

## **INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT OF UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN ENUGU STATE OF NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined the influence of social media usage on academic engagement of university undergraduates in Enugu State of Nigeria. The study will be carried out in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). The study will adopt an ex-post-facto research design. Three research questions with the corresponding hypotheses will guide the study. The population of the study will comprise 16, 105 undergraduates from ten (10) faculties in ESUT. Sample of the study will be 386 undergraduates from the four faculties drawn through multi stage sampling technique. Two instruments were developed, validated and used to collect data for the study. The instruments are: Social Media Usage Scale (SMUS) which has twenty (20) items and Academic Engagement Scale (AES) which has three (3) clusters of (30) items. The reliability of the instruments will be established using Cronbach Alpha method. Data was collected for the study and was analyzed using mean, standard deviation and ANOVA analyses which will be tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that social media usage negatively influence the academic engagement of undergraduates. On the other hand, female undergraduates' social media usage is equal to the male counterparts.*

### **Introduction**

Globally, education is regarded as the live wire of every nation. No nation including Nigeria can grow or develop without education. This inspired Fafunwa (2004) to define education as a process of transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge in order to ensure social control or to guarantee direction of the society or both. Menkiti (2012) views education as a process by which an individual is helped to grow into a well-rounded person and to be developed socially, physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually and morally so that the individual will be useful to himself, family and to the society. This definition is in tandem with the goals of education as an instrument for national development as

stipulated in National policy on education which emphasize development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society (FRN, 2013). All these goals of education above may be achieved successfully when individuals are academically engaged especially at the University level where undergraduates are subjected to receive a holistic knowledge, skills and innovations necessary to survive the hurdles of life.

In other words, there is need for a serious engagement of individuals to attain a result oriented goals in education. According to Okoro (2013), engagement is defined as commitment in doing things which can occur in any aspect of life. Okoro added that engagement is a variable state of being that is influence by a range of internal and external factors which individuals experience. Engagement also occurs in various aspect of human endeavor. The main concern in this study is to understand engagement in academics context which is also referred to as academic engagement.

Academic engagement as a variable of this study could be viewed as various school activities meant for the students. Academic engagement is defined as the extent to which a student participates in academic and non-academic related activities as well as values the goals of studying (Audas & Willms, 2002; Libby, 2004; Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). To Estell and Purdue (2013) academic engagement is how often the students participate in educationally purposeful activities inside and outside the classroom. Some of the educational purposeful activities include: attending classes, submitting assignment and following teacher's direction in class (Chapman, 2003). Academic engagement entails investment in and commitment to learning, and identification at school, and participation in the institution environment and initiation of activities to achieve an outcome (Christenson, Reschly, Appleton, Berman-Young, Spanjers & Varro, 2008).

In this study, academic engagement is defined as the level or extent undergraduates participate in the university academic studies and other related educational activities. A key point from the definitions of academic engagement is that students' investment and commitment in academic and non-academic activities could operate within and outside classrooms. This could be designed to connect students to various knowledge and experiences as well as understanding how much value they attach to other academic related activities. Thus, academic engagement is an important construct to explore especially with regards to students behavior in academics which seem to be malleable and could be influenced in different ways.

The importance of academic engagement cannot be overlooked. Academic engagement is useful in enhancing school activities towards

achieving positive academic outcomes and as well, decreases students' decision to drop out of school due to a long-term process of disengagement from school, among others (Skinner, Zermmer- Gembeck & Connell, 1998 & Alexander, Entwisle & Horsey, 1997). Brophy (2004) added that academic engagement is thought to be especially important for apathetic and discouraged learners. For example many undergraduates especially in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) who would have been discouraged as a result of past failures and disengagement in academics may have the opportunity to bounce back when proactive academic engagement is embraced. This is because when the undergraduates are busy with result oriented academic activities, they may not be able to think or involve in obnoxious behaviors that could cause them to drop out of school or develop apathy in academic tasks. Academic engagement is also important because it could help to develop latent potentials or talents in undergraduates especially when they are engaged both in academics and non-academic activities within and outside the classrooms.

