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Social Media Usage for Academic Purpose: A Systematic Literature Review 2010 to 2020.

Njideka-Nwawih C. Ojukwu¹, Stephen Mutula¹ and Sambo Atanda Saliu²

¹ *University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

² *Federal University of Petroleum, Effurun Warri, Nigeria*

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to provide an up to date estimate global usage of social media for academic purpose between 2010 and 2020.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The researcher applied systematic literature review, to explore global literatures on social media. 76 empirical studies relating to social media within 2010 to 2020, out of which 35 literatures that met identified minimum standards were utilized for this study. Proceedings of the findings were documented and discussed in thematic analysis.

Findings: Findings revealed numerous specific SM tools such as Twitter, Facebook, Blogging, Orkut, Badoo, Sky Blog, Google, LinkedIn, Whatsapp, Skype, My Space, Yahoo messenger, zoom, Academic Community Blogs, online article, bookmaking wikis, lib website for academic and social activities, SkyDrive Google group used by students. The purpose of SM usage identified as a determinant factor to academics and the impacts of social media to learning. Study further identified challenges experienced that may affect the use of SM for academic purpose.

Research limitations / implications: The article reports findings on SM usage were limited to only empirical research literatures focused on social media and students. The wider scope considered global literatures. However, resources like books and other information resources were not included in this study.

Practical implications: The study finding have practical implications in that they can be used as decision and policy model, or a developmental plan in education system to tackle pandemic or related issue in the future considering the 2020 pandemic experience on education system. Social Media use for education purpose can be redesigned into the model of learning in higher institutions.

Originality/ value: Use of social media in learning is gathering momentum among researchers globally. The purpose of SM use for academic purpose has not been explored in literature review approach. Finding of the study will, therefore, inform researchers, academics and institution decision makers on possibility of SM tools for academic purpose.

Keywords

Social Media, academics purpose, usage impact, literature review, students

Introduction

This 21st century generations of digital technology have infiltrated social media use in all aspect of life. According to Al-rahmi, Othman and Musa (2014), social media plays a significant role in boosting academics in the social sciences and across many educational fields generally. Social media are intended to support collaborative creation and disseminations of knowledge and a numbers of social media service specifically targeted at the academic community, including blogs, online comments to articles, social bookmarking sites, wikis, websites to post slides, text or videos etc. Academic according to Powell (2003), can be referred to as a place of learning or a place of education and scholarship. Information according to Dubois et al. (2010), deals with facts provided or learned about something or someone.

The following are the different types of social media:

- ✓ Facebook
- ✓ Instagram
- ✓ Twitter
- ✓ Pinterest
- ✓ LinkedIn
- ✓ Snapchat
- ✓ Whatsapp
- ✓ Blogging and publishing networks
- ✓ Social shopping networks and more

According to Nández and Borrego (2013), social media are among the most recent developments in the creation and communication of information in electronic format. The social media refers to a set of web technologies that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (OECD, 2007). According to Edosomwan et al. (2011), social media have evolved over the years to the modern-day variety which uses digital media. It started with telephone through phone phreaking. Phone phreaking, the term used for the rogue searching of the telephone network, began during the 1950s (Borders, 2010). This process was accomplished through the use of homemade electronic devices that facilitated unauthorized access to the telephone system to make free calls. Phreaks were able to find telephone company test lines and conference circuits to complete their task (Edosomwan, 2011). Brett Borders stated that phreaks were able to hack into corporate unused voice mailboxes to host the first blogs and podcasts. This extended through the 1960s; and in the 1980s and 1990s, email and internet was developed as original method to exchange messages from one computer to another, but both computers were required to be online. Today, social media has been widely accepted as an official means to allow users to transmit messages and access information globally (Rimskii, 2011; Ritholz, 2010). Particularly, SM impacts to academics.

