

## **Social Media Use among Students of Universities in South-East Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** *The use of social media like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube is a prevalent phenomenon among Nigerian university students. This work particularly examined the use of social media among students of selected universities in South-East Nigeria. The study was conducted using survey research method, with 300 as sample; multi-stage sampling technique was applied to draw the samples and questionnaire was the measuring instrument. Tables, mean, a pie chart and standard deviations were used for data presentation and analyses. The study found out that students use social media for purposes of getting entertainment, education/information; they use social media to discuss national issues, engage in cyber crimes and expose themselves to pornography. So, the students' use of social media reduces the time they devote to their studies. From these findings, the researchers recommended that there ought to be social media Acts that would stipulate the dos and don'ts in the students and public uses of social networking sites in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Social media, internet, ICTs, messages, information, education.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Social media are fast becoming very popular means of both interpersonal and public communication in Nigeria and the world at large. Social media are modern interactive communication channels through which people connect to one another, share ideas, experiences, pictures, messages and information of common interest. What distinguishes the social media from the conventional means of communication is their interactive nature which allows the audience to participate in it from any part of the world they reside. McQuail (2010:39) differentiates the social media from the traditional mass media when he noted that "traditional mass communication was essentially one-directional, while the new forms of communication are essentially interactive." This interactive aura of the new media confers an unprecedented popularity on them.

The social media by their nature have the capabilities of educating, informing, entertaining and 'inflaming' the audience. Above all, they possess a 'contagious and outreaching influence' which the conventional media lack. This potential is most likely what Osahenye (2012:52) refers to as "unstoppable power of the social media."

As a novel phenomenon, it is necessary to examine how Nigerian students use the new means of communication. This is because students' contribution as youths can make or mar any nation. Okolloh cited by Essoungou (2010:paragraph, 2), explains that, "the new communication technology is one of the few ways that young Africans can bypass the inefficiencies in the system that allow the status quo to hold on. It lowers the barriers to entry for everyone to get involved and be heard." A study like this shall help to ascertain whether students' use of the social media could be regulated or not. This is obviously because the disposition of people of a given community could shape the media in existence there, just like a cerebral media scholar Anim (2007:1) aptly notes that "...societies greatly influence the operations and functions of the media that operate within those societies." The manner in which the social media were used and the role they played in the recent uprising which rocked the Middle-East popularly referred to as 'Arab Spring' could be deciphered as credence to the above academic's observation.

Now just like radio or television stations, social media sites spread everywhere in Nigeria and are bound to be sprouting as technologies continue to improve; however, the problem lies in the point that the purposes which the users apply the new media for are still obscure. This is what Folorunso, Vincent, Adekoya and Adewale (2010: 326), perceived when they argue generally that, "in Africa, social media networking site is becoming widely spread than it has ever been before and it tends to be majorly accepted by the youths. Yet the widespread adoption by users of these sites is not clear, as it appears that people's perception of this technology is diverse."

By and large, this study among other things is set to methodically examine why the students in universities within South-East Nigeria make use of the social media. The reason for such academic inquiry is to unravel some of the fundamental purposes which students use the new media to achieve.

### **Statement of Problem**

The use of the social media as channels of communication is a growing trend in Nigeria now, like in virtually all parts of the globe. In the country, the people including university students make use of the new media. Meanwhile, Baran (2010:272) argues that “technology can be used in ways beneficial and otherwise...technology is a double-edged sword. Its power - for good and for bad - resides in us.” That is say, people (users) determine what they do with technology, the problems now are: For which purposes do Nigerian students use the social media? Does the use of the social media reduce the amount of time the students devote to their studies? Do the social media have any positive input on the students’ studies? These constitute the core problems this study seeks to systematically unravel.

**Objectives of the Study:** The objectives of this study are: (1) To find out why Nigerian students use the social media. (2) To ascertain whether the use of the new media reduces the amount of time the students devote to their studies. (3) To find out whether the use of the social media have positive inputs on the students’ studies.

