

# Social Media and Arabic Students Academic Performance in Southwest Nigerian Universities

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## ***Abstract***

*This study investigated the use of social media by Arabic students in South-West Nigerian universities. The study examined meaning of social media, application of social media, examples of social media, benefits of social media and the challenges of social media, The study found that the students are aware of the social media tools as majority from the institutions frequently use Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram on daily basis and Blog, YouTube, Flickr were used on weekly basis. Also, constraints such as cyber-bullying, lack of privacy, time wasting, addiction, being distracted were some of the highlighted problems encountered by the universities in the use of social media tools for educational activities. Conclusion and recommendations were made based on the findings.*

**Keywords:** Application, Challenges, Social media, Students, South-West, Nigeria

## Introduction

Since the last few decades, technology, the most adopted means of communication by individuals especially the millennials or the youth is the social media platforms, that have been made available due to the immense growth of technology. The term media was however derived from the Latin word 'Medium' and is defined as one of the main routes, channels, or instruments for communication and/or entertainment (Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2009). This definition, therefore, broadens the general scope and regard for the concept of media. Insights of this, the radio, television, newspapers, magazines, together with the internet have been jointly regarded by many as the 'media'. The word socio is also a Latin word; socius, which is referred to as 'friend'. According to Collins English Dictionary (2016), it refers to "things relating to human societies, communities, or groups of persons living together or doing things together".

Also, socius can be viewed as "relating to or involving activities in which people spend time talking to each other or doing enjoyable things with each other" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, 2016). Having both "Socius and Medium", Latin Words, we could, therefore, generate the definition of social media to be the interaction amongst individuals in which they create, share, and/or exchange ideas and information in virtual societies and networks (Ahlqvist et al., 2008; Asare-Donkoh, 2018). The presence of these social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter have therefore helped to connect people both afar and near together through the exchange of text, photos, music, videos, and much more. Comparatively, with the old means of communicating with people within and outside our environs, social media has reduced the communication barriers that used to exist through technological development as new mediums are being developed to connect worldwide audiences. The use of social media platforms as a tool for educational purposes has been acknowledged by researchers (Buhari, 2014; Ansari & Khan, 2020).

University students are active users of social media for academic purpose as well as for personal use. The evolution of social media has cut across all facets of society with its positive and negative impacts. Social media has transformed and impacted on communication, learning, research and education in general. Davis III, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar and Canche (2015) emphasized that the phrase Social Networking Sites is commonly used as abroad term for all social media as well as computer-mediated/web-based communications such as but not restricted to Twitter, Myspace, Facebook, Bebo, LinkedIn, Blogs and Friendster. In this study, the phrase Social Media and Social Networking Sites will be used interchangeably. Among the tremendous assortment of web-based tools which are accessible for disseminating information, social networking site (SNS) have turned into the most current and alluring tools for interfacing individuals all through the world (Aghazamani, 2010). SMTs are web-based technologies that empowers people or gathering of individuals in making, sharing, and exchanging data or information in an online environment (Bakare, 2018). Through this platform, individuals and organisations can create profiles, share and exchange information on various activities and interests.

Social media is very common nowadays as it is expanding exponentially, connecting more people together from every nook and cranny all over the world. Social Media refers generally to utilization of media to allow for social relation. The definition by Davis III, et al. (2015) was adopted for this study who defined SMT as the "web-based and mobile applications that allow individuals and organizations to create, engage, and share new user generated (example, personal photos, videos, writing) or existing (example, news, radio, television) content in digital environments through multiway communication". Social media have become an integral part of student social life as it serve as relevant platforms for the library to relate with clientele and university community at large. SNS has now been

popularly utilized as learning platform that can improve student's performance (Tavares, 2013) cited in (Mingle, 2015).

### **Concept of Social Media**

Social media is always a function of the technology, culture, and government of a particular country. The Social Media phenomenon has been interchangeably referred to as Social Media Networking (Boyd & Ellison, 2007) Social Networking (Trusov et al., 2009); Web (Wattal et al., 2010) and User Generated Information Systems (Desautels, 2011). Assaad, & Gomez, (2011) defined "Social networking at a high level is described as the convergence of technologies that allow individuals to easily communicate, share information, and form new communities online." The most well-known social software applications are weblogs, wikis, social networking sites, and instant messaging. Classification of social media involves grouping applications currently subsumed under the generalized term into more specific categories by characteristics, i.e., collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds. Liking or sharing social media messages can increase the effects of popular cohesion and message diffusion. The communicators can embrace social media tools to manage risk better.

