

**Influence of Social Media on Academic Information Sharing Among Vocational Education  
Students in University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study assessed influence of social media on academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. Two specific objectives, two research questions and two null hypotheses were postulated to guide the study. The study involved a survey design and a population of 161 respondents. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting a sample of 115 students. A questionnaire with 15 structured items was used for data collection. The questionnaire was face validated and had a reliability coefficient of 0.86. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while t-test statistics was used in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that there was great extent to which social media influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo. Based on the findings, it was concluded that effective use of social media by the students would greatly help to enhance their academic achievements. The study recommended that students should apply appropriate skills on the use of social media on information sharing as this will create an avenue for public relations as well as increasing their academic achievements.*

**KEYWORDS: Vocational education, academic knowledge sharing, social media, social network, and social networking sites.**

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**Introduction**

The emergence of social media has led to the expansion of the level of socialization among individuals in the society in general and schools in particular. University students now find it very easy to express their thoughts, ideas and beliefs through social networks like facebook, twitter, myspace, e-mail, skype, yahoo messengers, etc. with the aid of internet connectivity. The mention of an online community in academia brings to mind an image of students chatting aimlessly. New technologies have probably changed the way most students share knowledge as well as their academic work environment and will very likely do so even

more in the future into the direction of a more virtualized world. E-mails are already prevalent, and newer tools are in the marketplace (Olasina, 2013).

The increased use of Social Networking Websites has become an international phenomenon in the past several years. Vocational education students have especially embraced these sites as a way to connect with their peers, share information, reinvent their personalities, and showcase their social lives (Boyd, 2010). According to Utuk, Udofia and Udoh (2019), vocational education is that aspect of education that is concerned with the world of work; aimed at acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitude in specific trade areas. Broadly, these trade areas include; business education, technical education, agricultural education and computer education. In the recent times, social media websites offer vocational education students in the University of Uyo a new way to interact with each other and communicate with the world at large. The university authority approved online registration of courses; up till now, school fees are paid online as well as checking of semesters' result. Facebook, for example has over 500 million members and it is still growing and approximately 85% of undergraduate students are Facebook users (Schneider, 2017). These numbers are expected to grow since Facebook users will continue to grow. And this is not only true for Facebook, numbers for YouTube users closely follow as well (University of New Hampshire, 2019). Social networking websites provide tools by which students can communicate, share information, and create new relationships.

Social networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to either construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, or articulate a list of other users with whom they can connect, view, and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). According to Ellison (2010), the first recognizable social network site was launched in 1997. Facebook began in early 2004 as a Harvard-only social networking site (Cassidy, 2006). The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. Social networking websites have affected social interaction by changing the way people interact face-to-face, how information is shared, and the dynamics of our social groups and friendships (Asur and Huberman, 2010).

Academic knowledge sharing can be described as a process of communication whereby two or more parties are involved in the transfer of academic information (Usoro, Sharratt, Tsui and Shekhar, 2007). Knowledge sharing can be referred to as a social interaction where individuals interact and participate in sharing knowledge with one another in the group. Nowadays, knowledge is easily shared through the use of social media. Social media can be described as a group of Internet-based applications that is based on the ideological and innovative foundations of Web 2.0 (Andreas and Haenlein, 2010).

Since the most populous social media such as facebook, encouraged interconnectivity among individuals in remote locations, it has been observed that these veritable tools are also used to share information relating to assignments, examinations, time tables, lecture hours, group readings, seminars, and research.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The educational system in Nigeria is faced with so many challenges which have certainly brought about a rapid decline in the quality of education. There is a deviation, distraction and divided attention between social networking activities and their academic work. It is observed

that students devote more attention to social media than they do to their studies. The world today is a global market in which the internet is the most important source of information. Since the advent of social media sites in the 1990s, it is assumed in some quarters that the academic performance of students is facing a lot of neglect and challenges.

Students' addictiveness to social networks, and their frequency of exposure to social network, has been part of the discussions in recent times as they affect the students' academic performance. Instead of students reading their books, they spend their time chatting and making friends via the social media and this might definitely have influence on their academic performance, because when one do not read, there is no way one can perform well academically. It is a common sight to see a student chatting in sensitive and highly organized places like church, mosque and lecture venues. Some are so carried away that even as they are walking along the high way, they keep chatting.

This study therefore sought to investigate if students of vocational education in the University of Uyo use these social media to share academic information, the challenges to their use of such invaluable devices to share information relating to academics and their course work, and the prospects for the effective use of social media for academic information sharing.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of social media on academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the influence of facebook on academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo
2. determine the influence of WhatsApp on academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo

### **Research Questions**

The followings research questions guided the study

1. To what extent does the use of facebook influence academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo?
2. To what extent does the use of WhatsApp influence academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The followings null hypotheses guided the study and it was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent to which facebook influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent to which WhatsApp influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo

## Research Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was carried out in the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study consists of 161 vocational education students in the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. A sample size was 115 of the total population. The sample was determined statistically using Taro Yamane formulae. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted for this study. A structured instrument called “Influence of Social Media on academic information sharing Questionnaire” (ISMAISQ) with a 5-point rating scale of very great influence (5points), great influence (4 points), moderate influence (3 points), little influence (2 points) and very little influence (1 point), was developed by the researcher and used to collect data for the study. The instrument was face-validated by three research experts in University of Uyo. A reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha analysis. The researcher administered the instrument to the students. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions whereas independent t-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Decisions were based on real limit of the Mean rating.

