
STUDENTS' USE OF TWITTER AND THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN COMPUTER STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the teaching of the concept "Students' Use of Twitter and Their Academic Performance in Computer Studies." Advancement in technology in this era has reshaped all human activities on earth, including communication. The world has become a global village where the use of computers and internet facilities is indispensable. Social media is among the numerous means by which people interact and communicate online, as more recently, millions of people are on Twitter, which is one of the social media platforms to exchange views, ideas, and other related matters, a good number of them being young ones. This phenomenon has become a source of worry to those who believe in knowledge and skill acquisition, as students at all levels of learning now have divided attention between studies and available opportunities to be harnessed from social media such as Twitter. Based on the findings of the research work, it was concluded that students are very much indulged in the use of Twitter as one of the social networks. It was also concluded that male students are more indulged in the use of Twitter than their female counterparts. One of the recommendations made was that students should know that overuse of social networks, including Twitter, is detrimental to their studies and should limit their dependence on social networks.

KEYWORDS: Twitter, Academic Performance, Students, Computer Studies

Introduction

The impacts of social networking websites have been greatly felt and have expanded rapidly over the last few years, which makes many people see the need to be members of social networking websites. The social networking site as a standardised social setting incorporates individuals and/or organizations, which can be both profitable and non-profitable. Social networking is hardly mentioned without the term "social media". According to Reuben (2014), social media comprises activities that involve socialising and networking online through words, pictures, and videos. Twitter, Facebook, 2go, Whatsapp, Badoo, Bbn, E-buddi, YouTube, Sky, Imo, etc. are examples of social networks and their operations are made possible by internet facilities. Social networking websites have created new and varied channels of communication via the internet, whether through personal computers or mobile phones. Many people are now members of social networking websites. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. In line with this, Sherwin (2013) stated that social media introduced substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities, and individuals. With the widespread use of desktop computers, laptops, e-

readers, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and smart phones, millions of people can actively participate in social media, text messaging, content sharing, online learning, and much more.

A growing number of scholars globally agree that addiction to social media sites has become a distractive technology for students' academic work in secondary schools and beyond. Among the scholars is Oluwatoyin (2011), who surveyed 1,860 Facebook users from Lagos State University and discovered that 90 percent of the students were unable to achieve a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) above 3.50 because they spent a large portion of their time on social media rather than on home work and study time (which could contribute to a higher grade). This study therefore seeks to investigate the effect of the Twitter social network on the academic performance of secondary school students.

Advancement in technology in this era has reshaped all human activities on earth, including communication. The world has become a global village where the use of computers and internet facilities is indispensable. Social media is among the numerous means by which people interact and communicate online, as more recently, millions of people are on Twitter, which is one of the social media platforms to exchange views, ideas, and other related matters, a good number of them being young ones.

Twitter as a social network is not teen-friendly but rather a mature social network as it is more advanced in terms of language structure and it works differently from other social networks on the basis that instead of indicating a mutual relationship, it focuses only on one-way action in receiving information in the form of tweets from someone with such a social service provided by Twitter. It is a common sight to see youths twitting in sensitive and highly organised places like churches, mosques, and even class rooms. Some are so carried away that even as they are walking along the highway, they are twitting. The manufacturing and distribution of equally sophisticated cellular phones has also complicated the situation, as youths no longer need to visit a cybercafé to send and receive messages on Twitter. Their attention has been stuffed from visible to invisible friends, while important ventures like studying and writing are affected in the process.

This phenomenon has become a source of worry to those who believe in knowledge and skill acquisition, as students at all levels of learning now have divided attention between studies and available opportunities to be harnessed from social media such as Twitter. Whether these opportunities promote their academic performance or not, is a question that needs to be answered. Therefore, this research work seeks to explore, investigate, and unveil the use of Twitter by male and female students and how it affects their academic performance in computer studies.

Theoretical Framework on Media Effect Theories, Anderson and Meyer in 1980

This study will be based on the social action theory. The social action theory was developed by Anderson and Meyer in 1980. According to them, social action theory sees communication interaction in terms of actors' intent and recovers the interpretation of messages. They added that the theory focuses on media content as a silver bullet shot that penetrates a hapless audience. They explained further that the media audience is neither hapless nor passive, and that the media audience participates in the content they receive.

The students as the actors users of the content of social networking sites, communicating with others are the key aspect of using social network contents. They use it to create at least a basic profile that may include a personal webpage (name, age, status, photo, and interests) and a blog. The message content of these social sites is two-way communication, so the

receivers (students) interpret the message content as very effective in their lives as it gives them the freedom to express themselves and connect with their friends to interact. Both the students that use the sites and the students that see the message content as relatively new trends to them have the opportunity to write about their lives and chronicle their experiences and share them with the world, as this is why they participate actively in communicating with others and construct meaning from the content they perceive. Some students use this Twitter site to view phonographic materials that consciously or unconsciously model their academic activities.