Social media helps connect people themselves with social networking sites through which they can stay far and yet remain connected. Social media continues to transform contemporary society. Social media has fostered communication, creativity, social cohesion, and advanced freedom of expression. Social media has become a part of our daily lives that enables us to express our views and ideas in a novel way. Due to the advanced features of social media, organizations are adopting social media to improve their business performance (Tripathi & Verma, 2017). The first distinguishable social media site "Six Degrees," was created back in 1997. It enabled users to create a profile, make friends with other users and upload personal data. The past two decades has witnessed the popularity of blogs and social media that continues today and even in future. The sudden growth of community websites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn have ushered the world into a new era of social media. Interactive Social Media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Foursquare, and Digg in, etc., have radically changed the communication paradigm.

Considering the member count on social networks, if Facebook represents a country, it would be the third-largest nation, after China and India in the globe. Nowadays, Online Social Networking (OSN) websites are popular and have become a part of our lives. These sites have made a significant impact on an individual's life. Social networks allow users to communicate, share knowledge about similar interests, discuss favourite topics, review and rate products/services. Online Social Media (OSM) websites have attracted millions of users by enabling them to interact in ways that were not possible before. OSN sites are the most popular sites on the internet. OSN evolved into a global mainstream medium that generated increasing social and economic impact. Social media is the medium to socialize. In reality, Social media and traditional mainstream media both complement each other. As individual public members now are optimistic about having substantial interactions with organizations, especially by using digital media, communication professionals have been looking for ways to enhance these interactions.

The advancement in technology and the availability of great speed internet access, therefore, facilitated the fame of the concept which eventually led to the development of social networking sites such as Facebook in 2004 and Myspace in 2003 (Deepa & Priya, 2020). This brought out the term Social Media, which is now widely known. Associated concepts with social media are Web 1.0 and Web 2.0. Web 1.0 consists of personal online web pages, content publishing content publishing, and Encyclopaedia Britannica Online. It

was however replaced in 2004, with Web 2.0, also called World Wide Web (www) - “a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion” (Kaplan, 2010).

Widespread discussion of interactive social media and social networks is enabled by what is termed Web 2.0. Web 2.0 applications can directly engage consumers in the creative process by producing and distributing information through collaborative writing, content sharing, social networking, social bookmarking, and syndication. The advent of the Internet and, in particular, the interactive features of Web 2.0 in recent years have led to an explosion of interest in customer engagement.

### Forms of Social Media

- 1. Social Networking Sites (SNS):** Social networking sites are sites whereby users create a profile to establish some connection with friends or other users, who have related experiences or interests (Sharma & Godiyal, 2016). The account contains the users’ personal information. SNS provides specific ways for users to interrelate with themselves. Some examples of SNS include LinkedIn and Facebook.
- 2. Bookmarking sites:** Services that allow users to search, save and organize links to several websites and Internet resources (Al Rasheed & Berri, 2014). Some services allow the tagging of links to enable their contents to be shared easily. Examples of bookmarking sites are Delicious and Diigo.
- 3. Micro Blogging Sites:** These are services that merge SNS and blogging, however, messages interchanged are limited in size. Users have to subscribe to the services. An example of micro-blogging platforms also includes Twitter (Yazdanifard, Obeidy, Yusoff & Babaei, 2011).
- 4. Media Sharing Platforms:** These are services that enable media users to upload and also share media content like photos and videos as well as offering users to tag and comment (Sharma & Godiyal, 2016). Some of the examples of media sharing platforms include; Flickr and YouTube (Yazdanifard, Obeidy, Yusoff & Babaei, 2011).
- 5. Social News Sites:** These are services that enable other users to choose from news items and links, posted by other users. The articles that receive numerous votes are exhibited more frequently on the available site. Some examples of social news platforms include Reddit and Digg (Deepa & Priya, 2020).
- 6. Blogs and Forums:** Blogs are similar to online diaries that allow individuals to post remarks on the blog (Yazdanifard, Obeidy, Yusoff & Babaei, 2011). Forums enable users to have chats with other users by posting messages. Some examples of blogging platforms include Blogger and WordPress.

### Application of Social Media

Some social media sites commonly used by students are MySpace, Flickr, LinkedIn, YouTube, Blogs, Bookmarking, Instagram, E-Mail, Podcast and instant messaging media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instant Messaging, Skype WhatsApp (Quadri and Idowu, 2016). The interactive nature of social media such as Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Eskimi, YouTube and so on has further popularized the tools among students across the world as it allows them to re-create contents, connect, upload and share information. Social media is seen as an interactive web-based platform in which individuals, groups and communities discuss, share, connect, co-create and disseminate relevant information based on common goal (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre, 2011). Social media is dominated by applications such as Facebook, blogs, MySpace, video sharing sites, instagram, YouTube,

wikis, blogs, wikis, and other online communities (Jindoliya, 2017). This technology has impacted students-societies as they have changed the way they communicate and relate with one another through online channels and the conduct of their daily activities (Tanakinjal, Sondoh, Andrias and Ibrahim, 2012). Akakandelwa and Walubita (2018) noted that Whatsapp was the commonly used social media tools among the students and that they engage actively on these tools between 31 to 60 minutes on daily basis.