Academic engagement is a multifaceted concept. Researchers have identified several components of academic engagement which include: behavioural, emotional, and cognitive (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Fredrick, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004). Behavioural engagement as its name implies, usually encompasses a broad range of behaviours at school, from merely showing up to actively participating in academic or non-academic/ social activities (Hughes, Luo, Kwok & Loyd, 2008). According to Fredrick, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004), there are three forms of behavioural engagement which are: positive conduct, involvement in learning and participation in school-related activities. Positive conduct includes attending class, avoiding disruptive behaviours, and following class rules. Involvement in learning includes concentrating (active listening), making an effort, being persistent, contributing to class discussion, asking questions, completing homework or assignment and spending extratime on class-related learning. Participation in school-related activities includes taking part in extracurricular activities such as: sports, music and club activities. Emotional engagement includes affective reactions and having a sense of belonging at school (Willms, 2003). This similarly involves the positive and negative reaction of people and activities at school such as the student's feelings which includes liking, disliking, being interested, being bored, being happy, being sad. Others are the degree to which they care about their school; belongingness, safety, comfort and relationships with teachers and peers (Hughes, Luo, Kwok & Loyd, 2008). However, a positive emotional reaction to tasks or individuals could lead to students having a sense of belonging at school. Having a sense of

belonging referred to as feeling accepted, respected and value by others at school (Goodenow & Grady, 1995; Willms, 2003). Cognitive engagement is associated with how much the students invest or value education and how much motivation they enjoy. It also includes the significance of academics to the students as well as getting good grades and the ability to finish tasks and go beyond expectation (Sciarra & Seirrup, 2008).

Thus, the researchers of this study are of view that these components of academic engagement actually outlined so many activities which without them, the undergraduates will not be able to experience knowledge that manifest a purposeful learning outcome. It also identified different conducts, reactions, degree, time or energy which undergraduates could display as a remarkable behavior that depict high academic commitment.

High academically engaged undergraduates could be optimistic in attaining all the purposeful educational activities which include contributing to class discussion, explaining course material to classmates, organize group study and utilizing study skills strategies such as reviewing notes and summarizing class concepts after lectures (Grabowski & Sessa, 2014; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Kuh, Gruce, Shoup, Kinzie & Gonyea, 2008). They may do more than attend or perform academically by putting extra effort, self-regulate their behavior towards goals; challenge themselves to exceed, and enjoy challenge learning opportunities (Klem & Connell, 2004; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2004). In similar contribution, Flynn (2014) stated that high academically engaged undergraduates actively address academic issues, including interacting with faculty and academic advisors and participating in study groups.

On the other aspect, undergraduates that depict low academic engagement could be bored, unmotivated and uninvolved or disengaged from academic and other aspect of school life (Appleton, Christenson & Furlong, 2008). They poorly approach issues related to academic and non academic activities and avoid challenges in learning endeavor. The case is the same in ESUT where the researchers observed that many undergraduates are lackadaisical to academic activities. For example, some of the undergraduates are busy gallivanting around the school premises even when lectures are going on. To them, being serious with studies may not be necessary. They seem to skip classes and likely to complete their assignment very late. In addition, school seems to be boring to the undergraduates and such could cause them disruptive behaviors. This is in line with the view of Fredrick, Blumenfeld & Paris (2004) that low or disengaged undergraduates are more likely to struggle academically, drop out of school and have problem behaviors. In this case, individuals and government agencies may have made some efforts attempting

to encourage undergraduates on the need of proper academic engagement. Yet, the situation seems to be worrisome and has been a serious concern for educators and policy makers. A number of factors have been attributed to the poor academic engagement which among them includes: low quality of education and moral values, poor parental background, lecturers- students' factors (Famede, 2012; Arong & Ogbadu, 2010). Others include: motivation, attitude, interest, attribution, study habit, among others (Ajah, 2004). Another factor which may influence the academic engagement of undergraduates could be the levels of social media usage.

Social media usage has been a popular means of interaction among individuals in various setting. Kietzmann (2012) and Andreas & Michael (2010) defined social media as a means that employs mobile and web based technology to create highly interactive platforms which individuals and community share, co-create, discuss and modifies user generated content. To Osharive (2015) social media are forms of electronic communication which facilitate interaction based on certain interest. The interaction may be between the lecturers and undergraduates on academic matters. It could only be among the undergraduates based on academic tasks. The interaction could manifest different results depending on the levels of social media usage.