**Research Questions:** To achieve the aforementioned objectives, this study shall be guided by the following research questions: (1) For what purposes do Nigerian students use the social media? (2) Do the students’ uses of the new media make them lessen the amount of time they devote to their studies? (3) Do the social media have positive inputs on the students’ academics?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on a media theory, as Ohaja (2003:63-64) argues that “knowledge does not exist in a vacuum. In every discipline, there is a body of theories that provide the explanation for observable phenomena in that field.” The theory applied to this work is uses and gratifications theory.

Uses and gratifications theory basically stresses how and why the audience use the media (Klapper, 1963) as cited by Haridakis & Hanson (2009:7). Also, expatiating on the theory, McQuail (2010:423) states that “the central question posed is: why do people use media, and what do they use them for?” He further posits that:

Functionalist sociology (see Wright, 1974) viewed the media as serving the various needs of the society-e.g. for cohesion, cultural continuity, social control and a large circulation of public information of all kinds. This, in turn, presupposes that individuals also use media for related purposes such as personal guidance, relaxation, adjustment, information and identity formation.

The theory recognizes and maintains that the audience has various needs that prompt them to expose themselves to any media or media content. Therefore, the focal point is that the theory is of the notion that there are distinct benefits the media message consumers envisage to get from any medium they would expose themselves to. Once the medium does not deliver to the people those purposes, needs and or benefits they anticipate from the organ, the tendency is that they (the audience) will desert the very channel or content that does not satisfy them. The import is that the media audience is not an ‘idle’ soccer spectator that accepts what his football team plays; failure of a medium to satisfy the audience’s basic desire regularly will give them room to search for another medium. Lazarsfeld and Stanton, 1944, 1949, cited by McQuail (2010:423) has it that the first research conducted on the uses and gratifications theory “dates from the early 1940s, and focused on the reasons for the popular appeal of different radio programmes, especially ‘soap operas’ and quizzes, and also looked at daily newspaper reading.”

The theory was according to Weimer (2011:1) developed by Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch (1974). The theory is applicable to studies where the audience is free to choose what to use based on an anticipated benefit from the content of the media or a media programme. The suitability of it in our discourse here springs from the fact that the students in the university communities’ usage of the social media channels depends largely on the specific satisfaction they derive from them (the social media channels). The import is that the public give attention to media productions or services strictly on the bases of the satisfactions which they (the media services) offer to the users. So, the audience directly or indirectly participates actively in determining the very media content they consume. This is why Zafar (2010:515) contends that “uses and gratifications theory suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media.” Ojobor (2002:20) pointed out some results of previous studies that prove

the audience dependence on the gratifications they obtain from the media as the pivotal reason for their consumption of the media messages; he cites Stephen's (1967) play theory as an "approach centering on what uses we make of the media and the gratification we derive there from. The play theory suggests that we use media as a means of escaping into a world of "play" not accessible at other times." In a similar vein, the scholar contended that "other studies in uses and gratifications include those done by Herzog (1944) and Compesi (1980), Ojobor (2002). While Herzog identified compensations, wish fulfillment and advice as reasons for listening to soap operas, Compesi listed seven gratifications obtainable from watching the soap, "All my Children," as cited by (Ojobor, 2002:20). These studies quoted above paint a lucid picture that would actually buttress the meaning of the uses and gratifications theory and the rationale for its application in this study.

However, in an effort to further expatiate on what the uses and gratifications theory of the media entails; Folarin (2002:72) may have put it better, as he argues that, "the focus was thus shifted from media production and transmission functions to the media consumption function. Instead of asking; "what kinds of effects occur under what conditions?" The question became: "who uses ... which media under which conditions and for what reasons?"

