

## Undergraduates' Attitude towards the use of Social Media for Learning Purposes

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### **Abstract**

*This study was carried out to ascertain the position of students on the use of social media for educational purposes. It was conducted in University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The sample comprised 300 respondents randomly selected from three Faculties in the University. Two research objectives and two null hypotheses were used for the study. Mean scores, ANOVA, Z-test, and Sheffe's model were the statistical tools used in the study. The study found that social media are used for educational purposes in terms of rapid development in science and technology through ICT. In addition, it was found out that students are highly motivated by the need to find and bound with new peers and potential social group. Furthermore, the study found that respondents' preference for social media was in the following ranked order: Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype, YouTube, Opera Mini and WeChat. In terms of attitude of students, respondents generally have favourable attitude towards use of social media. The study revealed significant differences exist in usage of social media between male and female respondents; and in attitude of students towards social media. Based on these findings, it is important for Universities to be aware of students' current needs and interest related to their learning environment for better knowledge acquisition and academic achievements.*

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**Key words:** Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype, YouTube, Opera Mini and WeChat.

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### **Introduction**

Social media in education are used to foster learning by allowing for social interactions, active participation, and engagements of students in classroom discussion, communication (blended/online courses and social media solutions). Social media platforms, such as Facebook and twitter, are becoming steadily more integrated within a variety of applications targeted at learning. Real time news feeds and instant accessibility make them a tool that can be used quickly and efficiently but due to its changeable nature, it can be difficult for school systems to keep up and compensate. Most of our students in the tertiary institutions today are on social networking platforms, and these services are already tools that they are generally comfortable with and they can probably show you a thing or two in return. By learning how to use these platforms as a teacher, you are making yourself more aware of issues surrounding students today. If a student tells you a classmate is harassing them over Twitter doing something called "tweeting", how can you investigate the situation unless you know how to search profiles and send messages yourself? From current news feeds, following public figures, learning a new language or improving software skills, there is an endless range of free resources available

through social media both linked and hosted. If you are looking for a debate, a video or commentary based on a recent news report, Facebook and Twitter's search functions make them a valuable and free set of tools. Being able to find information online is a skill that is now important in the workplace and one that can be taught through lessons designed around social media platforms.

Rapid developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs) have resulted in a society that can adapt well to such developments. As the human factor plays an important role in the use, prevalence and instruction of generated information, human resources constitute one of the cornerstones of the information society. The impact of ICTs in our daily lives has been steadily increasing, which has, in turn, influence the change in attitudes towards ICTs. Similarly, rapid developments in science and technology influence education systems and other fields. It is therefore evident that ICTs necessitate the implementation of new technologies into the education system to improve the quality of education (Akkoyunlu & Tugrul, 2002; Aktumen & Kacar, 2003). However, the integration of technology into the school curriculum is a complex and challenging process (Copper, 1998). It requires taking into account numerous socio- technical factors such as teachers' computer skills as well as their confidence and attitudes towards ICTs, the use of ICTs in the teaching and learning process, the technology infrastructure within the school, and the school environment (Papanastasiou, & Angeli, 2008).

It is clear that new technologies have been used in every field of education. Computers enable students to study individually, and to overcome disadvantages that may arise from their individual differences. Thus, computers provide fast and permanent learning using elements such as sound and animation. In addition, the internet facilitates access to and sharing of information (Varol, 1999), thus, incorporating ICTs, particularly the internet, into teaching and learning in higher education has become an important issue in both economically developed and rapidly developing countries (Li & Kirkup, 2007).

The use of ICTs undoubtedly offers new educational experiences for both teachers and students, how teachers and students perceive such reform efforts- their thoughts and experiences about ICTs, their attitudes towards instructional applications and their expectations- are important factors in the plan for increasing ICTs in education (Lim, & Khine, 2006; Schug, 1988; Smerdon, cronen, Lanahan, Anderson, Lannotti & Angeles, 2000; Kozma, 2003; Thomas and Stratton, 2006). In other words, successful integration of computers into educational setting depends, to a great extent, on teachers' and students' attitudes towards ICTs and computers (Selwyn, 1999). It is also clear that investments in ICTs require integrations of programs in classrooms and orienting students towards determining their knowledge and their attitudes towards these technologies.

