

# Effects of Social Media on Students of American University of Nigeria

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**Abstract:** - This research paper looks at the effects of social media on students of American University of Nigeria. The study area is the American University of Nigeria located in Yola, Adamawa State, Nigeria. The study structured a questionnaire to extract information from respondents which consisted of selected students. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed and 80 of these questionnaires were retrieved. This number forms the crust of findings for this study; the 80 questionnaires retrieved and the interpretation of results therein, can be considered a justifiable sample size considering the fact that the university has a total of less than one thousand students. The simple percentage was used to analyze the research questions. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study and systematic random sampling was used to select the population sample. Findings revealed that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram are highly used by students of American University of Nigeria. The study also revealed that over 99% of the students owned mobile phones with internet facilities and have a good knowledge of the use of social media. The phone brands used by the students include Apple (iPhone), Samsung, Nokia and Huawei. Findings from the research revealed that social media use can have a negative effect on students, as well as hamper their academic performance. Nevertheless, social media also plays an important role in the lives of students as it provides a convenient medium for information dissemination, research and instant communication. The study recommends that students should minimize the time they spend on social media. Moderation is key. Excessive use of social media can result in mental issues, anxiety, decreased self-esteem, poor academic performance and depression.

**Keywords:** Academic Performance, Effects, Internet, Online, Social Media, Students, Website.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background to the Study

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is known as the age of technological advancement. One of the most prominent technological innovation that is dominant in virtually every part of the world is the mobile phone. The mobile phone is a device used for communication of information among people across different parts of the globe. Young people between the ages of 15 to 35 years and adults aged 39 to 70 years old and above, form the major group of persons with ownership of mobile phones with internet connection facilities today. The age group of persons from 80 years and above own phones but use the devices basically for making and receiving calls (Chatfield, 2109).

Social media on the other hand refers to computer-based technologies that facilitates the efficient sharing of ideas and information through virtual networks and online communities. It also refers to website applications designed to allow people share content quickly. There are several social media platforms but for the sake of this research, we will be limiting our findings four major social media platforms; Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. The use of these social media platforms is popular among young people and in this case, students of American University of Nigeria.

The internet is a worldwide system of computer network. The internet has revolutionized computer and information communication like nothing before. It is one of the greatest inventions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a medium for virtual connection of people around the world, who interact through these social media platforms. Social media platforms allow users to share their private pictures and allow access to the general public.

The effects of social media on students are two-folds; negative and positive. While we cannot overemphasize the need for moderation in the use of the internet, this study seek to find a balance between the use of social media by students of American University of Nigeria in a way that social media will not have deteriorating effects on the students.

### B. Statement of the Problem

Social media poses several threats to students and the society as a whole and this excesses need to be addressed and checkmate in order to avoid any pending catastrophe. Social media can have harmful effects on students if its use is not controlled. Some of these effects include: poor grades from academic pursuits, long hours spent on social media platforms, sleep deprivation, peer pressure, addiction to social media, deteriorating morals, exposure to adult information, pornography, cyber bullying, mental health issues and so on. This study seeks to critically analyze these risk factors and their underlying effects on students of the American University of Nigeria.

### C. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effects of social media usage on students of the American University of Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims at exploring the different kind of social media platforms used by students, their phone brands and user preference, use of social media as a medium

for acquiring general information, and the effects of prolonged hours of social media use on students of the American University of Nigeria.

#### D. Research Questions

The main research question of the study was: “has social media had distinctive effect on students’ academic life? Other questions also considered were:

How do students use social media?

To what extent has use of social media supported student learning?

#### A. Significance of the Study

There is no gainsaying the fact that having an understanding of social media, its usage and the attendant effects on students in the learning environment, will be of vital importance to policy makers, academics, researchers and even students themselves. The recommendations made from this study will help in re-orientating students’ psyche and attitude towards social media use, as well educate practitioners in the educational sector of the pros and cons of social media use by students.

#### B. Research Method

The study adopted the survey research design. Data for this study was gathered from selected students. A total of 100 questionnaires were randomly distributed to 50 males and 50 female students. 80 of the questionnaires comprising 80% of the study population, were retrieved forming the crust of our findings.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### A. Social Media

The term ‘Social media’ may be defined as an online platform which people use to interact and build social networks with other people who share similar personal or career interest, activities, background or real-life connections (Akram and Kumar). It can also be referred to as a collection of internet based services that connect people together, to communicate, participate and collaboratively interact, discuss and exchange ideas on a virtual online community. There are many social media platforms today; these platforms allow users to create their own content and share them freely. Some of these social media platforms include: Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Kindle, LinkedIn and many others.

Facebook, YouTube and Instagram have garnered a total of up to 4 billion users worldwide (Kakkar). Although there are some rules and regulations that exist to regulate the use of these social media platforms, these rules and regulations are often ignored by social media users.

