Assessment of the use of social media by in-school adolescents in secondary schools in south-east Nigeria. A case study of Imo and Anambra state

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Abstract

The study assesses the use of social media by in-school adolescents in secondary schools in South-East Nigeria. The study was guided by four research questions. The study was a descriptive survey. The target population of the study consist of 65,000 secondary school students (SS2) in Imo and Anambra State. A sample of 6000 students were randomly selected for the study. The data used in the used in the study were collected through questionnaires and interview schedule developed by the researcher. The instruments were validated by two experts in measurement and evaluation. Thereafter, Cronbach Alpaha was used to establish the reliability of the instrument at .89. 6,000 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. The analysis was done on 5,600 valid copies of the questionnaire retrieved. Quantitative data were be analyzed using mean, standard deviation, tables, percentages, and graphs. While, the qualitative oral data as a follow up to the quantitative results analyzed thematically. The social media often used by students -Facebook, Whatsapp, 2go/Skype and while Myspace, Twitter, Badoo, Blogs/Web scholars, Google+/ Social bookmarking are not often used by secondary school students in the study. Also, most students spent their time on social media doing a lot of non- academic activities. These have made them to perform poorly in schools. Based on the above findings, the researcher recommends Counselling programmes should be organized for secondary school students to put them on the right track on the positive usage of social media in enhancing their academic performance.

Keywords: Social media, Adolescence, Secondary education

1. Introduction

The use of social media among in-school adolescents in secondary schools has become a ubiquitous aspect of their daily lives, significantly influencing their academic performance,

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social interactions, and psychological well-being (Taibi et al., 2023). Adolescents spend considerable portions of their day engaging with social media platforms, a practice that has both positive and negative ramifications on their educational journey and social development.Research indicates that social media can serve as a valuable tool for educational purposes, offering a platform for information exchange, facilitating peer feedback on assignments, and enhancing mastery of course content (Sunet al.,2024). It provides a medium for adolescents to connect, share, and interact with peers, thereby fostering relationships and a sense of belonging. This aspect is particularly pertinent during adolescence, a critical period marked by identity formation and social exploration (Crocettiet al.,2023).

However, the pervasive use of social media also presents significant drawbacks. Excessive and unregulated use of social media platforms has been linked to distractions from academic work, leading to reduced academic performance (Gaoet al.,2024). Studies reveal that adolescents in Secondary School who spend substantial time on social media tend to experience a decline in grades due to the diversion of attention from academic pursuits to social networking (Lupoet al.,2024). Furthermore, the constant exposure to the curated lives of others can lead to psychological distress, including feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and depression.Secondary School education prepares the individual for useful living within the society and higher education (Olorunmoteniet al.,2023). The objective of secondary school education cannot be achieved if student is not properly trained while they are in school. The 21st century student which will be useful in the 21st century community cannot be trained with the 18th century tool. At its best if trained will gain little due to lack of connection between his /her environment and the school.

Social media is growing in its influence in our environment. 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, which allows the creation and exchange of user generated content. Social media can also be defined as a set of web-based broadcast technologies that enable the democratization of content, giving people the ability to emerge from consumers of content to publishers. Another important description is that social media encapsulates digital tools and activities that enable communication and sharing of ideas across

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the net. Davis, Canche, Deil-Amen and Rios-Aguilar (2012), see social media as "web-based and mobile applications that allow individuals and organizations to create, engage, and share new user generated or existing content, in digital environments through multi-way communication".

Social media refers to the means of interaction among people with which they create, share, exchange and interact among themselves in different network. Kaplan (2012) is of the opinion that social media is a group of internet-based application that builds on the ideological foundation and allows the creation and exchange of users –generated content. Social media has become one of the major channels of chatting through media platforms such as 2go, BB chat, blogger etc. Through this platform, people create personal or organizational profiles and share information. However, it isnotlimited to desktop or laptop computers but accessible through mobile applications and smart phones.

