

INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE READING CULTURE OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS: A STUDY OF STUDENTS IN KADUNA POLYTECHNIC

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of the social media on the reading culture of students in Nigerian polytechnics with Kaduna Polytechnic as a case study. The research aimed at identifying the activities, time allotted and the influence that social media have on students reading culture. Also, the study's main objective is to arrive at a means through which the curriculum of schools can incorporate the use of social media in the teaching and learning process. A descriptive survey was used for the study. Fifty respondents were included in the study with a questionnaire used to gather data for the study. Research findings show that the social media has a great influence on students' reading hours as it affects their performance in academic activities especially their reading. Also, the number of hours devoted to reading is quite low compared to the time allotted to chatting on the social media. It was recommended that the internet should be carefully monitored and incorporated into the teaching and learning process in schools, also the government should provide well equipped libraries in schools.

Introduction

The study focuses on the influence of social media on the reading culture of students in Nigerian polytechnics. It is common to find students more socially involved with friends through the social media than reading books in order to get information on their academics except when necessary. Students are much more interested in the social aspect of these social media sites more than their relevance for academic pursuits. Therefore, the study will take a look at the activities engaged by students during their leisure hours and to what extent the use of these

media sites affect their reading. Also, the study will investigate the effect of the social media on students' ability and their overall performance in academic activities.

The main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of the social media on the reading culture of students in Kaduna Polytechnic. Specifically, the study aims at identifying the following:

1. The activities students engage in at home, school or in their hostels.
2. The time students devote to reading books, magazines, playing games, watching chatting with friends and listening to music.
3. The Influence of the social media on the students' reading hours.

Reading is an essential tool for lifelong learning. Thus, it is important for students to develop a good reading culture so as to perform excellently in their academic endeavours. The reading skill for students is critical for academic performance and personal growth. It is an important component of student's ultimate literacy development. Ezeji, (2012), citing Holte (1998), agrees that reading adds quality to life and provides access to culture and cultural heritage. He points out that reading empowers and emancipates citizens, and brings people together. According to Rubin (2002), reading is an integrative process that starts with the reader and includes the affective, perceptual, and cognitive domains because the whole process of reading has to do with a learner's level of development and interest.

It is pertinent to note that students who engage in in-depth reading have developed self-confidence and they know that their ability to read can widen their academic horizon. Improving access to relevant information and promoting reading culture are prerequisites for literacy skills, widening education and learning opportunities, and helping people to address the causes of poverty.

Consequently, the emotion the reader has when reading any information resource, either online or offline, will help the reader know exactly what he or she is reading. Reading can be said to be the bedrock of most forms of learning activities culminating into literacy. The declining interest in reading among students in higher institutions is a challenge to education stakeholders like teachers, policy makers and administrators, as it affects the standard and the quality of graduates sent into the labour market. The ministry of education in Nigeria needs to launch a readership promotion campaign from the primary to the tertiary level which can help to inculcate the culture of reading in students to enhance a better reading culture among all and sundry.

It is interesting to note that students who excel academically read extensively because reading actually activates the mind and make us more creative. To be capable of doing this, students must develop an in-depth reading culture; they must have the ability to understand texts. Carson, (1992) suspects the existence of a one-to-one correlation between avid reading and intellectual accomplishment because those learners who read a lot of materials have the capability to excel in their academics more than those who read only for examination purpose. Reading is not taught separately as most other subjects or courses in the curriculum; it is rather subsumed in English language. This may be responsible for the purported low quality of graduates produced by Nigerian tertiary institutions. However, Olukemi (2010) advises Nigerian youths to imbibe the reading culture in all their endeavours. She laments that lack of reading culture among youths nowadays has greatly affected the quality of graduates being produced by the nation's higher institutions.

Generally, one usually finds out that students are more socially inclined with friends through using social media instead of reading newspapers in order to get information for their academic work except when necessary. Involvement with friends on the social media seems to have reduced interest in reading materials for the purpose of sourcing information, increasing vocabulary

and general knowledge which an individual gets from a good reading culture. Similarly, this has reduced student's interest in using electronic sources to enhance their reading culture, instead, they engage in activities like chatting, Hogging and browsing the internet that takes up much of their time.