The studies indicate that teachers' attitudes can be defined as either positive or negative with respect to computer technologies and computer supported applications (Smith, Caputi & Rawstorne, 2000). The earliest research that examined attitudes towards computer was conducted by Lee (1970), who identified two dimensions of attitude: (1) the belief in the computer as a beneficial tool and (2) belief that computers are autonomous entities. Furthermore, the studies demonstrate that there are several factors that affect the use of ICTs and attitude of an individual towards ICTs (Aral & Ayhan, 2006; Aydin, 2007; Teo, Chai, Hug & Lee, 2008a), demographic factors such as gender, age, years of teaching experience (Hartley, & Bendixen, 2001), teachers' levels of self-efficacy, anxiety, and belief (Hong & Koh, 2002; Paraskeva,

Bouta, & Papagianni, 2008; Teo, Chai, Hug & Lee, 2008a), teachers' experience with the use of ICTs (Isman, Evirgen & Cengel, 2008; Paraskeva, Bouta, & Papagianni, 2008), their learning and teaching styles (Niederhauser & Storddart, 2007; Teo, Chai, Hug & Lee, 2008b), and their frequency of access to ICTs seem fairly limited.

As the first social networking sites emerged, combining the functionality of bulletin boards with personal profiles and instant messaging tools, students were early adopters using the sites like Friends Reunited to maintain existing friendships and to establish personal support networks. Friendster extended the idea of what these spaces could do, and by the time Facebook launched, students were well prepared to experiment, socialize, and share their networks online. Some librarians and academics followed students into these spaces, sharing practical information and trying these new forms of engagement. Now with the widespread use of tools and technologies like YouTube, Twitter, blogs, wikis and Facebook, social media is used for teaching in higher education. Students remain ahead of the adoption curve of social media users in various higher education groups. While many, most notably Marc Prensky, attribute this to generational factors, it is also true that students are more highly motivated by the need to find and bound with new peers and potential social groups. Many find participating in a new online space a relatively low stakes issue of experimenting and exploring the spaces that work for them, or that their friends use, academic staff have been slower to find their feet, but the success of pioneering colleagues in communicating and engaging students in their work, or gaining professional advantage through social media spaces, has helped drive change and, in some cases institutional leadership (Nicola, 2012).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Social networking websites have become increasingly integrated into the way many people act, think, and relate to one another. Social media, it is obvious have a multitude of implications for the field of education and these impact students, educators, administrators and parents in no small manner. Obviously, ample is often spent by students on social media platforms but the intent is enough concern that triggered the interest of the researchers. Therefore this study intends to find out if students use social media for educational purposes particularly in the context of an ever-changing globalized society.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To ascertain the attitude of students towards the use of social networking sites for educational purposes
2. To identify the preferred social media sites used by students for educational purposes

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the attitudes of students towards social media for improved learning?
2. What are the preferred social media sites used by students?

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study area was targeted Faculties in University of Port Harcourt. The population of study included all third and fourth year students in three Faculties in the University. A sample of 300 students was involved in the study. 100 students were randomly selected for the study from each

of the Faculties. Random sampling techniques was applied in the selection process. A structured questionnaire was used as research instrument. The questionnaire was a four point scale (4, 3, 2, 1) as against (Very Often, Often, Not Often, Rarely) respectively. An acceptable mean of 2.50 was used in the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.1: Attitude of students using social media for educational purposes**

S/N	Attitude of students	Mean	Standard deviation	Remark
1	Information communication technology has steadily increased and in turn influenced the change in attitude towards ICTs	3.37	0.53	Agree
2	There is rapid development in science and technology through ICT and has influenced educational system and other fields	3.41	0.54	Agree
3	ICT has necessitated the implementation of new technologies into educational system to improve the quality of education	3.41	0.59	Agree
4	I don't have ICT skills	1.08	0.29	Agree
5	Social networking is interesting	3.38	0.54	Agree
6	Computer skill is beneficial	3.40	0.53	Agree
7	Social media technology has helped drive change	3.42	0.53	Agree
8	Students are highly motivated by the need to find and bound with new peers and potential social group	3.46	0.54	Agree
9	Friends are reunited by social networking sites	3.48	0.54	Agree
10	With the widespread use of tools and technologies like YouTube, Twitter, blogs, wikis and Facebook, social media is used for teaching in higher education	3.49	0.55	Agree
11	Communication is made easy	3.52	0.55	Agree
12	ICT offers new educational experience for both teachers and students	3.51	0.55	Agree
13	Orientation on the use of social media in classroom is required	3.53	0.55	Agree
14	Getting research materials and books is a welcome development with the use of various social media sites	3.50	0.56	Agree
15	Students are well prepared to experiment, socialize and share ideas online	3.46	0.57	Agree
	Average Mean and Standard Deviation	3.90	0.53	Agree