Adolescence is a transition period or stage between childhood and adulthood. It is a period when an individual pass-through dramatic changes while they examine the sense of which they are and worth, achieve cognitive ability, adjust to environmental commands and set ready for adult roles (Williams, 2018). Adolescence is also referred to as important stage of intellectual, psychosocial, and instinctive feelings (Vale, 2016; Wise, 2009) opined that adolescence is the beginning of the onset of puberty, the period of physical growth and development that brings to an end childhood and enables the growing person to achieve adult size, shape and sexual reproductivecapacity.

Adolescents see social media as an important source of information and encouragement in a pertinent and critical period (Mesch, 2019). No wonder a good number of adolescents spend 7 to 10 hours a day searching for information. According to a joint study by Campus2Careers and Study Breaks on the use of mobile devices among students discovered that, an average undergraduate spends3.6 hours a day on their cell phones and smart phones, while spending less time on computers, TV's, handheld gaming devices and e-readers.

According to Khan (2019), social media users often time experience poor performance, academically. Similarly, Englander, Terregrossa and Wang (2010) posited that

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social media is negatively associated with academic performance of student and is a lot more momentous than its advantages. Internet addiction consequently gave rise in internet usage within the last couple of decades. Nalwa and Anand (2013) reported that addicted users prefer using internet setting back their personal and professional responsibilities which ultimately leads to poor academic performance. In the same vein, Karpinski (2019) pointed out that social media users devote lesser time to their studies as opposed non users andsubsequently had lower GPAs. Karpinski and Duberstein (2019) also reported that among various unique distractions of every single generation, social media remains a major distraction of currentgeneration.

Social media networks, as well as other new forms of communication technology are also a concern to many school professionals because of the level of distraction they create within the school (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2018). Even though many schools have created many strict rules that forbid the use of handheld technology during school activities or that block certain social networking websites, many students are still able to connect during lecture hours as they please. This has caused distractions during instruction time and has had a negative impact on the learningenvironment.

According to Lenhart, and Madden (2017) asserted that approximately 80% of adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 living in the Nigeria have active social networking accounts and 90% of these are Facebook accounts. In Ogedebe, Emmanuel and Musa (2012), a study on Facebook and Academic Performance in Nigeria Universities was carried out on 122 university students; they tested six hypotheses to know the effect of Facebook on the academic performance of students in selected universities. The study tested among other hypotheses that the more time a student spends on Facebook, the lower his or her grade point average will be. Kirkup (2010) observed that the bone of contention of the social media is the obsessive attitude of Nigerian youths towards its use. Kirku pointed out that students waste their time through idle chats and other immoral acts. Students are so engrossed in the social media networks that they are almost 24 hours online. Even in classrooms and lecture theatres, it has been observed that some students are always busy pinging, 2going or facebooking, while lectures are on. The result is that quality time that ought to be spent on academic

research and other productive networking is lost.

Social media has a significant impact on children and adolescents, affecting their outlook on life and social interactions. The General Health Questionnaire (2021) highlights that frequent use of social media is associated with psychological distress, particularly among girls. Ebubechukwu (2018) studied the impact of social media on academic performance in Secondary Schools, finding a significant relationship between social media use and students' academic performance. Similarly, Khan, Sultan, and Salawa (2019) identified time wastage and distraction as key factors affecting academic performance due to social media use.

Numerous studies have highlighted the negative impact of social media on students' academic performance. For instance, Khan (2019) and Mohan and Prabhu (2013) found that Facebook users spent less time studying and had lower GPAs. Seo (2014) noted that most students use social media for socializing rather than studying, leading to distraction. Jeong (2015) and Banquil (2019) emphasized the negative correlation between internet dependency and academic performance.

Moreover, Karpinski and Duberstein (2019) observed a negative growth in students' academic performance due to social media use, with a particular emphasis on the distraction caused by social networking sites. Ogedebe, Emmanuel, and Musa (2012) reported that social media provides excessive stimulation, distracting students from their coursework.Studies like those by Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) and Alwagait, Shazad, and Alim (2018) further support the negative impact of social media on academic performance. Laundry's (2016) research at Kogi State University revealed that social media exposure negatively affects students' academic performance. Ofodi and Falasinumu (2014) noted that students who spend more time on social networks for non-academic purposes are negatively affected academically.