Justification of the Study

This research is carried out in order to cover some areas not earlier investigated by previous works. Most of the literature reviewed on this subject matter tends to concentrate more on the negative aspect of the social media as it relates to students. Also, previous studies have failed to look at the ways in which these social media outlets can be harnessed and used as an effective tool that can enhance the reading culture of students. Furthermore, new social media applications have been developed and therefore the need to incorporate these new trends like badoo, 2go, ebuddy and others in a research work because of their influence on youths.

Scope of the Study

The study will be looking at the influence of the social media on the reading culture of students in Kaduna Polytechnic. An examination of how the social media influences or affects the students' reading of their books and the number of hours devoted to these social sites fall within the scope of this study. The study equally covers some of the positive social media outlets that students make use of often and the attendant effect on their study. This work is restricted to National Diploma 1 (ND1), ND2 and HNDI students of Kaduna Polytechnic.

Influence of Social Media on Students' Reading

The idea of “Social Networking” has existed for several decades as a way for people to communicate in society and build relationships with others (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008:40). With the increase in the need to communicate with others and the popularity of the Internet, “Social Networking” has become an activity that is primarily on the Internet, with sites like Myspace, Facebook, Bebo, Friendster, WhatsApp, 2go and Xanga (Coyle & Vaughn:p41). Social sites (SNS) may be defined as: Web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system. It also includes an articulate list of other users with whom they share a connection.

Reading is an essential tool for lifelong learning. It is important for everyone to develop the rudiments of reading and the culture of reading always so as to survive in life. Reading, according to Holte (1998:p2), adds quality to life and provides access to culture and cultural heritage. He points out that reading empowers and emancipates citizens and brings people together. Okeke (2000) reaffirms that the art of reading is a priceless instrument for everyone. It is one of the most important activities of life through which we enter into the life and experiences of others and extend our knowledge, scope of experience and enjoyment. It has a critical role to play in the overall development of an individual and the nation at large. Reading experience can be obtained in the library. The school library is a gateway to knowledge and will serve as a starting point or road map to reading and the promotion of reading culture. The library provides books and other resources which will help shape thoughts and influence the actions of students throughout life with active supervision by an experienced librarian.

Due to technological development, reading habits are changing. In our society today, while technology is slowly taking a steady control over individual lives, the reading habit is fast vanishing. Students now lack the skill of reading because they spend more hours on electronic media, browsing the net, playing with handsets and passing nonstop SMSs seem to be the order of the day, thereby making reading a book or any other piece of written material in a quiet or peaceful corner of a library or home become an archaic idea for most school children and adults. Obama (2008) in his speech on the occasion to mark the World Reading Day, pointed out that children cannot achieve their set academic goals unless they raise their expectations and turn off television sets. Shabi and Udofia (2009) noted that active learning from books is better than passive learning such as watching and playing games. According to Kaufman (2001:p35), children spend their time watching TV and playing video games instead of spending a great deal of time reading and writing.

Statistics collected, according to Kaufman, by the U.S Department of Education's National Centre for Educational Statistics shows that students' achievement in both reading and academics have been declining in recent times. According to current studies, the rate of usage of mobile phones during lecture hours has been increasing dramatically. Teenagers and young adults send and read their text messages or play games on social network sites via their phones during lectures. There are two opposite views about school prohibition to access SNSs. First view states that "Some may primarily access the Internet at school rather than at home. Schools often have policy on usage, block websites or restrict access time for non-instructional purposes. Such situations might limit students' participation in social network sites." (Aim 2007:p43).

This opinion is nothing more than conjecture according to supporters of the other view. They claim that the prohibition to use mobile phones during lessons does not deter students from

reading: “64% of teens who own cell phones have text during class, even in schools where cell phones are technically banned.” (Kuznekoff 223:p20). This huge ratio indicates that prohibitions are not an effective way to reduce the use of social network sites during lessons. The negative effect of the use of social network sites on teenagers and young adults are quite obvious. Some results of usage of social network sites indicate that they turn into harmful facilities for teenagers and young adults. The first damage on them is to convince them about the existence of a new world which provides them with no challenges. Also, there is no person to check their actions on social network sites and it takes away the influence of parents and teachers from teenagers’ and young adults’ lives.