Today, the world is celebrating the improvements in communication technology which has broadened the scope of communication through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Ufuophu and Ayobami (2012) observe that the ICTs include internet, satellite, cable data transmission and computer assisted equipment. All these are ICTs resources that can be used by students and researchers worldwide for academic purposes. Buhari (2013) notes that internet provides many benefits to its users, including access to information from distant databases that can be studied to improve knowledge. The internet has enabled or accelerated new forms of human interactions through internet messaging, internet forums, and social networking (Hassan and Jacob, 2012). Internet facilities help to connect learners, teachers, educators, scholars, researchers, scientists, artists, industrialists and other individuals who enrich learning process (Ogunlade, et al, 2013). The social media is one of the services that can be found on the internet.

Kietzmann (2011) also defines social media as primarily internet-based and mobile-based tools for sharing and discussing information by users. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) also viewed social media as “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.” Web 2.0 was coined by Darcy DiNucci in 1999 to describe interactive social websites which allow users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue. The technological foundations of the social media include blogs, wikis, media (audio, photo, video, text) sharing tools, networking platforms, and virtual worlds. These tools social media foster social interactions and learning in academic communities. The SM use and its contribution to learning is significant in our present time.

Statement of Purpose

According to Bosch (2009), the study on the use of social media for academic purposes is important because it aids teaching and learning. It further draws the attention of students and researchers to the fact that social media could also be used for academic purposes apart from the social interaction facilities that it presents. Social media has positive reports as it’s generally used for knowledge sharing (Ahmed, Ahmad, Ahmad and Zakaria 2019). Despite the positive reports on social media application, its impact on academic purposes has been scarce in literature. Therefore, the understanding of the current literatures on social media usage for academic purposes worldwide is highly relevant during the current pandemic era. This awareness could influence students and academics positively as they might decide to adopt social media to advance academic programmes.

Objectives of Study

The aim of this study is to examine the use of social media for academics, tools specifically applied, and the impact of social media on students.

Significance of the Study

The proliferation of social media and its integration for learning purposes among students of higher institutions are some of the current ways of managing the cost, time, and easy access to information. Therefore, it is vital to investigate empirical literature results on social media usage for academic purposes in particular and the common tools used. This study will reveal this information as well as provide deeper and global knowledge on social media usage. It can also be considered in decision making with regards to digital and online learning classes during the pandemic or similar situations.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This investigation confines itself to relevant literature on the use of social medial for academic purposes worldwide. The review will be limited by time as only literatures published between 2010 and 2020 are reviewed, and there are no geographical boundary or limitation.

Methodology

This study was conducted by reviewing literatures that examine and/or evaluate the use of social media for academic purposes worldwide. Articles were included if they addressed the social media use for academic purposes, while those that are focused on social media use for marketing or social network are excluded. Editorials, non-peer reviewed articles and commentaries were also excluded from the study. A comprehensive search strategy on peer review journals was conducted in November 2020 for this study. To focus on the title social media use for academic purposes, two main concepts were included in the search strategy - social media use relevance and educational purposes. The search involved typing “social media use”, “impact” and “academic purpose” separately in Google scholar. The result from the searches yielded 14,600 articles from the period between 2010 and 2020, out of which 76 articles were retrieved and analysed, and 38 of them met the study inclusion criteria.

Review of Literature on Social Media Use

Ezeah et al. (2013) conducted a study on the use of social media among students in three universities in Nigeria and discovered that the purpose of use of the social media as indicated by majority of the respondents was varied. Most of the respondents with a mean value of 3.27 and 2.86 noted that they utilized the social media for the purpose of watching films and for discussing serious national issues like politics, economy and religious matters.

Buhari et al. (2014) examined the use of social media among students and the findings on the purpose of the social media use turned out the following mean scores:

- social media use to connect, interact and chat with friends (Mean=4.4);
- social media use for information sharing (Mean=4.3);
- social media use to access news, movies, music and photos (Mean=4.2);
- and use for religious purposes (Mean=3.6).