However, there are contrasting views. For example, Junco (2012) found no significant difference in overall Grade Point Average (GPA) between users and non-users of Facebook. Some studies, like that of Kolan and Dzandza (2018), showed that despite spending significant time on social media, students' academic performance was not necessarily impaired.The motivation for studying the use of social media by in-school adolescents in

secondary schools in South-East Nigeria, particularly in Imo and Anambra states, stems from recognizing a critical gap in understanding the local impact of digital platforms on youth. Despite extensive global research indicating both positive and negative outcomes of social media use on adolescents' academic performance, mental health, and social skills (Taibi et al., 2023; Sun et al.,2024; Crocetti et al.,2023; Lupo et al.,2024), there is a noticeable lack of localized studies that consider the unique cultural, educational, and socioeconomic contexts of Nigerian adolescents. This study aims to fill this gap by providing targeted insights into how social media affects students in specific Nigerian locales, thereby contributing to more effective educational policies, parental guidance, and intervention strategies tailored to the needs of Nigerian adolescents.

2. Statement of theProblem

Evidences abound that in-school adolescents spend so much time in social networks such as Facebook, 2go, Whatsapp, Twitter, Instagram, Google and others. Some of these in-school adolescents experience academic maladjustment in school. There has been a decline in the performance of students in both internal and external examination, Senior Secondary Certificate (SSCE), Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSSCE) and National Examination Council (NECO), to this observation. It appears that the addiction of in-school adolescents to social networking makes them to lack concentration while studying and consequently lead to poor academic Achievement. It has also been discovered that the in-school adolescents who are always on the net lack necessary skills that are required for academic adjustment in schools. For example, some of the adolescents do not use study time table to study and some lack study habitskills.

Consequently, some of the in-school adolescents who are always on social networking sites are more likely to have reduced academic performance. Some of these adolescents fail in both internal examinations repeat the examination and still fail again. The in-school adolescents' academic maladjustment leads to other anti- social behaviours such as examination malpractice, truancy, dropping out of school and so on.Much was reported on the negative side of social media by both reporters. These include; gang-raping, unwholesome connection for sinister, obsessive attitude of students towards social media,

time wasting, pinging, 2going during classes and distraction from academic work. They both shared that social mediahas no positive impact on the academic work of the students. It is against this background that the researcher has investigated the use of social media by in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Imo and Anambra state south-east Nigeria.

1.2. ResearchObjectives

The general objective of the study is to investigate the use of social media by in- school adolescents in secondary schools in Imo and Anambra state south-East Nigeria.The specific objectives of the study are as follows: To determine:

1. the various categories of social media in-school adolesc
2. the influence of social media on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo and AnambraState?
3. the level of students' addictiveness to social media in public secondary schools in Imo and AnambraState
4. the activities students engage on social media in public secondary schools in Imo and AnambraState

1.4 ResearchQuestions

1) What are the various categories of social media, in- school adolescents in public secondary schools are exposed to in Imo and AnambraState?
2) What is the influence of social media on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo and AnambraState?
3) What is the level of student addictiveness to social media in public secondary schools in Imo and AnambraState?
4) What activities do students engage on social media in public secondary schools in Imo and AnambraState?

3. Methodology

The study is a mixed method research design where the researcher combines both quantitative data and qualitative data. In term of quantitative, descriptive study was carried

out among adolescents that consented in publicsecondary schools in Imo and Anambra state Nigeria. Qualitatively, the study used phenomenological qualitative research design.The study include adolescents within the age range of 10 to 19 years in senior secondary classes enrolled as students in public senior secondary schools in Imo and Anambra State who responded to a self-structured questionnaire (n=6000) during the period. Furthermore, oral interview on the research problem was conducted on 25 research participants to enhance the understanding of the issue.

The data in the study were collected through the help of questionnaire and oral interview. The questionnaire wasused to collected data for quantitative analysis while oral interview were used to collected qualitative data. Quantitative data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, tables, percentages, and graphs. While, the qualitative oral data were analyzed thematically.

4.0 Results

This was done according to research questions that were formulated to guide the study. The analysis was done on 5,600 valid copies of the questionnaire retrieved.

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4.1 Quantitative Findings

Research Question 1. What are the various categories of social media inschool adolescents in public secondary schools are exposed to in Imo and Anambra State?