The application of social action theory is of strength to the effects of the use of Twitter social networking sites on the academic performance of secondary school students. From the part that students these days are too connected, using Twitter more than necessary, this obviously indicates how media content has penetrated their hearts like a silver bullet shot.

However, the opposite view is purely positive experience for most students. Apart from social benefits, students use the content of social networking sites like Twitter to document school research, and this interaction can help students who are typically shy to get to know a person better and become comfortable with them.

Concept of Social Media

Social media has emerged as a term frequently used (and variously defined) to describe different types of communication platforms and electronic ways of interacting. This research will utilise the definition of social media developed by Zarattaro (2011), who defined social media as technologies that facilitate social interaction, make collaboration possible, and enable deliberations across stakeholders. Utilizing this definition, social media includes tools such as electronic blogs, audio/video tools (e.g., YouTube), internet chat rooms such as Twitter, cellular and computer texting, and social networking sites. While all the previously mentioned tools can and do facilitate interaction between and among users to various degrees, this research is primarily concerned with the use of social media through social networking sites (SNS). In terms of daily use of all media collectively, one study found that those born between 1965 and 1979 (generation) consumed approximately 13 hours of social media per day; those born between 1980 and 1989 (net generation) consumed approximately 9 hours of social media per day; and those born between 1990 and 1999 (1 generation) consumed approximately 20 hours of social media per day (Rosen, 2011). These figures represent self-reported data collection use of all forms of social media, including television, cell phone usage, internet usage, computer tablets, laptops, music Ipads, texting, and social networking sites (Rosen, 2011).

Twitter Social Networking Sites and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students

According to the Metropolitan School of Business and Management (2013), it has been proven that students who are actively engaged in social media networking sites like Twitter perform worse than other students who are not. It is easier to get distracted by the various social media networking sites. Students are more likely to be faced with the temptation of surfing the web, chatting with friends, and visiting the various social and media websites rather than focusing on getting their schoolwork done on time. For a secondary school student, the negative effects of social media networking sites on academic performance include:

1. **Decrease in productivity:** David (2014) asserts that social media networking sites decrease productivity as so many students end up spending the better part of their study hours checking those sites. Rather than getting their assignments done, they spend the whole time either tweeting or posting messages on Facebook. There is bound to be a reduction in students' focus of attention when they are studying and at the same time trying to get involved in activities on these social sites. This often causes a drastic reduction in their academic performance.
2. **Encourages Poor Grammar usage:** Not only does the active involvement in social sites encourage the poor use of grammar but also of spelling, as students mostly use slang or shortened forms of words. Using Twitter as an example, Twitter limits its users to the use of 140 characters. Therefore, users will have no other option than to abbreviate their words as much as they can, just to enable their thoughts to fit into the 140 character provision. "There is, after all, only so much information that can be obtained in 140 characters. While the option to dig deeper may be present through embedded links in Tweets, for example, there may be little reward in pursuing those connections for students. As a result of the excessive use of abbreviated words and slang by students on social networks, they have started to rely on the computer grammar and spell checkers on their devices. This results in the reduction of their command of the English language and also their writing skills (David, 2014).
3. **Reduction in research capabilities:** Ibrahim (2012) posited that most students prefer being on the Twitter site than reading their books. Students are often observed during school time in the various hiding places, either discussing social networks or browsing with their phones. Many researchers, such as Choney (2010), San Miguel (2009), and Enriquez (2010), found that students' use of social media sites had a negative effect on their academic performance. According to Khan (2009), Twitter users often experience poor performance academically. Similarly, Englander et al. (2010) posit that social media is negatively associated with the academic performance of students and is a lot more momentous than its advantages. Internet addiction consequently gave rise to internet usage within the last couple decades.

The effect of Twitter social networking sites on the academic performance of secondary school students worldwide can be localised from both positive and negative perspectives. Twitter social networking sites, according to Janet, (2010) explain further that Twitter social networking sites give students the opportunity to communicate with their friends and others who share the same interests. The opposite view on the subject would be that students are too connected, using the internet more than necessary. According to News todayneo.com (2009) students who spend much of their time on internet usage prove that they find it difficult to concentrate in the classroom and do not notice what is taught. The website explains that teachers are disappointed to see the students using "Chat language," which is commonly used on social networking sites such as Twitter, during English grammar lessons. The website further says that social networking sites like Twitter unconsciously shape the attitudes, behaviors, and academic performance of students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research work, it was concluded that students are very much indulged in the use of Twitter as one of the social networks. It was also concluded that male students are more indulged in the use of Twitter than their female counterparts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, the following recommendations are necessary:

1. Students should know that overuse of social networks, including Twitter, is detrimental to their studies and should limit their dependence on social networks.
2. Parents should discourage their children from the overuse of social networking sites so as not to affect their academic work negatively.
3. School authorities should discourage students from excessive use of any of the social networks. By so doing, we will improve their academic performance not only in computer studies but also in other subjects.
4. Network operators should incorporate academic features into social networking sites like Twitter to aid in the academic development of youth.

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