Findings revealed favourable attitude towards use of social media

Respondents revealed that information communication technology has steadily increased and in turn influenced the change in attitude towards ICTs (Mean= 3.37; SD= 0.53), Also, there is rapid development in science and technology through ICT and has influenced educational system and other fields (Mean= 3.41; SD= 0.54), Also, ICT has necessitated the implementation of new technologies into educational system to improve the quality of education (Mean= 3.41; SD= 0.59); Also, social networking is interesting (Mean= 3.38; SD= 0.54), Also, computer skills is beneficial (Mean= 3.40; SD= 0.53), Also, social media technology has helped drive change (Mean= 3.42; SD= 0.53), Respondents revealed that students are highly motivated by the need to find and bound with new peers and potential group (Mean= 3.46; SD=0.54), They also agreed that friends are reunited by social media sites (Mean= 3.48; SD= 0.54). They agreed that with widespread use of tools and technologies like YouTube, Twitter, blogs, wikis and Facebook, social media is used for teaching in higher education (Mean= 3.49; SD= 0.55), Also, communication is made essay (Mean= 3.52; SD= 0.55), Also respondents agreed that ICT offers new educational experiences for both teachers and students (Mean= 3.51; SD= 0.55), Respondents also agreed that orientation on the use of social media in classroom is required (Mean= 3.53; SD= 0.55), Also, getting research materials and books is a welcome development with the use of various social media sites (Mean= 3.50; SD= 0.56), Respondents agreed that students are well prepared to experiment, socialize and share ideas online (Mean= 3.46; SD= 0.57). The average mean standard at 3.90, a value above the 2.50 acceptable mean.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in attitude on use of social media for improved learning among students in the various Faculties.

**Table 1.2a: ANOVA**

Source variation	Sum of square (SS)	Df	Mean of score (MS)	F- cal	F-tab
Between group	47195.666	2	23597.833	105.533	3.07
Within Group	62610.016	297	223.607		

*Significant @ 0.05 level*

Decision: F-Cal > F-tab, null hypotheses is rejected.

**Table 1.2b: Scheffe**

Faculties	N	Mean Score
Faculty of Education	100	48.703
Faculty of Agriculture	100	49.707
Faculty of Engineering	100	50.54

## Presentation

The result shows that there is no significant difference in attitude on use of social media for improved learning among students in the various Faculties. The Scheffe's model shows that there is no significant difference in attitude of students in Faculty of Education (M=48.703) and Faculty of Agriculture (M= 49.707). Also, there is no significant difference in attitude of students in Faculty of Agriculture (49.707) and Faculty of Engineering (M=50.540). However, significant difference exist in attitude of students in Faculty of Education (M= 48.703) and Faculty of Engineering (M= 50.540). The result shows that Engineering students explore social media more than Education and Agricultural Science students.