Table 1:Social Media Exposed to Most Secondary School Students

S/N	Social Media	Frequency	Percentage	Remark
1	BB Chart	210	3.75%	9th
2	Facebook	1000	17.8%	1st
3	2go//Instagram	620	11.1%	5th
4	Myspace	90	1.6%	11th
5	Whatsapp	900	16.1%	2nd
6	Google+/Social book marking	520	9.3%	6th
7	Skype	310	5.5%	8th
8	Twitter	720	12.9%	3rd
9	You tube	650	11.6	4th
10	Baddoo	180	3.2%	10th
11	Blogs/Web Scholars	400	7.1%	7th

Table 1 examined the type of social media the respondents are mostly exposed to. Findings show that majority of the students 1000 (17.8%) are more exposed to Face-book than any other networking site, while 900(16.1%) agreed to Whatsapp as the most exposed networking site to them, while 720 (12.9%) out of the 5600 respondents are more exposed to twitter, 620 (11.1%) out of the 5600 respondents are more exposed to 2go, 520 (9.3%) out of the 5600 respondents are more exposed to Google+/social bookmarking, 400 (7.1%) out of the 5600 respondents are more exposed to Blogs/web scholars, 300 (5.5%) out of the 5600 respondents are more exposed to Skype, 210 (3.75%) out of the 5600 respondents are more exposed to BB chat, 180 (3.2%) out of the 5600 respondents are more exposed to Baddo whereas, only 90(1.6%) are exposed to myspace. Table 1 also indicated that the following are often used by students -Facebook,

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Whatsapp, 2go/Skype and while Myspace, Twitter, Badoo, Blogs/Web scholars, Google+/ Social bookmarking are not often used by secondary school students in the study.
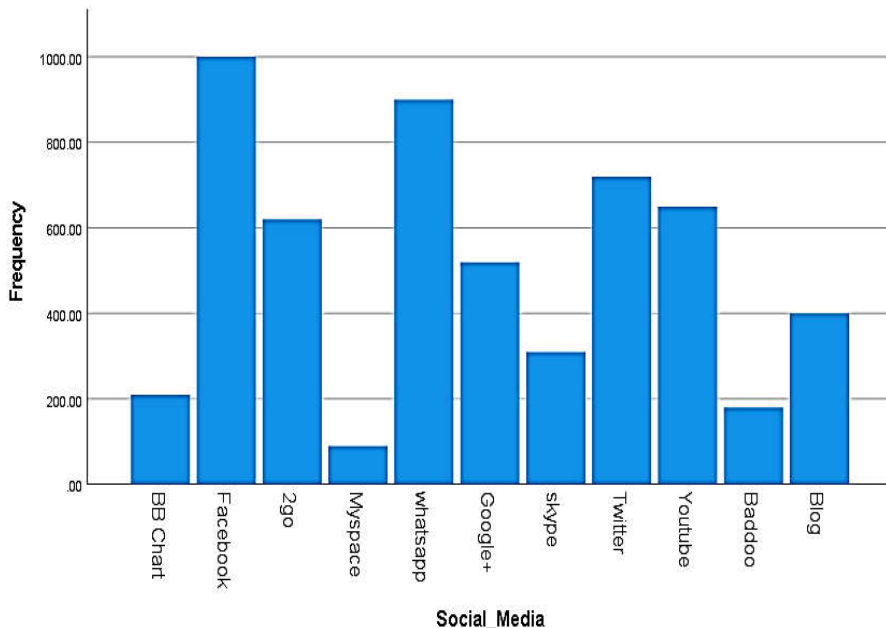
Fig 1: Simple Bar Chart of Frequency by Social Media

Research Question 2. What are influence of social media on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo and Anambra State?

