

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ON THE READING HABITS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) on the reading habits of undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The design of the study was descriptive survey. Four research questions guided the study. The population of the study comprised all the 21,221 regular students of the Awka campus of the university. The sample for the study consists of 200 regular students selected through multi-stage sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a 27 item questionnaire titled "Influence of Social Networking Sites" (ISNS) that was structured on a four point rating scale. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument and the coefficient of 0.87 was obtained. The data collected were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that most of the students visited social networking sites several times daily and spent an average time of 30 minutes-2 hours per visit. Internet addictions, distraction from academic works and exposure to immoral acts were identified as negative impacts of social networking sites on students. The study further found out that deleting of social networking accounts was among the strategies that will solve social networking problems. The researchers recommended among others that lecturers should organize proper orientation on when and how to use social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp for students in tertiary institutions, and they should also discourage students from bringing their cell phones to classes.

Introduction

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are recent technological boom in the world of information. It is an online channel that aims at building and reflecting on the social relation among peoples of the world, who may share

common interest or activities. Social networking sites are becoming very popular means of both interpersonal and public communication in Nigeria. According to Adomi and Ejirefe (2012), social networking refers to activities, practices and behaviour among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions using interactive media.

Social networking sites are modern interactive communication channels through which people connect to one another, share ideas, experiences, pictures, messages and information of interest. Social networking sites are websites that allow those who have account with them to communicate with a selected group of friends (Awake, 2011). They provide various interactive platforms based on the intention of their respective founders. They range from social, political, academic, businesses, sports, romance, marriage and so on. Therefore, social networking sites by nature are capable of educating, informing, entertaining and inflaming the audience. Most of the social networks are web-based and provide means for their users to interact via the internet, such as e-mail and instant-messaging. Social networks allow activities, events and interaction within their individual networks.

Young (2010) defined social networking as the process of finding friends and managing friendship through the internet. Through it, people seek and enjoy the companionship of others online. According to Anderson (2013), social networking is defined as the act of exchanging information; private or public through various forms of technology such as internet, cell phones and other services.

Students use social networking for various reasons. Some use it to communicate ideas, feelings, personal information, video streaming and pictures. While some use it for the purpose of connecting with families and friends location notwithstanding, keeping up with the happenings and events of the daily lives and also for academic purposes. To consider the positive influence of social networking, Lusk (2010) posits that online communities can afford students' academic assistance and support. Social networking provides quick access to virtual space which students can explore with friends having similar academic needs. In contrast, Wang, Chen and Liang (2011), in their findings on effects of social media (networking included) on college students, showed that social media use is negatively associated with academic performance. They also found out that about two-thirds of the students are seen to be going through the internet while in class receiving lessons/lectures or doing homework at home. According to them, this multi-tasking may increase distraction and negatively affect students' reading habits and eventual performance.

Reading is a means of language acquisition, communication, and of sharing information and idea. It is an essential tool for lifelong learning. When someone looks into a written text and starts to absorb the information from the written linguistic message, he is said to be reading. Reading is an interactive process between the reader and the writer. According to Brounger and Lewis (2006), reading is a process which enlightens the mind, makes the intellect sharper and makes an individual travel far without motion. This suggests that reading is a mental activity which is always complex and involves intellectual skills.

Reading is not just about the printed material, but about the ability to interpret anything that is intended to convey a message or that which is to enable communication. Hettings and Knapp (2011) are of the opinion that one of the most important factors in education is the ability to read, understand and critically apprehend text. According to Busayo (2005), we read for a variety of aesthetic purpose; for enjoyment and relaxation, to get information, to develop skills, to follow instructions, to develop an understanding of ourselves and of the world.

Reading helps in all-round development of a person from his birth to death. It adds new vision to the eyes and new wisdom to the mind. Reading habit is an important aspect for students to improve their general academic performance. It is a deliberate effort towards understanding and acquiring knowledge. The activity of reading is regarded as a habit when it is repeatedly carried out. According to Wagner (2006), reading habit is often considered in terms of the amount of materials being read, the frequency of reading, as well as the average time spent on reading and this habit can be cultivated. Reading, which is a long time habit starting with the very early ages, is the predominant gateway to the knowledge room. In this sense, reading habit is an important tool for the development of personalities and mental capabilities of individuals. Shen (2006) identifies reading habit, as how often, how much time and what students read.