In this study, the researchers perceive social media usage as various levels of engaging in the activities of social media for different purposes. The levels of social media usage are grouped into high, moderate and low levels (Idubor, 2015). These levels of social media usage manifest based on the interest of the users. The interest of users of the social media is necessary because social media is classified into various forms. This is in line with the view of Andreas and Micheal (2010) that social media usage are classified into six (6) different classes such as: collaborative project (wikipedia), Blogs and micro blogs (Twitter), content communities (Youtube), social networking site (Facebook; 2go; BB chat), virtual game world (World of warcraft) and virtual second world (second life). All these categories of using social media above could be useful in different spheres of life and may be dangerous on the other hand when the users apply them wrongly.

The importance of social media usage cannot be overlooked in life. In academic context, social media when properly used could enable learners and teachers to share and publish educational information which could help to improved academic activities (Dale & Pymm, 2009). It may be properly use when the undergraduates visit some sites such as: Blogs and Wikipedia to tackle learning problems affecting them. Social media usage is also important because as an instructional alternative to get across a teacher's ideas and track learning outcomes online, students may be engaged in academic tasks

(Sherer & Shea, 2011). It motivate students to learn, allows individualized learning and give room to learn in a collaborative environment (Wheeler, Yeomans & Wheeler, 2008 and Solis, 2008). Social media usage is as well important because it allows people to connect in the online world to form a group, a forum and community where ideas can be exchanged without geographic barrier (Sokoya, Onifade & Alabi, 2012). Onuoha, Unegbu and Lasis (2012) added that social media usage creates an avenue for undergraduates to network with one another irrespective of time and space. This has been inspired most of the universities to create an official group as one of the social media networks where lecturers, students and staff can interact and share intellectual resources (Selwyn, 2009). Actually, social media usage may be necessary to the ESUT undergraduates in that useful information needed to engage them in academics could be source from the social media network. It could also create a sense of belonging among users as well as increase their technological competency levels. The case could be different when academic engagement of ESUT undergraduates is been thwarted as a result of improper social media usage.

Social media usage may affect the academic engagement of undergraduates despite its numerous advantages. According to Munkaila and Iddrisu (2015), social media usage among the undergraduates of higher institutions is becoming widespread and trendy. Many undergraduates do not want to be left out but actively connected to the activities of social media. In support of this, Wiley and Sisson (2006) said that more than ninety percent (90%) of undergraduates are used to social media. By the observation of the researchers, the case is similar with the undergraduates of ESUT where many of them are seriously engaged with the activities of social media even to the extent of using it in the classrooms during lectures. The implication is that when it is wrongly used, it could affect the academic engagement of the undergraduates. This is in line with the ideas of Banquil & Chua, 2009; Karpinski & Duberstein, (2009) that improper use of social media activities could affect students' academics especially their grade point average (GPA). This may happen when the undergraduates spend time chatting and doing other irrelevant things instead of been serious with their studies. No wonder Ai-menaye (2015) said that time dedicated to social media is more than what should have been spent for academic engagement. To Bawa and Suleiman (2017), many undergraduates often check their social media sites before any other thing when they wake up in the morning. Barwa and Suleiman added that the major problem is that the undergraduates consume more time on using social media than even their school activities. For example, they usually engage in texting and chatting with friends at odd time and for most of the day

searching for individuals' private life and avoiding their real jobs and studies. Most of these chatting could grab attention of the undergraduates and divert it towards non-educational and inappropriate actions (Kuppuswamy & Narayan, 2010). Thus, for the undergraduates of ESUT who are always busy face booking without being conscious of time and to keep away from the distractions of social media usage may end up academically disengaged.

Several related studies have been conducted on social media usage in academic context. A study conducted by Shahzad (2012) examined the influence of social media on students which the result showed that social media usage has not affected the students' academic engagement. In the same vein, Junco, Heiberger and Loken (2011) examined the impact of Twitter on students' engagement and grade point average (GPA). The result revealed that students were significantly more engaged and had a higher GPA. The researchers concluded that social media usage has no negative impact on students' academic activities. In different view, Osharive (2015) examined the influence of social media usage and academic performance of undergraduates of Lagos University, which revealed that the undergraduates are addicted to social media and such affected their academic activities negatively. This is in line with the investigation of Colak (2014) on the role and impact of social media in students' life. The study showed that students got so much involved in social media activities which affected their grades. Casmilia, Sajoh and Dalhtu (2013) investigated on the students' social media usage with various reports. In the responses of 536 students, it was revealed by the study that many of the students used social media networks. Face book was the most popular social network site, followed by "2go" and YouTube. A quarter of the students reported that they believed that social media impacted positively on their academic performance, while others indicated that social media usage negatively affected their studies.