Table 2: The influence of Social Media On academic performance of Secondary school students

		Mean	SD	Remark
12	Most students spend more time on social media than reading their books	2.56	1.4	Accepted
13	Students now rely on social media to do their assignments without consulting other sources	2.01	2.2	Rejected
14	Students' exposure to social media have negative effect on their academic performance	2.37	2.1	Accepted
15	Students who spend more time on social media are likely to perform poorly in their academic activities than those who do	2.30	3.1	Accepted

	not			
16	Social media affects reading ability of most secondary school students	2.56	2.11	Accepted
17	Social media affects writing ability of most secondary school students	2.57	2.09	Accepted
18	Social media affects academic thinking capacity of most secondary school students	2.61	3.11	Accepted
19	Social media affects academic concentration of most secondary school students	2.90	3.01	Accepted
20	What moststudents watch on social media interferes with their studies sometimes	3.12	2.11	Accepted
21	Most students are addicted to social media which has become a problem that is affecting my academic life	2.89	2.07	Accepted
22	Unlimited access to Facebook has affected the academic performance of most students negatively.	2.77	2.19	Accepted
23	Whenever most students want to study their books, their attention is drawn to the social media, thereby distracting me	2.95	2.22	Accepted
24	Most students spend a lot of time looking at what other people have posted on social media	2.60	2.40	Accepted
25	Due to the abbreviations used on social media, most students do not know how to spell words correctly again.	2.64	2.11	Accepted
26	The time spent on social media prevents me from sleeping well at night thereby affecting my concentration in the classroom	2.71	2.31	Accepted
27	Most students engaged in academic discussions on social media and this has improved their academic performance	2.11	3.04	Rejected
28	The use of Social media has helped most students to improve their communication skill	2.02	1.23	Rejected
29	The used of social media has made many students to	2.81	2.15	Accepted

abandon their assignment and studies after school hours

In table 2, items 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26 and 29 with the mean scores of 2.56,2.37, 2.30, 2.56, 2.57, 2.61, 2.90, 3.12, 2.89, 2.77, 2.95, 2.60, 2.64, 2.71 and 2.81 respectively are above the cut-off point 2.5 which means that most students spend more time on social media than reading their books, students' exposure to social media have negative effect on their academic performance, students who spend more time on social media are likely to perform poorly in their academic activities than those who do not, social media affects reading ability of most secondary school students, social media affects reading ability of most secondary school students, social media affects academic thinking capacity of most secondary school students, social media affects academic concentration of most secondary school students, what most watch on social media interferes with their studies sometimes, most students are addicted to social media which has become a problem that is affecting my academic life. Furthermore, unlimited access to Facebook has affected the academic performance of most students negatively, whenever most students want to study their books, their attention is drawn to the social media, thereby distracting me, due to the abbreviations used on social media, and most students do not know how to spell words correctly again. The time spent on social media prevents me from sleeping well at night thereby affecting my concentration in the classroom and the used of social media has made many students to abandon their assignment and studies after school hours

Items 13, 27 and 28 are all below the cut-off point of 2.5 indicating t that students do not use social media to do their assignments rather for charting. Most students do not engaged in academic discussions on social media and   has result to their academic performance. The use of Social media has marred most students' communication skills particularly writing and reading abilities

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Research Question 3. What are the level of students' addictiveness to social media in public secondary schools in Imo and Anambra State?

Table 3: Level of Addiction of Secondary School Students to social media.

Level of Addiction	Frequency	Percentage	Remark
High	2600	46.4%	1st
Moderate	1430	25.5%	2nd
Low	1000	17.8%	3rd
No addiction	570	10.3%	4th

Table 3 explore the Level of Addiction of Secondary School Students to social media. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents 2600 (46.4%)are highly addicted to social media,1430 (25.5%) are moderately addicted to social media, 1000(17.8%) are low addicted to social media, and 570(10.3%) are not addicted to social media. This implies that, most of the students are highly addict to social media. This could be possibly responsible for poor academic performance in the study area.

