Anierobi et al (2022) construed that the importance of academic performance is not only in the achievement of educational and learning goals but also necessary for transformation which occurs in the cognitive, affective, and behavioural domain of the student. Deductively, academic performance can be measured by students' self-report on their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor outcomes in their academic endeavour. Academic performance of students is a thing of interest given its role in determining the level of their achievement of academic goals.

There is no consensus among scholars that social media usage hampers academic performance of students. Anierobi et al (2021) observed that social media addiction promotes academic procrastination and decreases academic performance among undergraduate students, whereas Mosharrafa et al (2024) reported that its usage significantly improves academic performance when mediated by psychological well-being. Hill et al (2024) emphasized that excessive use of social media by students gives room for addiction, which promotes academic procrastination, shortens sleep duration and quality, results to academic stress and poor academic performance. Scholars also observed that irrespective of school type and social media usage times ranging from high, moderate, and low, no students perform and behave alike (Atomatofa et al, 2024). Similarly, Malu and Nnamdi-Eze (2023) posited that social media usage among students does not always decrease but promote students' academic performance, while Masrom et al (2023) reported that excessive use of social media gets students more engaged in entertainments and social life to the detriment of their academics.

Though, scholars have explored the relationship between social media usage and factors which bother on academic outcomes of students, there are still gaps in the literature especially in the study area. Social media has become part of students lives and rationale for its use could have either a positive or negative impact on student users. Given the import of academic engagement and performance of students which distractions from misuse of social media could hamper, this study becomes apt. This study, therefore, explored social media use and its association with

academic engagement and performance of undergraduates in the faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Statement of the Problem

In today's increasingly digitized educational landscape, students go to school to acquire knowledge. They can only do so by constantly and actively engaging in academic activities made available to them by their teachers. Active engagement no doubt promotes good academic performance which is the desire of every student especially undergraduate economics option students in the department of educational foundations.

However, it is evident through research that the use of social media is prevalent in universities. Most students most often perform below expectation in some of the courses they offer which could be attributed to excessive use of social media. For instance, previous studies have shown that excessive use of social media leads to academic procrastination with a ripple effect on the performance of students. Moreover, distractions from social media have been underscored as a factor that hampers the academic engagement of students. Scholars have shown that social media has been a source of distraction to students leading them to resort unconsciously and inadvertently to using chatting signs and abbreviations even while writing formal schoolwork which cannot be decoded by their lecturers. Given that distractions from social media usage have a detrimental impact on the academic engagement and achievement of students in the university, this study becomes necessary, and the problem of this study posed in a question form is what impact social media use has on academic engagement and academic performance of undergraduate students of the faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the prevalence of social media use among faculty of Education students, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?
2. What is the impact of social media use on the academic engagement among faculty of Education students, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?
3. What is the impact of social media use on the academic performance among faculty of Education students, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka?

Methods

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study comprised all the 300 and 400 levels, 2022/2023 session regular undergraduate students of the Faculty Education in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The sample comprised 750 students. The sample comprised both male and female students drawn through convenient sampling technique based on the number of the students that filled the google form questionnaire shared in the platform of the class levels concerned. The research instrument used for this present study was a structured questionnaire, developed by the researchers and coined from literature. The instrument was titled "Impact of Social Media Use on Academic Engagement and Academic Performance questionnaire" (PISMUAEAPQ). The questionnaire has two sections of A and B. Section A sought information on personal data of the respondents while section B has 3 clusters and sought information relevant for answering the research questions. The instrument contains a total of 15 items (5 each for cluster 1, 2, and 3 and was based on four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) and weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher submitted the instrument alongside with the title, purpose of the study, scope of the study and research questions to 3 experts in the Department of Education Foundations in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha

Statistics and alpha coefficients of 0.70, 0.71 and 0.70 were obtained for clusters 1, 2 and 3 respectively while an overall alpha coefficient of 0.70 was obtained. This shows that the instrument was reliable and was used as instrument for data collection. Data collected were analyzed in line with research questions. The research questions were answered using arithmetic mean. The decision rule is that a mean value of 2.50 was used as the criterion. The implication of this is that any item that scored a mean of 2.50 and above would be taken as “agreed” responses while items that scored less than 2.50 would be regarded as “disagreed” responses.