Once more, the theory could be viewed as very relevant to this study as it (the study) looks into why the university communities within our coverage radius use the social media in Nigeria. Therefore, this study focuses on ascertaining the purposes and the benefits which the new media serve for their users that invariably sustain their usage. It presupposes that there are certain satisfactions the new media provide to the public without which their usage would have been waned. Hence, the uses of the social media have been in existence for years, it is an indication that they certainly provide meaningful gratifications to those who use them. This study shall unearth the benefits or gratifications which the social media or the new media present to their teeming number of student-users within the South-East Universities in Nigeria. Just as all commercial commodities have definite needs they provide their satisfactions to the consumers, in a much similar way, all media and or their contents are envisaged to play certain roles to their users. Otherwise, the audience in their discretion could jettison the very media or a media content that tends not to present a 'profitable consumption.' Such profitable consumption in the context of this study is referred to as gratifications, purposes, benefits or satisfactions which the social media provide to those who use them. The major emphasis in the uses and gratifications theory is that the user or the audience plays a great part in the choice of the media or the media content he or she consumes; and this is determined by what (gratifications) the content or the media offers. From the argument above the theoretical significant of uses and gratifications theory to this study has been made clear.

## **II. Methodology**

The survey design was adopted for this study. It was essentially considered as the most suitable design for the work because students' opinion would be the main source of primary data collection.

The population for this study comprises all the undergraduate students of the selected universities in South-East Nigeria. So, the population excludes the postgraduate students of the universities. The opinion of Okoro (2001:7) that "population in research ... stands for all elements of concern in a given study," reasonably justifies the decision taken above in respect to the choice of the population of this study. The population of undergraduate students of the selected universities in South-East Nigeria is estimated to be one hundred and twelve thousand, five hundred and ninety one students (112, 591).

The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire with both open-ended and close-ended questions. The sample size for this study is 300. This number would be used following a rule provided by renowned mass media researchers, Wimmer and Dominick (2011:103) who suggests that one guideline recommended for a multivariate studies like this "is as follows: 50=very poor; 100=poor; 200=fair; 300=good; 500=very good; 1,000=excellent" (Comprey & Lee, 1992).

The sample elements for this study was drawn by the application of simple random sampling (a form of balloting) technique. Through balloting using pick without replacement, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN); Anambra State University (ANSU); and Madonna University Okija, Anambra State University, were chosen to represent the Federal, Private and State-owned universities in the region respectively. Another balloting was conducted where final year students from Departments of Computer Science, Economics and Civil Engineering were chosen from the UNN, ANSU and Madonna University respectively. To ensure that those that would fill the measuring instrument were actually from the classes and departments chosen; the students were given questionnaire to complete immediately after lectures. Out of the 300 copies of questionnaire administered, 289 were returned, while eleven (11) were either poorly filled or not returned entirely.

**Reliability and Validity**

By face validation experts in research and media studies affirmed that the measuring instrument contains intelligible information useful enough to answer all the research questions adequately in order to actualize the objectives of the study.

Then test of reliability was conducted by administering a pre-test questionnaire randomly to selected respondents within one of the universities constituting the radius of the study. The result of this pilot test was used to assess and ascertain the reliability of the measuring instrument. As such, the result of it was not presented at the final statistical analyses in this study. Meanwhile, the reliability of the contents of the measuring instrument was further tested using SPSS, the brief outcome of the test is presented below.

**Reliability**

**Scale: ALL VARIABLES**

**Table 3(a): Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	21	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	21	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Table 3(b): Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.633	16

**Source: SPSS version 16.0**

The test of reliability presented in the above table shows that the reliability for all the items is .633 as could be seen in the Cronbach's Alpha in the table 3(b); it means more than 60% reliability. This implies that the data was reliable. The reliability result above was ascertained through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

**Method of Data Analysis**

In this study, the data generated were analysed using mean and standard deviations obtained by application of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). It is important to note the following which were used in the data analysis of this work.

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U= Undecided, M = Mean, St.De. = Standard Deviation, Decision= Yes or No. To get the Mean cut off point = (SA+A+ SD+D+U) ÷ 5, i.e. (4+3+2+1+0) ÷ 5; therefore, the mean cut-off point = (10) ÷ 5= 2.