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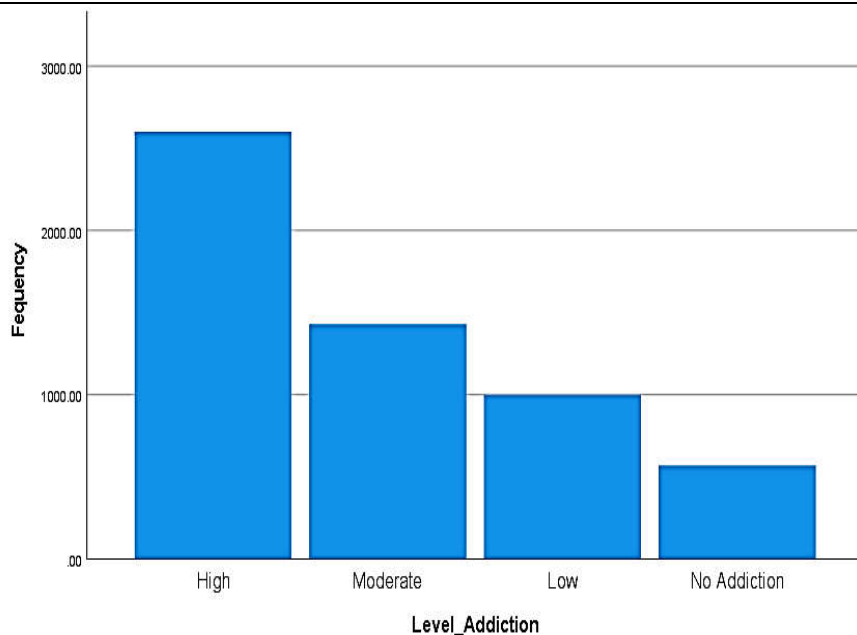
Fig 2: Simple Bar Chart of Frequency by level of Addiction to social media

Research Question 4. What the activities students engage on social media in public secondary schools in Imo and Anambra State?

Table 4: Activities Mostly Engaged bySecondary School Students on Social Media.

Activities	Frequency	Percentage	Remark
Academic	200	3.6%	6th
Sports and news	2100	37.5%	1st
Entertainment	1000	17.9%	3rd
Chatting	1750	31.3%	2nd
Political	300	5.4%	4th
Religious	250	4.5%	5th

Table 4 explore theactivities of Secondary School Students to social media. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents 2100 (37.5%) agreed touse social media for sport and news purposes, 1750(31.3%) concurred to using social media for charting purposes,1000(17.9%) concurred to using social media for charting purposes, 300 (5.4%) concurred to using social media for political purposes, 250(4.5%) concurred to using social media for religious activities,

while only 200 (3.6%) out of the studentsmake use of social media for academic activities. This implies that, most of the students' activities on social media are not related to academic activities and this have negative effect on their academic performance.
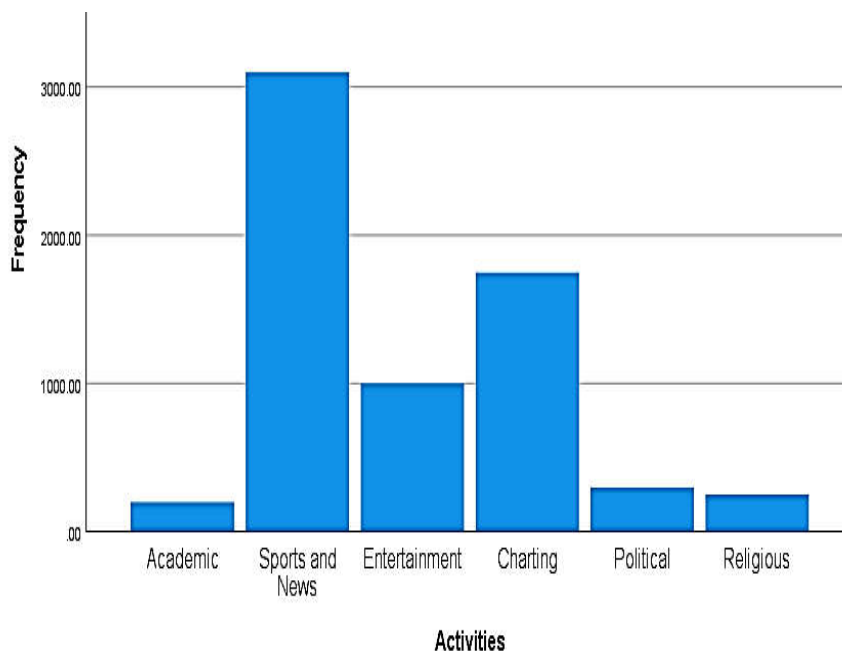
Fig 3: Simple Bar Chart of Frequency by Students Activities on social media

4.2 Qualitative Findings

The analyses of the students' answers for the structured interview questions on effect of social media on students' academic achievement revealed that overall, all the students reported a negative effect on academic achievement. In summary, almost all the students interviewed noted the following effect of social media on academic achievement

1. The students said they use all the social media stated in the research but they use Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp more.