Ethical Considerations

In the present study, the consent of the respondents was sought for before they filled the google form questionnaire. The authors had a section in the form that assured the participants that their responses were strictly for research purposes and that their identity would be confidential. They were also informed of the opportunity to discontinue with responding to the questionnaire items anytime they feel uncomfortable about it. With this information, only the willing 300 and 400 levels regular undergraduate students of the faculty of Education who understood that their responses were for research purposes and their identity kept confidential took part in the study.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of social media use among students of Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?

Table 1: Mean rating of respondents on the prevalence of social media use among students of Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

| S/N | Items | SA 4 | A 3 | D 2 | SD 1 | Total | Mean | Decision |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|-------|------------|---------------|
| 1 | I spend more than two hours daily on social media | 211 | 423 | 82 | 34 | 750 | 3.12 | Agreed |
| 2 | Social media is the first thing I check in the morning before attending my classes | 192 | 412 | 113 | 33 | 750 | 3.05 | Agreed |
| 3 | The number of followers or friends I have on social media is important to me | 106 | 384 | 152 | 108 | 750 | 2.66 | Agreed |
| 4 | I use multiple social media platforms simultaneously while working on class assignments | 314 | 312 | 92 | 32 | 750 | 3.25 | Agreed |
| 5 | Social media is a significant source of distraction when preparing for my exams | 195 | 372 | 110 | 73 | 750 | 2.95 | Agreed |
| Grand Mean | | | | | | | 3.0 | Agreed |

In Table 1, all the items obtained mean rating above the criterion mean of 2.50, above showing that the respondents agreed that social media use is prevalent among them. Therefore, social media use is prevalent among students of Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of social media use on the academic engagement among students of Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University?

Table 2: Mean rating of respondents on impact of social media use on the academic engagement among students of Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

| S/N | Items | SA 4 | A 3 | D 2 | SD 1 | Total | Mean | Decision |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|-------|------|----------|
| 6. | Social media enhances my overall engagement with coursework? | 114 | 492 | 112 | 32 | 750 | 2.94 | Agreed |
| 7. | I feel more connected to my academic peers through social media, fostering a sense of academic community? | 212 | 393 | 102 | 43 | 750 | 3.07 | Agreed |
| 8. | Social media discussions on course materials motivate me to actively participate in class? | 269 | 288 | 105 | 88 | 750 | 3.01 | Agreed |
| 9. | I find it difficult to balance my time between social media and engaging in coursework? | 186 | 183 | 220 | 162 | 750 | 2.52 | Agreed |
| 10 | Participating in online forums and discussions about courses I offer enhances my understanding of course materials? | 133 | 412 | 122 | 123 | 750 | 2.81 | Agreed |
| Grand Mean | | | | | | | 2.87 | Agreed |

In Table 2, all the items obtained mean rating above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating their agreement on items suggesting that social media facilitates academic engagement. This implies that social media use has a positive impact on academic engagement of students of Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Research Question 3: What impact of does social media use have on academic performance of undergraduate students of Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University?

Table 3: Mean of respondents on impact of social media use on academic performance of students of Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

| S/N | Items | SA 4 | A 3 | D 2 | SD 1 | Total | Means | Decision |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|-------|-------|-----------|
| 11. | Social media provides a platform for collaborative learning and group discussions related to lecture materials | 142 | 523 | 43 | 42 | 750 | 3.05 | Agreed |
| 12 | Using social media has improved my ability to communicate course concepts effectively | 293 | 352 | 72 | 33 | 750 | 3.25 | Agreed |
| 13. | I believe my grades would improve if I reduced my time on social media | 252 | 274 | 140 | 84 | 750 | 2.95 | Agreed |
| 14. | I find it challenging to concentrate on my studies due to social media distractions | 192 | 132 | 274 | 152 | 750 | 2.45 | Disagreed |
| 15. | Social media positively impacts my academic performance | 312 | 313 | 92 | 33 | 750 | 3.25 | Agreed |
| Grand Mean | | | | | | | 2.99 | Agreed |