Continuous use of social networking sites can to a large extent determine or affect the reading habits of students, and can also determine how often and how much time students devote to their books. Mbachu (2011) found out that students skip the time to engage in meaningful activities such as reading and utilizing the school library, but engage in social activities such as chatting, posting pictures and videos. Karpanski (2009) reported in her findings that majority of students who use Facebook every day are underachieving on their entire grade when compared with those who do not frequent it. According to her, social network users may feel socially successful in cyberspace but they are more likely to perform poorly in exams. Social

networking has proven to be addictive for older and younger people especially the undergraduates of the 21st century who tend to spend considerable amount of time maintaining social connections, making new acquaintances and a broad band of friends during their years of study (Loving & Ochoa, 2010). Students' un-eagerness to read extensively in this century is a worrisome phenomenon. Schii (2011) has noted that social media sites foster negative behaviours among students such as catching up with unknown friends and as such exposed to obscenities, pornography and other social vices which adversely affect students' reading habits.

In Nigerian universities generally and in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka in particular, students always rush to charging points mainly to power their phones and computers to enable them chat, while the few that use their gadgets for academic purposes do so because they rely on its information accessibility to provide direct lifting of answers to their assignment. These compelling observations triggered the desire for this study to investigate the influence of social networking sites on the reading habits of undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.

Four research questions guided the study and they include:

1. How much time do students spend browsing social networking sites?
2. What are students' purposes for using social networking sites?
3. What are the negative impacts of social networking sites on the reading habits of undergraduate students?
4. What are the solutions to the negative impacts of social networking sites on the reading habits of undergraduate students?

Method

The design of the study was descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. The University has 14 faculties and ten (10) are situated in Awka campus. All the 5,362 regular undergraduate hundred (100) level students studying at Awka campus as at 2016/2017 academic session constituted the population of the study. A sample of 200 undergraduate students was selected using multi-stage sampling technique. Five faculties were randomly selected out of the 10 faculties in Awka campus. From each of the five faculties, one (1) department was selected randomly making it a total of five departments. Finally, from each of the five departments, 40 students were randomly selected totaling 200 students. The instrument titled "Influence of Social Networking Sites" (ISNS) was developed by the researchers and structured on a 4 point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA-4 Points), Agree (A-3 Points), Disagree (D-2 points), and

Strongly Disagree (SD-1 point). Reliability of the instrument was established using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and coefficient of 0.87 was obtained. Direct delivery method was used in collecting data with the help of five research assistants and the copies of the questionnaire were collected on the spot.

Frequency and percentage were used to answer research questions 1 and 2, while mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions 3 and 4. Any item with mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted, while items below 2.50 were rejected.

Results

Table 1: Frequency Use of Social Networking Sites

S/N	Frequency of use	Frequency	Percentage
1	Several times a	138	69
2	day	42	21
3	Once a day	11	5.5
4	Once a week	9	4.5
	Occasionally		
	Total	200	100

Table 1 reveals that majority of the undergraduate students with a total of 138 (69%) use social networking sites several times a day, while 42 (21%) respondents indicated that they use social networking sites once a day. This result indicates that students frequent social networking sites several times a day.

Table 2: Time Spent on the Social Networking Sites

S/N	Time spent per visit	Frequency	Percentage
5	Less than 15minutes	40	20
6	15-30 minutes	65	32.5
7	30-1hour	75	37.5
8	1-2hours	20	10
	Total	200	100

Table 2 shows that great number of students 75 (37.5%) spent 30mins-1 hour each time they visit social networking sites. In relation to the data obtained in Table 1, it is evident that the students spend less time in their academic reading.

Table 3: Reasons for using Social Networking Sites

S/N	Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
	For Academic Purpose		
9	Reading of novel/textbook	9	4.5
10	To share academic information	15	7.5
11	To source material for quizzes and exams	15	7.5
12	To communicate with lecturers	10	5
13	For Non-Academic Purpose	61	30.5
14	Chatting with friends	50	25
15	To share photos	15	7.5
16	For online dating	25	12.5
	For watching movies		
Total		200	100

Table 3 presents the students' reasons for using social networking sites. The data in Table 3 shows that majority of the undergraduate students use social networking sites mainly for non-academic purposes like chatting with friends; 61 (30.5%) and watching of movies with a total number of 25 (12.5%) than reading of novels/materials with 9 (4.5%) and sharing of academic information with a total response of 15 (7.5%).