To get the standard deviation cut-off point=  $\sqrt{\frac{\sum(x - \bar{x})^2}{n-1}}$

$$\frac{(4-2)^2 + (3-2)^2 + (2-2)^2 + (1-2)^2 + (0-2)^2}{5-1} = \frac{2^2 + 1^2 + 0^2 + 1^2 + 2^2}{4} = \frac{4+1+1+4}{4}$$

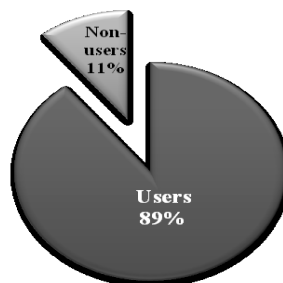
Therefore the standard deviation cut-off point is  $10 \div 4 = \sqrt{2.5}$

Decision: yes means acceptance of a statement, while decision: no, means rejection of it.

**Data presentation and analyses**

**Questionnaire item 1:** This was used to ascertain whether a reasonable number of the respondents use social media or not; so the item was not framed to answer any research question in this study. The data provided for it were presented in a pie chart below:

Figure 2: Student Users and Non-users of Social Media



Source: the researchers’ survey 2012

**Research Question 1: For what purposes do Nigerian students use the social media?**

The items on the table below containing items 1, 2, 3 and 4 provided answers to research question 1. The table and the analyses of the contents are presented below.

Table1: Items used to answer research question 1: For what purposes do Nigerian students use the social media?

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	U	Mean	St.De.	Decision
2.	Nigerian students use social media to watch movies (films).	131	133	10	2	13	3.27	.922	Yes
3.	The students use social media to expose themselves to pornography.	89	132	20	5	43	2.76	1.316	Yes
4.	The students use social media for discussion of serious national issues like politics, economy and religious matters.	88	138	21	6	36	2.82	1.246	Yes
5.	The students use social media as easy means to communicate to their leaders on national affairs.	27	86	78	42	56	1.95	1.263	No

Source: the researchers’ survey 2012

From table 1 above, the responses for item 1 have the mean of 3.27, which is above the mean cut-off point for the study, thus, the decision ‘yes’ on the table; meaning that greater respondents accepted the statement, ‘Nigerian students use social media to watch movies (films).’ The responses have the standard deviation of .922, which is less than the standard deviation cut-off point, meaning that there is high variability between the respondents who accepted the above statement and those who rejected it.

Also, from same table, the responses for item 2 have the mean of 2.76, which is above the mean cut-off point for the study, thus, the decision ‘yes’ on the table; meaning that greater respondents accepted the statement, ‘the students use social media to expose themselves to pornography.’ The responses have the standard deviation of 1.316, which is less than the standard deviation cut-off point for the study, meaning that there is high variability between the respondents who accepted the above statement and those who rejected it.

From the same table again, the responses for item 3 have the mean of 2.82, which is above the mean cut-off point for the study, thus, the decision ‘yes’ on the table; meaning that greater respondents accepted the statement, ‘the students use social media for discussion of serious national issues like politics, economy and religious matters.’ The responses have the standard deviation of 1.246, which is less than the standard deviation cut-off point for the study, meaning that there is high variability between the respondents who accepted the above statement and those who rejected it.

Moreover, from the table 1 above, the responses for item 4 have the mean of 1.95, which is less than the mean cut-off point for the study, thus, the decision ‘no’ on the table; meaning that greater respondents rejected the statement, ‘the students use social media as easy means to communicate to their leaders on national affairs.’ The responses have the standard deviation of 1.263, which is less than the standard deviation cut-off point for the study, meaning that there is high variability between the respondents who accepted the above statement and those who rejected it.



**Research Question 2: Do the Students’ uses of the social media make them reduce the amount of time they devote to their academic studies?**

The items on the table below containing items 5, 6, 7 and 8 provided answers to research question 2. The table and the analyses of the contents are presented below.