Gender as a moderating variable of this study cannot be overlooked. According to Igbo, Onu and Obiyo (2015) gender is defined as how individuals perceive themselves in such a way that most people of the same sex identify themselves with certain attributes. To Offorma (2004), gender is a social construct, it is not biologically determined but a concept equivalent to race or class. In this study, gender is defined as a social construct or behaviour attributed to female and male undergraduates with regards to the activities of social media.

Studies conducted in the past have shown that influence of gender on social media usage and academic activities may differ. In other words, there have been controversial gender reports on social media usage and academic engagement. In a study conducted by Lee (2014) on the relationship between

students' engagement and academic performance, the females had higher academic engagement than the male counterparts. To Lin and Subrahmanyam (2007) studies have shown that males have been involved more in the use of social media than females in the previous decades because of earlier forms of technology such as video or computer games. Another study revealed that males seem to use more social media and other communication technology than the females (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009). On the other hand, Giles and Price (2008) and Boogart(2016) reported that the females are more attracted to social media networks and other online social groups than males. A different studies shows that there is no significant difference between male and female university undergraduates social media usage (Osharive,2015;Abdulwahaab).

Considering the harmful activities of social media usage which may impede the academic engagement of undergraduates and the inconclusive reports of gender on social media usage and academic engagement, the researchers decided to take up the study in order to find out the influence of social media usage on academic engagement of university undergraduates with gender as a moderating variable.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions are posed to guide the study.

1. What is the influence of social media usage on undergraduates' behavioural, emotional, and cognitive academic engagement?
2. What is the influence of social media usage on male and female undergraduates' behavioural, emotional, and cognitive academic engagement?

### **Research Hypotheses**

To guide the study, three null hypotheses were formulated and will be tested at 0.05 levels of significance.

- Ho<sub>1</sub>. Influence of social media usage on undergraduates' behavioural, emotional, and cognitive academic engagement is not significant.
- Ho<sub>2</sub>. Influence of social media usage and gender on undergraduates' behavioural, emotional, and cognitive academic engagement is not significant.

### **Method**

This study adopted an ex-post-facto research design. Ex-post facto is concern with establishing cause-effect relationship but usually, the researcher has no control over the independent variables of interest and therefore cannot manipulate them (Nworgu, 2015). The study was carried out in Enugu State

University of Science and Technology(ESUT) in Enugu State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 16,105 undergraduates from ten (10) faculties in ESUT. Sample size of the study was 386 undergraduates from the four faculties drawn through multi-stage sampling technique. Two instruments were adapted, validated and used to collect data for the study. The instruments are: Social Media Usage Scale (SMUS) which has twenty (20) items and Academic Engagement Scale (AES) which has three (3) clusters of 30 items. Items of the instruments have a response option of Strongly Agreed(SA=4), Agreed (A=3), Disagreed (D=2) and Strongly Disagreed (SD=1). The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha method with coefficients of 0.76 and 0.86. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer research questions while Analysis of variance (ANCOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

**Results** Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of undergraduates' academic engagement according to their social media usage

<b>Social media usage</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean score</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
High usage	117	31.17	8.57
Moderate usage	153	39.53	11.77
Low usage	116	48.18	19.33

Data in table I show the various levels of social media usage on undergraduates' behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement with their mean scores and standard deviation. The data revealed that undergraduates with high usage of social media numbering 117, had the behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement mean score of 31.17 and standard deviation of 8.57. Those of moderate usage of social media with number of 153 had the behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement mean score of 39.53 and standard deviation of 11.77. It also shows that undergraduates with low usage of social media, numbering 116, had the highest behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement mean score of 48.18 with standard deviation of 19.33

Table 2: Summary of one way ANOVA statistics showing difference in undergraduates' academic engagement according to their social media usage.

	<b>Sum of squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig</b>
Between Groups	16838.078	2	8419.039	44.439	.000
With groups	7256.481	383	189.453		
Total	89398.560	385			

Data in the table 2 shows that there is significant difference in the mean behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement scores of undergraduates' social media usage. This is because the f-calculated of 44.439 is significant at .000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis of the influence of social media usage on undergraduates' behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement is not significant is therefore rejected.