Table 4: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Responses on Negative Impacts of Social Networking Sites on Reading Habits of Undergraduate Students.

S/N	Items	Means (x)	SD	Decision
17	Internet addiction	2.84	1.32	Agreed
18	Distracted while reading in classroom and at home	2.58	0.65	Agreed
19	Increased socialization contract with friends	3.08	1.00	Agreed
20	Reduced my time for academic reading	2.66	0.94	Agreed
21	Easily makes me come late to class or miss lectures	3.25	1.06	Agreed
22	Exposure to immoral act e.g. pornography and masturbation	2.88	0.92	Agreed

Table 4 shows that undergraduate students agreed that internet addiction, exposure to immoral act, distracted while reading, coming late or missing lectures, e.t.c. with mean ratings of 2.84, 2.58, 3.08, 2.66, 3.25 and

2.88 respectively which were above the mean of 2.50 are the negative impacts of social networking sites on their reading habits.

Table 5: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Solutions to the Negative Impacts of Social Networking Sites on the Reading Habits of Undergraduate Students.

S/N	Items	Means (x)	SD	Decision
23	Deleting my social networking account	2.67	1.37	Agreed
24	Parents should regulate students' use of social networking sites	2.64	0.82	Agreed
25	Lecturers should regulate students' use of social networking sites	2.88	0.78	Agreed
26	Reducing the amount of time spent on social networking sites	2.90	0.88	Agreed
27	Providing ample time for face to face social interaction	2.54	1.14	Agreed

Table 5 shows that items 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27 were agreed by the respondents with mean ratings of 2.67, 2.64, 2.88, 2.90 and 2.54 respectively which were above the decision mean of 2.50 as the solutions to the negative impacts of social networking sites on the students' reading habits.

Discussion

The findings revealed that the time spent on social networking sites by undergraduate students is very high. It indicated that undergraduate students spent much time browsing various networking sites. Since the time spent on social networking sites by undergraduate students is very high, it is obvious that it affects students' reading habits negatively. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Loving and Ocha (2010) who found out that the undergraduates of the 21st century spent considerable amount of time maintaining social connections, making new acquaintances and a broad brand of friends during their years of study. They also found that reading habit is constantly diminishing these days among youths. This poses a great threat to the reading habits of students and by extension to the nation's academic sector.

The findings further showed that undergraduate students' involvement in social networking is mostly for non-academic purposes such as chatting with friends, sharing photos, online dating and watching of films. This finding is supported Wang, Chen and Liang (2011) who found out that about two-thirds of the students are seen going through the internet while receiving

lessons or lectures in class or when doing homework at home. According to them, this multi-tasking may lead to distraction and negatively affect students' reading habits and eventually their academic performance. They also reported that most students do not read academic works on social networking sites rather they prefer checking Facebook profiles. This consequently leads to poor reading habits.

The findings further indicated that there are numerous negative impacts of social networking to the reading habits of students, which may reduce students' focus on learning and reading time. It was found out that internet addiction, being distracted while reading in classroom and at home, easily makes students to come late to class or miss lectures, and exposing students to immoral act are the negative impacts of social networking sites on the reading habits of undergraduate students. This finding agrees with Mbachu (2011) who found out that students skip the time to engage in meaningful activities such as reading and utilizing the school library but engage in social activities such as chatting, posting pictures and videos. However, this finding disagrees with Lusk (2010) who posits that online communities can afford students' academic assistance and support; and that social networking provides quick access to virtual space which students can explore with friends having similar academic needs.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was found that the undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka spent much time browsing social networking sites. Majority of the students use social networking sites for communicating with friends and other leisure rather than for academic purpose.

Recommendations

1. Lecturers should organize proper orientation on when and how to use social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram for students in tertiary institutions.
2. Lecturers should also discourage students from bringing cell phones to classes and if brought into the class should be switched-off to avoid being distracted in the process of teaching and learning.

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