**Table2: Items used to answer research question 2:**

**Do the Students’ uses of the new media make them reduce the amount of time they devote to their academic studies?**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	U	Mean	St.De.	Decision
6.	Nigerian students devote much time to using the social media than reading their books.	130	102	25	5	27	3.05	1.204	Yes
7.	Students use social media to chat even during classes.	166	105	6	4	8	3.443	0.840	Yes
8.	The students use social media to encourage secret cult networks among themselves.	26	95	34	11	123	1.62	1.514	No
9.	The use of social media stimulates students to abandon their studies and travel to meet their online friends.	60	135	26	9	59	2.44	1.399	Yes

**Source: the researchers’ survey 2012**

From table 2 above, the responses for item 5 have the mean of 3.05, which is above the mean cut-off point for the study, thus, the decision ‘yes’ on the table; meaning that greater respondents accepted the statement, ‘Nigerian students devote much time to using the social media than reading their books.’ The responses have the standard deviation of 1.204, which is less than the standard deviation cut-off point, meaning that there is high variability between the respondents who accepted the above statement and those who rejected it.

Again, in table 2 above, the responses for item 6 have the mean of 3.443, which is above the mean cut-off point for the study, thus, the decision ‘yes’ on the table; meaning that greater respondents accepted the statement, ‘some students use social media to chat even during classes.’ The responses have the standard deviation of 0.840, which is less than the standard deviation cut-off point, meaning that there is high variability between the respondents who accepted the above statement and those who rejected it.

Furthermore, from the table 2 above, the responses for item 7 have the mean of 1.62, which is less than the mean cut-off point for the study, thus, the decision ‘no’ on the table; meaning that greater respondents rejected the statement, ‘the students use social media to encourage secret cult networks among themselves.’ The responses have the standard deviation of 1.514, which is less than the standard deviation cut-off point for the study, meaning that there is high variability between the respondents who accepted the above statement and those who rejected it.

Also, from table 2 above, the responses for item 8 have the mean of 2.44, which is above the mean cut-off point for the study, thus, the decision ‘yes’ on the table; meaning that greater respondents accepted the statement, ‘the use of social media stimulates students to abandon their studies and travel to meet their online friends.’ The responses have the standard deviation of 1.399, which is less than the standard deviation cut-off point for the study, meaning that there is high variability between the respondents who accepted the above statement and those who rejected it.

**Research Question 3: Do the social media have positive inputs on the students’ academic studies? The items on the table below containing items 9, 10, 11 and 12 provided answers to research question 3. The table and the analyses of the contents are presented below.**

**Table 3: Items used to answer research question 3: Do the social media have positive inputs on the students’ academic studies?**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	U	Mean	St.De.	Decision
10.	There are study materials and ideas available for students on the social media.	105	123	32	6	23	2.97	1.130	Yes
11.	Students use social media to get study partners online.	31	83	61	25	89	1.80	1.415	No
12.	Students use social media to motivate themselves to study.	21	98	60	36	74	1.85	1.327	No
13.	The students use social media to engage in cyber crimes.	75	147	10	3	54	2.64	1.377	Yes

**Source: the researchers’ survey 2012**

From table 3 above, the responses for item 9 have the mean of 2.97, which is above the mean cut-off point for the study, thus, the decision 'yes' on the table; meaning that greater respondents accepted the statement, 'there are study materials and ideas available for students on the social media.' The responses have the standard deviation of 1.399, which is less than the standard deviation cut-off point for the study, meaning that there is high variability between the respondents who accepted the above statement and those who rejected it.

Moreover, from the table 3 above, the responses for item 10 have the mean of 1.80, which is less than the mean cut-off point for the study, thus, the decision 'no' on the table; meaning that greater respondents rejected the statement, 'students use social media to get study partners online.' The responses have the standard deviation of 1.415, which is less than the standard deviation cut-off point for the study, meaning that there is high variability between the respondents who accepted the above statement and those who rejected it.

From, table 3 above, the responses for item 11 have the mean of 1.85, which is less than the mean cut-off point for the study, thus, the decision 'no' on the table; meaning that greater respondents rejected the statement, 'students use social media to motivate themselves to study.' The responses have the standard deviation of 1.327, which is less than the standard deviation cut-off point for the study, meaning that there is high variability between the respondents who accepted the above statement and those who rejected it.