## Research Question 1

To what extent does the use of facebook influence academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo?

**Table 1: Mean responses of the respondents on the extent to which facebook influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo. n = 115**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Facebook software transmits research information among students and lecturers	2.62	0.52	GE
2	Uses of social media materials complement students' class work	2.59	0.54	GE
3	Passing of academic information through facebook platforms enhance students performance	4.23	0.94	VGE
4	Facebook assist lecturers on sharing academic information	2.10	1.06	GE
5	Library promotes use of facebook platform for rendering their services.	3.85	0.83	ME
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.08</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>GE</b>

VGE = Very Great Extent; GE = Great Extent; ME= Moderate Extent

The results presented in Table 1 revealed that Facebook social media have the grand mean of 3.08. This indicates that facebook social media have great influence on academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo. This shows that the mean range of the influence of facebook social media on academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo was between 2.10 and 4.23 and most of the means range were above the cut-off point of 2.50, while one item was below the cut-off point. The standard deviation ranged from 0.52 to 1.06 which is not far away from the mean as the score clustered around the grand mean of 3.08. This means that there is great influence of

facebook social media on academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo.

### Research Question 2

To what extent does the use of WhatsApp influence academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo?

**Table 2: Mean responses of the respondents on the extent to which WhatsApp influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo. n =115**

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	WhatsApp software transmits academic information among students in the university community within short time	3.12	0.62	GE
2	Uses of WhatsApp group help students to share academic information fast.	3.39	0.75	GE
3	WhatsApp group contributes immensely to students academic achievement	4.23	0.89	VGE
4	Students WhatsApp group help institution in sharing academic information	3.24	0.99	GE
5	students uses WhatsApp to promote group learning process	4.85	1.10	VGE
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.77</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>GE</b>

VGE = Very Great Extent; GE = Great Extent; ME= Moderate Extent

The results presented in Table 2 revealed that WhatsApp social media have the grand mean of 3.77. This indicates that WhatsApp social media have great influence on academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo. This shows that the mean range of the influence of WhatsApp social media on academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo was between 3.12 and 4.85 and all the mean range were above the cut-off point of 2.50. As it was observed that the standard deviation ranged from 0.62 to 1.10 which is not far away from the mean as the score clustered around the grand mean of 3.77. This means that there is great influence of WhatsApp social media on academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo.

### Research Hypothesis 1

**H<sub>01</sub>** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent to which facebook influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo.

**Table 3: t-test analysis of the difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent to which facebook influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo. n = 115**

Variables	N	Mean	t-cal	t-cri	Df	Decision
Male students	51	2.13	4.51	1.96	113	S
Female Students	64	3.12				

**Note:** NS = *not significant*, S = *significant*@  $p \geq .05$ , df= 113

Table 3 reveals t-test analysis of the influence of facebook on academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo. The table shows that the calculated t-value of 4.51 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significant with 113 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent to which facebook influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo is rejected and the alternative accepted which implies that there is significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent to which facebook influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo.

### Research Hypothesis 2

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent to which WhatsApp influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo

**Table 4: t-test analysis of the difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent to which WhatsApp influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo n =115**

Variables	N	Mean	t-cal	t-cri	Df	Decision
Male students	51	3.22	3.31	1.96	113	S
female Students	64	4.27				

**Note:** NS = *not significant*, S = *significant* @,  $p \geq .05$ , df= 113

Table 4 reveals t-test analysis of the influence of WhatsApp on academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo. The table shows that the calculated t-value of 3.31 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significant with 113 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent to which WhatsApp influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo is rejected and the alternative accepted which implies that there is

significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent to which WhatsApp influences academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings on Table 1, 2, 3 and 4 showed that social media has great influence on the academic information sharing among vocational education students in University of Uyo and that of male and female students were not significantly different in their responses on the extent to which social media influence academic information sharing among vocational education students in the University of Uyo. This finding is in congruence with the work of Benson (2011) who found out that social media has relationship with students' achievement in third world education system. From this finding, the researcher wishes to assert that the use of social media effectively for academic activities by students will enhance effective learning. It will also influence academic information sharing as well as academic performance of the students.

### **Conclusion**

The use of social media for information sharing cannot be over emphasized. There is no doubt that the social media platform was originally meant for socialization. However, today, it can be used as a platform to promote information sharing relating to academics as well. The finding of this study shows that the social media is not mainly used for sharing information relating to academics. Rather, it is also used for socialization by students. These challenges could be avoided if a social media platform for academic activities is created for information sharing among vocational educational students.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The students should apply appropriate skills on the use of facebook account on information sharing, as this will create an avenue for public relationship and also increasing their academic achievements.
2. The students should be enlightened on how to make good use of WhatsApp social media for effective and efficient academic information sharing.

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