Data in Table 3 including the cluster mean obtained mean rating above the criterion point of 2.50 except disagreement that social media use distracts them from concentrating on their studies. This indicates agreement that social media use improves academic performance. Therefore, social media use has a positive impact on academic performance among students of Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study have shown that social media use is prevalent among student of Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This could be attributed to the fact that social media has become part of human life, globally as a means of connecting with other people and for other purposes in line with the findings of Tayo et al (2019) that students use social media platforms for various purposes ranging from academic, entertainment, business, information, to connecting with online friends. This finding agrees with Anierobi et al (2021) who reported that undergraduate students in a federal university in Anambra State use social media often, It also aligns with the findings of Asemah et al (2013) which showed that undergraduate students make use of social media to a very great extent. Similarly, the finding of the study validates that of Akinwalere and Adeosun (2022) who observed that 87.0% of the university students in western Nigeria, use social media very often while 80% of them access social media platforms for information update.

The study revealed that social media use has a positive impact on the academic engagement of undergraduate students of the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This could be attributed to the lecturers' efforts at connecting with the students online through WhatsApp platforms for online follow-up after daily classes. Lecturers' online connectedness with students propels students to be actively engaged in their studies. The finding of this study aligns with Manu, Oduro, and Antwi, (2023) showed that use of social media improved the engagement of China students in school activities through sharing of academic related information. It disagrees with the findings of Onwu, Ononaiwu, Jombo-Mba and Akaneme (2021) which revealed that social media usage negatively influence the academic engagement of undergraduate students in Enugu, Nigeria. The finding of the study also contradicts that of Landa-Blanco et al (2024) which found that TikTok users experienced higher levels of addiction, anxiety and depression more than non-users and has indirect inverse effects on their academic engagement. This disparity in findings could be attributed to the disparity in exposures to online lecturer-students connectedness that students of the faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University receive which their counterparts in other universities might be enjoying.

Finally, the study's finding showed that social media use has a positive impact on the academic performance of undergraduate students of the faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. It is understandable that when students are made to be actively involved in their studies through social media platforms as obtained in the faculty of Education, NAU, it will no doubt bolster their academic performance. This finding affirms Mosharrafa et al (2024) who observed that its usage significantly improves academic performance when mediated by psychological well-being. It also confirms the findings of Malu and Nnamdi-Eze (2023) posited that social media usage among students does not always decrease but promote students' academic performance. However, it contradicts Anierobi et al (2021) who found that social media addiction promotes academic procrastination and decreases academic performance among undergraduate students. It further disagrees with Hill et al (2024) that excessive use of social media by students gives room for addiction, which promotes academic procrastination, shortens sleep duration and quality, results to academic stress and poor academic performance. Finally,

the finding of the study denies the finding by Masrom et al (2023) which reported that excessive use of social media gets students more engaged in entertainments and social life to the detriment of their academics. The disparity in the findings of the studies could be in lecturers' restructured method of teaching which gives room for online academic follow-up with undergraduate students of the faculty of Education, NAU with a ripple positive impact on their academic performance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that social media use is prevalent among undergraduate students in the faculty of Education, NAU. It was also concluded that social media use has a positive impact on both academic engagement and academic performance of the students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Students who are addicted to social media and who find it distracting to their academics should reduce the number of times spent on these media platforms.
2. Students should devote greater part of the time spent on social media to academic activities.
3. More online group pages and platforms, such, as class, departmental and Faculty pages should be encouraged and created specifically for academic discussions, so as to maximize the educational potentials of social media.

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