### Research Question 2: What are the preferred social media sites used by students?

**Table 2.1: Preference of social media sites**

S/N	Preferred media sites by students	Mean	Standard deviation	Remark
1	Facebook	3.75	0.46	Agreed
2	Twitter	3.40	0.70	Agreed
3	WhatsApp	3.33	0.22	Agreed
4	Skype	3.15	0.84	Agreed
5	YouTube	3.05	0.88	Agreed
6	Opera Mini	2.97	0.99	Agreed
7	WeChat	2.96	0.94	Agreed
8	Badoo	2.46	0.21	Disagreed
9	Google+	2.42	0.95	Disagreed
9	Wiki	2.42	0.98	Agreed
11	hi5	2.04	0.15	Disagreed
12	Eskimo	1.87	0.01	Disagreed
13	MySpace	1.78	0.97	Disagreed
14	Second Life	1.61	0.88	Disagreed
15	Word Press	1.60	0.84	Disagreed
16	LinkedIn	1.46	0.81	Disagreed
16	Tumblr	1.46	0.74	Disagreed
18	Pinterest	1.42	0.71	Disagreed
19	Tribe.net	1.40	0.78	Disagreed
20	Blackboard	1.28	0.68	Disagreed
20	Classmate	1.28	0.67	Disagreed
22	Netlog	1.19	0.49	Disagreed
23	Teach Street	1.18	0.54	Disagreed
24	Science Stage	1.16	0.48	Disagreed
24	Students Circle Network	1.16	0.48	Disagreed
26	Moodle	1.15	0.53	Disagreed
27	Tagged	1.11	0.37	Disagreed
	Average mean and Standard Deviation	2.00	0.39	Agree

Table 2.2 shows that students prefer Facebook (Mean = 3.75; SD= 0.46), Also, students prefer Twitter (Mean= 3.40; SD= 0.70), Skype (Mean= 3.15; SD= 0.84), YouTube (Mean= 3.05; SD= 0.88), WeChat (Mean= 2.96; SD= 0.94), WhatsApp (Mean= 3.33; SD=0.22), and Opera Mini (Mean=2.97; SD= 0.99). An average mean of 2.00 suggests that students' preference for social media for educational purposes is on the low side. This reason is that only Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype, YouTube, Opera Mini and WeChat have mean values exceeding the 2.50 acceptable mean unlike the rest that are yet to be explored by learners for educational purposes.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between Male and Female students on social media usage.

Table 2.2: Z- Test

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	Zcal	Ztab	Remark
Male	140	107.958	15.168	299	2.935	1.96	Significant
Female	160	114.426	21.388				

*P < 0.05; significant @ 0.05 levels*

Decision :  $Z_{cal} > Z_{tab}$ , null hypotheses is rejected

Entries from table 2.2 show mean of 107.958 social media usage for male respondents while mean score of 114.426 was recorded for female respondents. The z-cal value of 2.935 which is greater than the Z-cal value of 1.96 suggests that significant difference exist between social media usage of male and female respondents. The result indicates that significant differences exist in social media preference between respondents. An overall mean of 2.00 suggests that there are social media sites that students preferred. The result reveals that social media sites that are used for educational purposes as well as its components will only progress over time and as well its integration into our daily life increases; it should also be incorporated into education. The result reveals that Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, YouTube, and opera mini can be used in higher education as a communication tool between the institution, and students, as well as parents, guardians and the community. The sites could be wonderful tools for building a sustainable and life-long social network and building an extended community learning environment.

The result is expected because most students already have social networking accounts and are used to getting resources/materials for educational purposes on the sites. Essential communication creates a working atmosphere that includes: students' engagement, psychosocial development, retention, academic success and communication patterns among students and their parents.

The finding of the present study is in agreement with those Mc Carthy (2010), and Bosch (2009) who also found out that there is positive student feedback for its integration into the learning environment. Despite being known primarily for social networking activities, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, Whatsapp, Opera mini, Wechat and YouTube are recognized as a respectable learning platform.

However, findings disconcertant with the present one were found by Wise, Skue & Williams (2011) argue that Facebook and other social networking sites have only a limited role to play in promoting student engagement, and that institutional based learning management system can replicate many of the interactive functions of social networking sites like Facebook. The difference in the result could be because the present study was carried out in schools where technology and the use of social networking is encouraged and discussed in classroom.

## Conclusion

The following conclusions were made by the researchers

- It was found that students can explore topics that they are interested in through online social networking.
- Students use Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype, YouTube, Opera Mini and WeChat for educational purposes.
- Social media is well used by students in the Faculties and may be an excellent tool to integrate into the learning resources of University courses, generally.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is obvious that social networking tools have the ability to be the preferable tool for university students' communication and interaction. It is evident that students need more interactive learning environment that allows them to have greater chances to manage and control their online learning environment.
- It is important for Universities to be aware of students' current needs and interest related to their learning environment for better knowledge acquisition and academic achievements.

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