In contrast, Hussain (2012) noted that majority of the students 90% acknowledged that they preferred using Facebook to other social media tools like Twitter, 6 LinkedIn, Web-Blog etcetera. The study also affirmed that 82% of the respondents utilize Facebook on daily basis followed by Google Group 74% and Twitter 71%, while only 2% used the Web-Blog on monthly basis. Asemah, Okpanachi and Edegoh (2013) found in their study on social media and undergraduates' academic performance in North-Central Nigeria. The study revealed that undergraduates' exposure to SNS has negative effects on them particularly their academic performance. This was in agreement with study by Lahiry, Choudhury, Chatterjeen and Hazra (2019) who noted that almost two-thirds 60.87% of the respondents agreed that SNS have positively enhanced their academic performance. Boahene, Fang and Sampong (2019) avowed that the use of social media for educational activities positively associated to academic performance.

The study further discovered that social media usage can negatively influence students' academic performance. Kolan & Dzanza (2018) discovered that about 50.3% of the Ghanaian students spent over two hours on social media daily and that 82.5% noted that they majorly use the social media tools for downloading videos, pictures and chatting while 32% of the respondents mostly use the social media tools for academic purposes. Fatokun (2019) noted that 60.8% of the undergraduate students engage in social media tools mostly for educational associated activities while 52.9% of the respondents attested that social media tools have assisted in boosting their cumulative grade point average (CGPA).

In supporting the above, Mowafy (2018) noted that large proportion 47.4% of the undergraduate students at Nile University, Egypt disagree that social media have negative influence on their GPA. Apuke (2016) found that students who spend most of their time on SNS are liable to perform awfully in their academic purposes than those who did not. This was in tandem with findings by Talaue, AISaad, AIRushaidan, AIHugail and AIFahhad (2018) who found that the time spend engaging on social media have negative influence on students' academic performance. Ghareb and Sharif (2015) found that undergraduate students use more of Facebook on daily basis with average of 1-3 hour and this negatively affects their academic performance.

With the importance of social media, it is thus no surprise that numerous individuals around the globe, including youth specifically students, make use of it (Asare-Donkoh, 2018). Research indicates that approximately 250 million people utilize Facebook every day, with Twitter having fifteen million users sending sixty-five million messages every day (Asare-Donkoh, 2018 ). On YouTube, studies indicate that there are over two billion people who watch YouTube video clips daily while "24 hours of video content are uploaded every hour" (Research, 2011). Analyzing the data above is an indication that, most of the students that make use of the social media platform are undergraduate students. In that, at the undergraduate level, the majority of the students have access to Smartphone and laptops with access to all social media platforms. Following the belief that social media has an impact on university students, the impact could either be positive or negative hence this study; to help assess the kind of impact the usage of social media has on undergraduate students.



### **Benefits of Social Media**

Undergraduate students could be described as those who have just admitted into higher institution of learning like Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Educations, Monotechnic and so on and has not completed their course of study or has not obtained a degree/first degree certificate. In Nigeria, students access social media through their laptops, mobile phones, Internet moderns, ipads and have continued to seek information for various purposes to include online chatting, reading online newspapers, making online transactions, online call (audio and video calls), news and entertainments, group discussions, class work, assignments and research.

Students now register their own social media site accounts such as twitter, Facebook, MySpace, WhatsApp as well as blogs. Students also use YouTube to find or share video online with anyone anywhere around the world without the constraint of distance and cost as limiting factors. Social networking sites although has been recognised as an important resource (Ndunge 2017) for education today, this shows that social networks are beneficial for the students as it contributes to their learning experiences as well as in their academic life. The use of social media for academic activities plays an important role in undergraduate placement. Due to this, many people are concerned with ways the undergraduates can enhance their academic achievement. SNS platform do not only make it easy for companies to communicate with their consumers, but also make it easier for tertiary institutions to communicate related course work to their students as well as to encourage discussion among students and to address administrative issues (Moran, Seaman, and Tinti-Kane, 2011)

With advent and use of social media tools, many students are utilizing the Social Media Technology (SMT) to search for information and assist them in completing class assignments. Students have described the social networking sites as a functional tool that helps them to communicate with professors and lecturers, conduct research, and to access library collections (Chawing, 2017). The advantages possibly deriving from the use of social networks as an educational tool are independence from time and location, improvement in quality, success, and efficiency of education by use of computer for education, individualisation of learning, ability to have instant feedback, offering the student ability to repeat course content, ease of displaying the content, ability to present courses that require laboratory applications to students via simulation, animation, and virtual laboratories, archiving course content and synchronized class (virtual class) applications, offering possibility to evaluate performance of students, reducing risk of error in measuring evaluation results, improving skills of students and teachers to reach, evaluate, use, and efficiently cite the knowledge (Balci, 2010).