Table 3 multiple comparisons of undergraduates' behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement according to their social media usage.

(i) Social media usage	(i) Social Media Usage	Mean Difference (1-d)	Std Error	Sig
High usage	Moderate usage	-8.35646	1.69042	.000
	Low usage	-17.00155	1.80346	.000
Moderate usage	High usage	8.35646	1.69042	.000
	Low usage	8.64509	1.69454	.000
Low usage	High usage	17.00155	1.80346	0.000
	Moderate Usage	8.64509	1.69454	.000

Table 3 indicated that undergraduates with high and moderate social media usage had the highest post mean difference in behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement compared to other pairs. This shows that high and moderate social media usage contributed most to the significance.

Table 4: Mean and Standard deviation scores revealing influence of social media usage on male and female undergraduates behavioural, emotional, and cognitive academic engagement.

Social media usage	Gender	N	Mean	S.D
High usage	Males	42	31.79	6.81
	Females	75	30.84	9.45
Moderate Usage	Males	78	39.44	11.64
	Females	75	39.63	11.99
Low usage	Males	56	48.68	19.43
	Females	60	48.72	19.38

Result in table 4 above shows that male undergraduates with high, moderate and low social media usage had the following behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement mean scores of 31.79, 39.44 and 48.68 with standard deviation of 6.81, 11.64 and 19.43 respectively. Their female counterpart had the following behavioural, emotional and cognitive

academic engagement mean scores 30.84, 39.63 and 48.72 with standard deviation of 9.45, 11.99 and 19.38. Hence, the male and female undergraduates with low social media usage had a higher academic engagement than others. In other words, the influence of social media usage on male and female undergraduates' behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement was equal.

Thus, the corresponding null hypothesis was accepted on the basis of  $F(1.380) = 0.63$ ,  $P = 0.03$  which was below the 0.05 level of significance.

### **Discussion**

The finding of this study showed that social media usage influences negatively on the undergraduates behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement. This finding agrees with the studies conducted by Osharive (2015), Colak (2014), Casmilia, Sajoh and Dalhtu (2013) which showed that social media affected the grades and academic activities of the undergraduates. Many undergraduates dedicated so much time to social media activities more than their studies. Their attention was diverted towards non-educational and inappropriate actions and distractions of social media usage and there were unable to attend lectures regularly and poorly contributed to class discussions, among others. Social media usage also made them perceived the school activities as being boring and uninteresting. This finding also disagrees with the studies by Shahzad (2012), Junco, Heiberger and Loken (2011) which shows that students were significantly more engaged and had a higher grades in academic after using social media.

The next finding of this study indicated that the influence of social media usage on male and female undergraduates' behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement was not significant. This shows that social media usage of male and female undergraduates on academic engagement was equal. This finding agrees with the studies by Osharive (2015) and Abdulwahaab (2016) which stated that influence of social media usage on male and female academics was not significant. Thus, this study contradicts that of peter and Valkenburg (2009) which submitted that males used more social media networks and other communication technology than the females. While studies by Giles and Price (2008) reported that the females are more attracted to social media networks and other online social groups than males.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, the following conclusions are made. Social media usage has negative influence on the undergraduates' behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement.

So many university undergraduates engaged more in using social media for non- educational purposes. Influence of social media usage on male and female undergraduates' behavioural, emotional and cognitive academic engagement was not significant. This shown that both gender equally involved in using social media.

### **Recommendations**

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government, university authorities and other well to do individuals should encourage hard work by rewarding undergraduates with high sense of academic commitment.
2. University authorities should organize seminars and workshops for the undergraduates on issues related to social media usage. This could help the undergraduates to reduce their high exposure to social media activities and concentrate more attention on their studies.
3. Counseling units in the university should be well equipped to enable them perform better in counseling undergraduates with problems that could hinder their academic engagement.
4. University counselors, lecturers and parents should work collaboratively to identify and assist undergraduates with high usage of social media before it destroy the entire society.
5. Mass media organizations should help to educate or disseminate information to the public especially to the undergraduates on the danger of using social media wrongly.
6. Social media club should be establishing in the universities to help educate undergraduates on harmful activities of social media usage.

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