From same table 3 above, the responses for item 12 have the mean of 2.64, which is above the mean cut-off point for the study, thus, the decision 'yes' on the table; meaning that greater respondents accepted the statement, 'the students use social media to engage in cyber crimes.' The responses have the standard deviation of 1.399, which is less than the standard deviation cut-off point for the study, meaning that there is high variability between the respondents who accepted the above statement and those who rejected it.

### **III. Discussion of Research Findings**

In this study, some interesting findings were made on the students' uses of the social media and the purposes they apply them for. With respect to research question one, i.e. for what purposes do Nigerian students use the social media? It was revealed in this study, that one of the purposes which Nigerian students use the social media to achieve is watching movies (films). The revelation here is similar to the finding of Haridakis and Hanson (2009:329-330), who submitted after their study entitled 'social interaction and co-viewing with YouTube: blending mass communication reception and social connection' that the group they studied, "viewed YouTube for purposes of leisurely entertainment...characterized by two specific motives: social interaction and co-viewing." So, here it has been found out that one of the students reasons for using the social media is watching movies, this was seen as greater respondents (264) agreed and strongly agreed with the statement, 'Nigerian students use social media to watch movies (films). Also, it was found out that students use the social media to expose themselves to pornographies, this was shown as greater respondents (221) agreed and strongly agreed with the statement, 'the students use social media to expose themselves to pornography.' This finding is similar to what Ahmad (2011:39) found out and reported that, "pornography... is very much available and rampant on the YouTube site." Ahmad (2011) noted that visiting such a site could jeopardize students' morality; however, he pointed out that, "it is not possible for the user to fall into the *YouTube* porn site without being notified." The findings obtained from these two items showed that students use the social media partly because of the pleasure and fun they derive from the pornographic contents and watching movies using the social media. These purposes of the students' use of social media would not make them studious or engage in constructive intellectual exercise. The purposes would make the students to be excessively fun-loving and live frivolous lives. These findings confirm the rationale for application of uses and gratification theory of the media, as one of the theoretical anchors for this study.

Besides, in the next item used to answer research question one, it was revealed that the students use the social media because they discuss serious national issues like politics, economy, and religious matters on the new media. This finding is encouraging as it shows that students do have brainstorming on national issues via the social media. This will be useful for them to generate ideas that can be implemented for the good of the nation. So, the social media provide a similar forum for the people to discuss relevant national matters, just like McQuail (2010:149) observed that the mass media as a whole do when he remarks that, "mass media often provide topics of conversation for discussion and thus help to lubricate social life in families, workplaces..." From the data for the finding greater respondents (226) accepted the statement, 'the students use social media for discussion of serious national issues like politics, economy and religious matters.' This means that the social media are platform for the students to discuss and share ideas and information on national matters, thereby educate themselves on such issues. This further justifies the application of uses and gratification theory to this study, as the finding proves that the social media give the students room for getting essential information and education; this is one of their reasons for

using the media. So, the findings here for research question one show that the students use the social media for entertainment, e.g. watching movies; information and education purposes e.g. discussion of national issues.

Moreover, with respect to research question two, 'do the students uses of the new media make them reduce the amount of time they devote to their studies?' This study reveals that students' uses of the social media reduce the amount of time they devote to their studies. From this finding, all stakeholders in university education in Nigeria have to rise to control the students' excessive usage of the new media to the detriment of their studies. In this work's findings greater respondents, (232) agreed and strongly agreed with the statement, 'Nigerian students devote much time to using the social media than reading their books.' Also, that finding was supported by another one that recorded greater respondents' acceptance that students use social media to chat even during classes. This is not healthy for the students, their parents and the society at large. What this inquiry found out is similar to the finding of Olasina (2012) who reported that some professionals in Nigeria use networking sites for entertainment purposes during their official duty hours, quite like students who chat on social media during lectures. In addition, some other students go to the extent of abandoning studies and travel outside the campus to fraternize with 'social-media-borne friends.' This was evident as greater respondents affirmed that 'the use of social media stimulates students to abandon their studies and travel to meet their online friends.' These findings imply that good measures have to be put in place to forestall Nigerian universities from being turned into 'production sites for half-baked graduates,' as the use of the new media by the students grows at substantial rate.