2. On the issue of time spent on social media, most of the students they spent more than 2 hours daily on social media. This one of the major reasons for their poor academic performance.

4. Most students engage on social media for dating /relationship, meeting new friends update about news and just for charting.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The researcher found out social media often used by students -Facebook, Whatsapp, 2go/Skype and while Myspace, Twitter, Badoo, Blogs/Web scholars, Google+/ Social bookmarking are not often used by secondary school students in the study. Also, most students spent their on social media doing a lot of non- academic activities. These have made them to perform poorly in schools. This also corroborates the findings of Wiley and Sisson (2006), that previous studies have found that more than 90% percent of tertiary school students use social networks. On the issue of time spent on social media, 42.8% of the students spent 1-2 hours daily on social media, 27.8% spent less than 1 hour daily, while the least proportion 12.8% and 16.7% spent 2-4 hours daily and 4 hours above respectively. This shows that majority are on social media for 1-2hours daily. According to Kolan,andDzandza (2018) majority of the students; (50.3%) spent over two (2) hours on social media on a daily basis. This was supposed to impair their studies but the study indicates differently contrary to expectations. This is in agreement with a study conducted by Kolan,andDzandza (2018) in Ghana. Their findings revealed that students of university of Ghana are well exposed to social media networks; all 197 respondents use one social media platform or the other. All the respondents are on Facebook and whatsApp.

Results of interview shows that of social media usage has influence on students' academic performance. The result of this finding may be due to the fact that the time that should be used in study by the students is spent on the social media which leads to poor performance in examinations. This finding supports Ofodi and Falasinumu (2014) who noted that students who spend more time on social networks for social purposes other than academic purposes are affected by the internet. While they enjoy the informative power of the social media, their academic performance experiences a downward trend. Martin (2009) also agrees with this finding when he maintained that there is a correlation between how much time is spent on a social media and grades of students' Equally, students who multi-task between social network and homework are likely to have lower grades than a student who does not have a social network

in visual range as such serves as distraction. However, the finding contradicts Junco (2012) who found no difference in overall Grade Point Average (GPA) between users and non-users of Facebook. Nothing less, usage of social media for academic purposes will not only increase students' grades but also strengthen students' communication to facilitate peer feedback on assignments and mastery of the course content.

5.2 Conclusion

The assessment of social media usage by in-school adolescents in secondary schools within South-East Nigeria, focusing on Imo and Anambra states, reveals a nuanced landscape of digital engagement among students. The study identifies Facebook, WhatsApp, and 2go/Skype as the predominant platforms frequented by students, while Myspace, Twitter, Badoo, Blogs/Web scholars, and Google+/Social bookmarking sites are less popular among this demographic. A significant finding of this research is that a majority of students allocate their online time to activities unrelated to their academic pursuits. This trend towards prioritizing non-academic activities on social media platforms correlates with observed declines in academic performance within the student population under study. These insights underscore the need for a balanced approach to social media use, where students are encouraged and guided to exploit the educational potential of these platforms without detracting from their academic responsibilities. Future interventions could focus on integrating social media as a tool for enhancing learning while developing strategies to mitigate its distractions, thereby fostering a healthier balance that could improve educational outcomes for adolescents in South-East Nigeria.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made by the researchers for high institutions and secondary school students in Nigeria.

1. Counselling programmes should be organized for secondary school students to put them on the right track on the positive usage of social media in enhancing their academic performance.

2. There is need to design appropriate behavioural change communication materials that will educate adolescents of various age groups and parents about the potential benefits and draw backs of using social media

3. Students should try use social media for academic purposes. They can like or shares academic websites with Facebook, Google+ and follow academic twitter websites.

4. Students should be careful with the type of websites they use social media account to shares or likes.

5. Students should try to use more time in reading their books than social media surfing, because of the negative effects.

Funding

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