Fasee Ullah and his colleagues report that social networks provide a virtual life to the students, such that those students who do not even speak in front of anyone could feel freedom in their virtual life. When they use social networks they feel excited but this addiction kills their inner self confidence for ever. Becoming an addict of social networks makes them think that they have so many friends but in reality all of the contacts are virtual contacts. As a result of these it is observed that the interest in reading books is declining at a very fast pace. If it is not checked, it will lead to a situation whereby students will become addicted to the social media sites.

The present study will adopt a descriptive research theory to analyze data gathered. Descriptive research is used to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. It does not answer questions about how/when/why the characteristics occurred. Rather, it addresses the "what" question (what are the characteristics of students who indulge in social media as compared to those whose use is quite minimal? (Schields, 2013)). The characteristics used to describe the situation or populations are usually some kind of categorical scheme also known as descriptive categories. The description is used for frequencies, averages and other

statistical calculations. Often, the best approach, prior to writing descriptive research, is to conduct a survey investigation.

Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey. A well-structured questionnaire tagged “influence of the electronic media on reading ability of students in homes and schools” was used to collect information from the student respondents. Four lecturers were interviewed. The questions asked had to do with the number of times they refer students to the internet to source for materials, what they observed about students’ interest in reading, and how useful is the internet to their studies. The survey method was used to gather data for this work and was analyzed using simple percentages. The target population of this study consists of students in National Diploma One (NDI), Diploma 2 and Higher Diploma students of the Department of Languages, Kaduna Polytechnic. Out of the total population of 105 students, 50 students were involved in the study and they were randomly selected using the simple random sampling.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This part focuses on the analysis and interpretation of data that were collected for this study to establish the extent of the influence of the social media on students’ reading culture in Nigerian polytechnics with Kaduna Polytechnic as an example. Data collected for this study were analyzed using frequency distribution and simple percentages.

Of the 50 respondents, 21 (42%) are in National Diploma 1 class, 19 (38%) are in their second year, while 10 (20%) of the students respondents are in the Higher National Diploma class. This shows that students from different levels were examined in order to give the study a wider spread.

Table 1: Percentage of Educational Level of Respondents

LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
ND1	21	42%
ND2	19	38%
HND	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Table 2 shows the hobbies engaged in by the respondents. 23(46%) of the respondents prefer chatting with friends online using the social media, 10 (20%) of them prefer reading books, 5 (10%) of the respondents prefer reading magazines, while 7 (14%) of the students engage in other activities like travelling and playing board games. These responses go to show that the students mostly have a preference for going online to chat with friends because 46% of the respondents prefer that to reading their books.

Table 2: Hobbies Engaged in by Respondents

HOBBIES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Reading Books	10	20%
Chatting Online	23	46%
Reading Magazines	5	10%
Watching T.V.	5	10%
Others	7	14%
TOTAL	50	100%

Table 3 shows the number of students and the corresponding percentage who engage themselves in each of the activities. Out of the 50 students sampled, 21 representing 42% of the respondents engage themselves in chatting online using various media platforms. 10 of the students representing 20% prefer reading textbooks and writing school assignments. Also, 9 of the respondents representing 18% engage in watching satellite television during their leisure hours. It can be inferred from the table that the activity that the students are occupied with during their leisure is chatting online using social media followed by writing assignments and reading their books. Watching satellite television is the least activity they engage in.