From the above finding, it could be extrapolated that some students might endanger their educational pursuits due to flippancy to studies, and overexposure to use of social media. This could make many a student end up as a school dropout. It is good for students to expose themselves to both curricula and extra-curricular activities, but the time devoted to the latter should not be equated with the former. The findings espoused the fact that the use of the networking sites has great negative influence on the time the students devote to their studies. This is a justification for the use of technological determinism theory as one of the theoretical bases for the study. The revelations above upheld the findings of Ahmad (2011:40), who found out that, "most students spend many hours on *YouTube* and they equally acquired negative behaviours on *YouTube*. Most students as well reported themselves as heavy users on which they are mostly using mobile phones in browsing the *YouTube* and most a times in isolation."

Meanwhile, for research question three, i.e. 'do social media have positive inputs on students' academics?' This work revealed that social media have some ways which provide positive inputs for the students' studies. This was found out as greater respondents (228) affirmed that 'there are study materials and ideas available for students on the social media.' The finding here supports Ahmad (2011: 39) who reported in a study entitled, '*YouTube* usage and behaviour change among Nigerian university students,' that "*YouTube* is a research and teaching tool from which students and researchers can refer as there might be some lectures online from other schools uploaded by their lecturers or other lecturers..." The findings on the other items used to answer research question three showed that even though there are study materials for students' academic consumption on the social media, most of them do not make use of the sources. All these point to the fact that the social media per se have some good academic contents but the student-users apply them in negative directions. The above is in line with the submission of a media scholar who argues that, "technology can be used in ways beneficial and otherwise...technology is a double-edged sword. Its power - for good and for bad - resides in us," (the users), (Baran, 2010). What this work found out illustrates the above better as greater respondents (175) declined to the statement, 'students use social media to get study partners online.' In the same vein, other respondents (170) disagreed and strongly disagreed that, 'students use the social media to motivate themselves to study.' While, on the other hand, other respondents (222) greater than each of the two figures above accepted that, 'students use social media to engage in cyber crimes.' Ahmad (2011:40) reported that one of the cyber crimes perpetrated through the social media was copyright impingement. According to him:

Copyright impingement also remains a serious case in dealing with Social Networking Sites (SNS) especially about the video clips for instance in the *YouTube*. Users without considering the terms can easily upload, download or watch any kind of video clip. *YouTube* for instance was sued several times on these issues. For example Viacom sued *YouTube* claiming one billion dollar for uploaded 160 thousand videos belonging to Viacom without their permission as deed the French independent labels collecting society (SPPF) in 2009 over disputed 100 music clips claiming to be originally theirs but uploaded onto *YouTube*.

So, in a nutshell, the social media have contents that can contribute positively to studies, but unfortunately most students do not use the beneficial aspects of the networking sites. This calls for social media usage and attitude orientation for the students, hence the future of the Nigerian society lies with them. From this revelation, students are advised to desist from using the social media for indulging in crimes.



### **Contribution to Literature**

This study has added knowledge to the existing studies on the social media or social networking sites, by establishing empirically that students' use of the social media reduces the time they devote to their academics. This means that if students over-expose themselves to the social media, it will affect their academic performance. Also, the overt implication is that the unbridled use of social media by students will make them not to achieve a high-ranking academic project. It is clear that constructive intellectual achievements require enough time and concentration on one's academic venture, being in the library, labouratory or surfing the internet for useful information. This is unlike what was found in this study, that students' use of the social media stimulates them to travel outside their campus just to fraternize with their online-social-media friends.

### **Theoretical Contribution**

From this study, it has been revealed that there are some gratifications the students-audience derive from their uses of social media. Thus, they use the new media because of the entertainment drive they get from them, for example the pleasure they derive by watching movies and exposure to some pornographic contents therein. Also, the audience use the social media for education and information purposes the media offer them. These findings contribute in strengthening the uses and gratifications theory as it concerns the use of it in audience usage of the social media. The findings show that students' use of the social media hinges on the benefits the new communication channels provide to their users. So, the findings in this paper further give credence to the relevance of uses and gratifications theory.