### B. Social Media and Student Academic Life at American University of Nigeria

Academic life in the context of this study is described as the overall activities that encompasses work done in colleges and universities which involves studying, reasoning, reading and writing. The American University of Nigeria, being a technologically compliant university with state of the art facilities, affords students the opportunity of having access to Wi-Fi and internet services. The university also has an e-library with an enormous collection of e-Books for students to consult when carrying out research via the internet. However, rather than being a source of enlightenment and support for these students, the internet tend to be a source of distraction for these students. This occurs as a result of wrong use of the internet; thereby, making internet use to have some negative effects on the students.

### C. Negative Effects of Social Media

Like everything, social media has its pros and cons. Although there are some positive sides to the use of social media by students, the negative effects far outweighs the positive side. These problems range from regulation, to abuse in the form of excessive indulgence and misuse. Some of the negative effects social media use can have on students include:

i) *Depression:* Studies have shown that social media users average around seven and a half hours a day (El Badawy and Hashem). The use of social media for such lengthy hours daily can lead to addiction, leaving little or no time for doing other academic work or even sleep. This addiction can also result in the user developing antisocial behavior and getting continuously withdrawn and detached from real life social interactions. The user feels lost, isolated and cannot function if he or she is not connected online. Also, reality is not always as clear as it is portrayed on social media; in reality, people face challenges which are the normal state of affairs for humans. On the contrary, social media users are always seeing good things happen to other people. This can cause depression in some users who are going through difficult times, thereby leading them into depression or going to the extreme of committing suicide. This dependence and unhealthy attachment will bring about reclusion from normal life activities, resulting in mental health challenges and subsequently, depression.

ii) *Wasting Time on Social:* Ideally, university students should be very good time managers. Therefore, when one spends excessive time joggling from one account to another on different social media platforms, he or she will have less time left to attend to assignments, prepare for tests or attend to other academic activities. As a result, the grades will suffer, leading to a decline in academic performance.

iii) *Lack of Focus and Productivity:* Over indulgence in the use of social media will make a student lack focus, thus hampering his/her academic productivity. Over indulgence leads to brain fatigue and reduced attention span, thus

reducing efficiency. A college student's priority should be his academic pursuits and not spending hours on end on social media sites. "Studies indicate a fall in grades in students who spend endless hours in social networking sites" (aha-now.com).

iv) *Unhealthy Lifestyle:* Students hooked on social media tend to live a sedentary and unhealthy lifestyle. Sleep deprivation is one of the most common health challenge associated with excessive social media use. This leads to student arriving late for classes, failing to complete assignments on time, indulging in habitual procrastination and even sleeping during classes. Such students who are addicts to social media also tend to have a short attention span, get easily bored, irritated and impatient during the day due to lack of sleep. "Several studies have shown that increased use of social media has a negative effect on your sleep quality" (Zhukova).

v) *Online Fraud, Unethical Conduct and Scam on Social Media:* Cybercrime is something everyone needs to be careful about. You cannot say who the other person behind the computer is or what his or her intention really is. Several persons have been victims of scammers on social networking sites. These hackers and spammers often send links that can harm the student's computer; and once that happens, they can use your contacts to further spread such malicious malware. "Several cases are available where people have committed fraud and scam through online networking" (Akram and Kumar).

vi) *Cyber Harassment and Bullying:* One of the most common problem students encountered even before the introduction of the internet, has been the problem of bullying. "Bullying may be defined as repeated verbal, physical and social or psychological aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed towards a less powerful person or group that is intended to harm, distress or fear" (Victoria Government). In recent times, bullying has been carried out through the internet especially via the internet. As aptly put, "Dangers, terrorizing messages and bits of gossips can be sent to the majority to make inconvenience and uproar to the general public" (Akram and Kumar).

vii) *The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) Syndrome:*

Information on social media is being posted and updated by the minute. The users are often aware that even a single second away from social media could mean missing information of interest. So, this makes users always anxious of what's happening next and unable to break the habit of being online all the time. Keeping up with the trend by the minute will tend to get such users hooked to the social networking sites. 'Perhaps you always want to listen to what everyone has to say all the time' (aha-now.com).

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Design

In this study, qualitative research approach was used rather than quantitative. This is because qualitative is more appropriate in collecting data in a natural setting. The researchers conducted brief face-to-face interviews with participants and questionnaires were administered thereafter. The questions in the questionnaires were crafted to elicit the respondents' views about how social media use affects students of the American University of Nigeria.

#### B. Population

The target population of the study was undergraduate students of American University of Nigeria. The sample was extracted out of this population.

#### C. Sampling and Sampling Technique

Systematic random sampling method was used to select the population sample. 100 printed survey questionnaires were administered. The sample comprised of 50 female students and 50 male students. A total of 80 questionnaires representing 80% of the population sample, was retrieved.

#### D. Data Collection Procedure

The questions contained in the questionnaire were crafted to objectively gather data based on the thesis. They bordered on mobile phone brand and ownership, internet facility on mobile phone, knowledge of social media sites, the amount of time spent on social media daily and purpose for which social media was used.

#### E. Data Analysis

The data collected was then interpreted and analyzed accordingly.

### IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results and findings of this study.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Sample Size

Gender	Total Number of Students	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	50	45	90
Female	50	35	70
Total	100	80	80

Source: Field Work, April 2019

As depicted in the table above, total number of respondents for the study was 80, representing 80% of the study population. 45 (90%) of the respondents were males while the remaining 35 (70%) were females.

100% of the respondents admitted to always "being in possession of a mobile phone".

In response to the question on “having internet facility on their mobile phones”, 96% responded in the affirmative, while the remaining 4% responded on the negative.

100% of the respondents admitted to having a good knowledge of social media network sites.

From the responses above, it can be concluded that all of the respondents own a mobile phone, a vast majority of the respondents have internet facility on their mobile phones and all of the respondents have an appreciable knowledge of social media network sites.

Table 2: Distribution of Social Media Sites Used by Respondents

Social Media Sites	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Instagram	15	18.75
Snapchat	34	42.5
Twitter	25	31.25
Facebook	6	7.5
Total	80	100

Source: Field Work, April 2019

It is inferred in table 2 above that about half of the respondents (42.5) use Snapchat as their preferable social media platform, followed by 31.25% of the respondents using Twitter. Instagram is the third favorite with 18.75% respondents and Facebook has the least with 7.5% of the respondents using this platform. Therefore, Snapchat is the favorite social media site used by American University of Nigeria students.

Table 3: Choice of Phone Brands by Students and Individual Satisfaction Level

Gender of Respondent	Phone Brand	Satisfaction Level/10	Possibility of switching Brands
Female	iPhone	4	Yes
Female	iPhone	9	No
Female	iPhone	8	No
Male	Samsung	8	No
Female	iPhone	10	No
Male	Samsung	10	No
Male	Samsung	8	No
Female	iPhone	10	No
Female	Samsung	7	Yes
Female	Samsung	6	Yes
Male	Nokia	6	Yes
Male	Nokia	4	Yes
Female	iPhone	10	No
Female	iPhone	9	No
Female	Huawei	6	Yes
Male	Nokia	7	No

Male	Huawei	9	Yes
Female	Huawei	6	No
Female	iPhone	8	No
Female	iPhone	6	Yes

Source: Field Work, April 2019

As depicted in the table above, the iPhone brand holds the highest percentage of users with 52% of American University of Nigeria students using it. Unsurprisingly, it is the most popular brand among students and they are no complaints about its functionality.

Samsung is the next commonly used phone brand among students, with 21% of the students using it. Followed by Huawei and Nokia brands with 13% and 11% of students’ ownership respectively. Our research revealed that Nokia brand is only used by students due to its affordability, as its functionality is said to be below average.

Table 4: Amount of time Spent on Social Media by Students

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 30 minutes	5	6.25
30 Minutes to 1 Hour	10	12.5
2 to 3 Hours	13	16.25
4 to 5 Hours	28	35
More Than 5 Hours	24	30
Total	80	100

Source: Field Work, April 2019

The data on table 4 above illustrates the amount of time spent on social media sites by AUN students daily. It was deduced that 6.25 % of students spent less than 30 minutes, 12.5% of the respondents spent between 30 minutes to an hour of their day on social media. 16.25% of the respondents admitted to spending at most 2 to 3 hours of their day on their favorite online media platforms. The highest percentage of respondents, that is 35%, admitted to spending 4 to 5 hours of their day scrolling through their online feeds. The last group of respondents (30%), spent more than 5 hours on different social media platforms.

These figures were however not surprising, owing to the fact that most of these students are youngsters and the major proponents of the digital media age.

Table 5: Reasons for the Use of Social Media by Students

Purpose for Use	Frequency	Percentage
Social Networking (News feeds, Tweets, Instagram posts, etc.)	37	46.25
Academic Research	9	11.25
Multimedia (Music, Videos, Podcasts, others)	34	42.5
Total	80	100

Source: Field Work, April 2019

From the statistics on table 5 above, it could be inferred that majority of the respondents (46.25%) affirmed to primarily use the social media to either chat with friends, post pictures on their timelines or just simply scroll through news feeds for anything that may be of interest to them.

45% of the respondents revealed that their use of social media is mainly to stream or download music, movies, as well as e-Books.

However, only 11% of the respondents actually used social media primarily for academic work. This translates to mean that a lesser percentage of students actually use social media for research and academic work.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings from this study, we were able to come to the following conclusions:

- All students of American University of Nigeria are knowledgeable about social media. Majority of them actively participate and visit social media sites.
- The positive effects of social media on students of American University of Nigeria include; making information readily available, providing data for academic research, seamless and speedy communications, social networking and making new friends.
- The negative effects of social media on students of American University of Nigeria include; depression, wasting time, lack of focus and productivity, unhealthy lifestyle, fraud and unethical conduct, cyber harassment, FOMO syndrome and so on.
- The negative effects of social media use on students far outweighs the positive effects. The researchers recommend that moderation in the use of social media is key, to avoid addiction.

- Majority of the students of American University of Nigeria prefer iPhone to other phone brands.
- The social media sites used by American University of Nigeria students include: Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Snapchat is the favorite among students of AUN.

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