Table 3: Activities Performed by students

ACTIVITY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Writing School Assignments	10	20%

Reading textbooks	10	20%
Going Online to Chat	21	42%
Watching Satellite TV	09	18%
TOTAL	50	100%

Table 4 gives the percentage and number of respondents according to the activities listed on the table. From responses received, 6% of the respondents devote 30 minutes of their time to writing assignments, 44% devote an hour for their assignments, 30% devote about two hours while 20% of the respondents allot more than 2 hours to writing assignments. Also, for an activity like chatting online on social media, 6% allot 30 minutes for that, 14% devote an hour, 56% use two hours while 14% spend over two hours chatting with friends' online. Furthermore, 10% of the respondents devote about 30 minutes to reading of books, 20% allot an hour, and 54% devote two hours while about 6% spend over 2 hours reading their books. Other activities performed by the respondents include reading of magazines and daily newspapers where 50% of the respondents devote 2 hours, 20% allot about 30 minutes and 30% of the students respondents spend more than 2 hours on the activity. Other activities performed by the students which were not listed in the questionnaire include travelling, playing games such as football etc we have 52% of the respondents spending 2 hours on such activities, 40% of them spent an hour, 4% allotted more than 2 hours for these other activities while only 4% of them spent about 30 minutes on such activities.

Table 4: Number of Hours that Students Allot to Various Activities

Activity		Hours			
		½	1	2	Above 2hrs
A	Writing school assignment	3(6%)	22(44%)	15(30%)	10(20%)
B	Reading books	10(20%)	10(20%)	27(54%)	3(6%)
C	Reading magazines/dailies	10(20%)	25(50%)	15(30%)	0
D	Going online to chat	3(6%)	7(14%)	28(56%)	12(24%)
E	others	2(4%)	20(40%)	26(52%)	2(4%)

It was observed that 74% of the respondents use less than or equal to one hour for writing their assignments. Exactly 74% of the respondents devote a minimum of 2 hours to reading of books. For activity like going online to chat, 84% of the respondents spend a minimum of 2 hours and above for the activity. 80% of the respondents devote an hour or more to reading of magazines and newspapers while about 92% of the students devote a minimum of 2 hours for other activities. This clearly shows that activities like chatting online and other activities remain popular with the students though academic activities like writing assignments and reading of textbooks are not far behind.

From the results presented in Table 5, it was observed that the majority of the respondents about 48% devote 2 hours in reading their books when they visit the school library, while about 20% of the respondents devote 30 minutes for that. Few of the students, about 12% devote one hour for reading their books.

Table 5: Number of Hours Students Devote to Reading their Books

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
30 minutes	10	20%
One hour	6	12%
2 hours	24	48%
More than 2 hours	10	20%
TOTAL	50	100%

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it is concluded that reading should be inculcated in the students by incorporating the internet into the teaching and learning process. Because of its popularity, the internet if effectively managed can enhance the reading culture of the students in no small way. Also, the study revealed that adequate books if provided in the school libraries will enhance the reading ability and stimulate interest among learners.

This research will go a long way in finding a lasting solution to the over bearing influence of the social media on students reading culture by looking at ways through which these electronic means can be incorporated into the curriculum in order to help improve the fast culture of reading among youths especially those in tertiary institutions. The findings from this study will also help the teachers in finding ways through which students can be made to read books and also ways through which the positive aspects of the social media can be incorporated into the school curriculum. This study is of scholarly importance. Students undergoing research works

similar to the present study and other scholars alike will find this work as a reference material or a spring board for their own research.

The following recommendations are made based on the research findings:

1. The internet should be adequately monitored and incorporated into the teaching and learning process in schools because of its influence on the way the students read and study.
2. The federal Government should establish functional libraries which are adequately catered for and well equipped with current biographic material which will in turn stimulate the interest and increase the reading habits of students.
3. Reading should be promoted through partnership and collaboration between the public and private sectors such as publishers, booksellers, librarians, teachers and all employers of labour to encourage readership campaign.
4. Parents should as a matter of fact encourage reading by buying the children books as gifts during their birthdays and when they pass examinations.
5. Libraries should strive to create an environment conducive to reading so as to make the school children feel at home and comfortable.
6. Schools should organize debates and essay competitions for students. This exercise will help in generating reading interest and the habit of gathering information.
7. Parents should set out time for watching television, playing video games and chatting with friends and also surfing the internet so as to avoid distraction from the social media.

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