### **Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

**Summary:** This study investigated social media use among the students of selected universities in South-East Nigeria. One of the objectives of the study is to ascertain the purposes for which Nigerian students use the social media to achieve. Other objectives of the study include finding out whether the students' use of the social media reduces the amount of time they devote to their studies; then the research x-rayed the possible positive inputs of the social media on students' studies. From the in-depth inquiry, the study among others found out that, Nigerian students use the social to watch movies, expose themselves to pornography, and chat while their lectures go on as well as use the new media to discuss topical national issues among themselves. In a nutshell, the students use the social media for entertainment, education and information purposes.

In addition, it was revealed that the students' uses of the social media reduce the time they devote their studies; the new media genre have some contributions to the students' studies as some of them agreed to using them (the media) to get study materials and ideas.

In conclusion, the results obtained from this study show that a reasonable number of university students of South-East Nigeria use the social media. Therefore, the popularity of the phenomenon (social media use among university students) and their influence (both positive and negative) on the student-users are recorded. Base on this, it is instructive to note that the relevant government authorities, the parents, guardians and other sponsors of the students take good measures to make them (students) be wary of how and why they use the social media. Otherwise, many a student might lavish their precious time and the sponsors' hard-earned resources in the university and later end up as a school dropout.

## **IV. Recommendations**

The nature of the envisaged persons which the findings of this work concerns makes the researchers put down these recommendations to: The university authorities and the Ministry of Communications Technology in Nigeria.

### **To University Authorities**

**1. Regulation of the use of GSM phones during lectures:** Hence the students access the various social media through their mobile phones; it is advisable that Nigerian university governing councils and the university senate has to enact laws making students' use of phones during lectures offence which shall attract drastic punitive measures for the culprits.

**2. Provision of sanctions for erring users:** When the above are put in place, university students have to be made aware of the sanctions that could follow any illicit use of any of the social media.

**3. Motivation to bravura and scrupulous users of the social media:** One of the most popular social media, *Facebook* (which is one of the most successful business enterprises in the world presently) was developed by a Harvard sophomore, Mark Zuckerberg (Cassidy, 2006) cited by Boyd and Ellison (2007). He founded *Facebook* by hacking Harvard's database containing identification images of students. From this, Nigerian university students

have to be motivated that any of them who could invent a useful device through the usage of the social media will be rewarded by the university.

### **To the Ministry of Communications Technology**

The social media fall within the ambit of the Ministry of Communications Technology of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This is the ministry saddled with the onus of initiating and co-coordinating all the policies and programmes toward the use and development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Nigeria. Social media are parts and parcel of the ICTs, as such from the findings from this work; these recommendations are made to the ministry:

**1. Enactment of social media use act:** The ministry has to propose to the National Assembly to enact an act that would provide the users of the social media with their dos and don'ts. This is quite necessary now, as one of the findings of this study shows that some of the students use the social media to engage in cyber crimes. Such act shall provide the legal framework that would help law courts to adjudicate on cyber crime cases in Nigeria, as the Federal Ministry of Information and Communication's ICT policy draft (2012:18) states that the "major challenges facing the country in the area of ICT development include cyber crimes." It will equally give the universities the legal back-up to check their students' uses of the social media.

**2. The ministry has to liaise with Nigerian Communications Commission:** to mandate all the social media service providers Nigeria to make it mandatory that the condition for one to open an account on any of the social media is having a GSM SIM card duly registered in Nigeria. The service providers have to keep the personal details of each of their account owners including their GSM phone numbers; and make the information available to an appropriate government agency if the need arises.

Finally, if the suggested recommendations in this work could be implemented, students' use of the social media shall be improved thereby making them not waste more of their time on the use of social media. It shall also make them desist from the various wrong uses of the social media and use them in ways that could be beneficial to them and the nation at large.

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