A study was conducted by Ijeoma & Burke (2013), to determine the consequences and practical progress of social conduct and scholastic advancement of social media. The study showed that consistent use of social media can make the understudy turn into a possible social media addict thereby, low academic performance. Further results from the study revealed that social media has a bad impact on students, as it causes students to indulge in terrible slangs and also causes them to disregard folk educators and the laws in the general public. A study was also conducted by Mahas (2014) who contended that the usage of social media has an impact on student's privacy, as these social media networks consist of hackers ready to hack the personal information of students. They can damage the privacy contacts of students (MahaS , 2014).

Online learning through various social media technologies have become the commonly used platform in the world particularly by higher institutions of learning and their learners, owing to its flexibility of time as well as place (Shen, Laffey, Lin, and Huang 2006) cited in (Wiid, Cant and Nell, 2014). Commenting on the benefits of SNS with regards education, Mazman and Usluel (2010) noted that SNS has supported collaborative learning,

join individuals in analytical thinking as well as enhance both communicating and writing competencies. Faizi, El Afia & Chiheb (2013) also submitted that SNS is important as a channel of communication between lecturers and students and as a collaborative platform particularly with learners' colleague. SNS support collaborative learning, engage individuals in critical thinking, improve communication and writing skills through activating users' work in personalised environments (Mazman & Usluel, 2010).

Amongst the benefits of social media platforms is that, it enhances communication amongst students and instructors, helps students to get access to course materials, increases chances for networking among students, facilitates speedy sharing of resources, exposes students to skills and technologies that may improve their employment opportunities (Asare-Donkoh, 2018). Though social media usage can span a varied range of feasible activities, the majority of the youths and teenager's population which is the constituent of the student population in the Universities use it for mainly social interacting. In reference to research conducted, it was estimated that more than ninety percent (90%) of university students (undergraduates) utilize social media platforms (Mehboob, 2012). This development has therefore raised major concern in this era of massive technological advancements as social media sites are becoming more updated and popular amongst the students of the Universities in Nigeria. The concern has therefore been whether or not the usage of these social media platforms has an impact on the academic performance of students. The question has since remained that, what is the impact of social media on students' academic performance in Southwest Nigerian universities.

### **Challenges of Social Media**

Observing the major obstacles, challenges or constraints encountered by undergraduates on the use of social media, Wickramanayake & Jika (2018) noted that erratic power generated; cost of internet connectivity and low bandwidth in internet connection as well as issues associated with privacy and security were noticed as some constraints to students' social media usage. This agreed with study by Hussain (2012) who reported the major problems faced by students on social media use to be unstable electricity 93%; low internet bandwidth 77%; poor time management 89% particularly during session; lack of infrastructure 72%. Privacy and security issues, ergonomics, blurred vision as well as cyber bullying were also identified as the constraints to social media use. Fatokun (2019) further identified habit, health issues, distraction as well as poor time management as some of the barriers to the use of social media tools among undergraduate students in Nigeria. Abbas, Aman, Nurunnabi & Bano (2019) highlighted the constraints to the use of SNS among students in Pakistan which include poor of critical thinking; time wasting; slow writing skills; leads to laziness as well as health problems.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study concluded that students from Nigerian universities are aware of the social media platform and frequently used them with WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter being highly utilized on daily basis. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that the students were faced with challenges to the use of social media particularly for academic work, this include cyber-bullying, lack of privacy, time wasting, addiction, distraction as well as lack of conformity. Therefore, in order to encourage a productive use of social media by the students for academic pursuit in South-West Nigeria universities, it is recommended that:

1. The students should be encouraged to continually utilize the social media platform in such a way that will not affect their academic pursuit negatively.

2. Cyber-bullying should be discouraged among students in Nigerian universities. This should be done by creating awareness through counselling services on the dangers inherent in cyber-bullying in social media usage particularly on their academic activities.
3. Students should be careful on the information posted on these social media platforms because information posted may be used against them in future.
4. Social media vendors such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other social networking sites should incorporate privacy policy to secure users' privacy in the use of social media.
5. The government should consider the possibility of evolving a policy on teenagers' exposure to social media.
6. Students should decrease their introduction to social media and give careful consideration to their studies.
7. Students, particularly those ready to record gigantic scholarly achievement should guard themselves against the successive utilization of social media.

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