These two studies reveal that the social media is used basically for social purposes and seldom used for academic activities by students. Regardless of how the social media is used, the benefits associated with its use are enormous.

One of the most commonly cited benefits of social media by students is their ability to facilitate collaborative learning and communication among peers and with people outside academia (Collins and Hide, 2010; Rowlands et al., 2011). Another frequently reported advantage of social media is its remarkable ability to facilitate information distribution. Among the examples are blogging tools which are used by many students to disseminate information within their area, their peers and also to everyone globally (Bukvova et al., 2010). The ability to explore unasked questions inside a less formal atmosphere, getting a strong voice through web technology, and getting a location to go over issues within an open, public format are other provisions of social media (Kirkup, 2010). Other than communication, scholarly Twitter users cite information distribution among the primary advantages of social media and have proven to become popular especially in academic conferences (Letierce et al., 2010; Ross et al., 2011).

Ahmed and Oazi (2011) studied the academic impacts of social media networking sites from the perspectives of one thousand (1000) students in six universities in Pakistan. The study adopted the use of two sampling techniques, multistage and simple random techniques. Questionnaire was the data collection instruments used and the results showed that 91.3% of the respondents indicated that they made use of Facebook, 3.4% used Twitter and 2.2% made use of Orkut. Most of the respondents (75.3%) stated that they made use of the social media sites between one (1) to three (3) hours a day, while 19.5% used the social media between four (4) and six (6) hours a day.

Murrithi and Murrithi (2013) also examined students' motives for utilizing social networking in private universities in Dar Es Saleem, Tanzania. Findings revealed that Facebook was the most used social network as indicated by 46.1%, followed by Twitter 15.5%, Badoo 9.7%, Sky Blog 8.7%, Google+ 8.0% and LinkedIn 2.3%. In addition, social media use was basically for student personal purpose, but has no negative effect on their academics.

Buhari et al. (2014) surveyed the use of the social media by students in Nigeria and found out that most of the respondents used the social media which has helped them to achieve academic excellence. Study revealed they use social media to share information, chat and network with friends.

Hung, H.T. and Yuen, S.C.Y. (2010) from Taiwan explored how social networking technology can be used to supplement face-to-face courses as a means of enhancing students' sense of community and, thus, to promote classroom communities of practice in the context of higher education. The study indicated that the majority of participants developed strong feelings of social connectedness and expressed favorable feelings regarding their learning experiences in the classes where social networking sites were used as a supplementary tool.

Rutherford (2010) examined how the use of social media resources can affect student engagement in Canada. Results of this study indicate that there is a positive correlation between student use of a variety of social media resources and how students perceive their relationships with their fellow students and instructors as well as how they describe the overall quality of their educational experience.

Filiz Tiryakioglu and Funda Erzurum (2011) investigated the views and attitudes of instructors in the Faculty of Communication Sciences at Anadolu University in Turkey, with the assumption that communication specialists should have more expertise and interest in social media than any other group of experts. The study finds that three quarters of instructors have a Facebook account and they spend less than half an hour per day on Facebook. There is no gender related difference among the faculty in terms of attitudes toward Facebook. Instructors who are younger than 45 years old login Facebook on daily basis, while senior faculty login several times a week. Two in every three instructors use Facebook mainly as a tool of communication with friends. Finally, two thirds of the faculty think that Facebook can provide important contributions to social interactions among students as well as to communications between instructors and students.

Nández and Borrego (2013) analyzed various aspects of an academic social network: the profile of users, the reasons for its use, its perceived benefits and the use of other social media for scholarly purposes in Spain. Their findings revealed that academics used the service to get in touch with other scholars, disseminate research results and follow other scholars.

Gupta, C. A. Pallavi; Singh, Bharti; Marwaha, Tushar (2013) assessed the purpose of usage of social media tools, specifically Facebook, Blogs, Google groups, SkyDrive and Twitter by students for academic purposes in India. The study reveals that majority of the students access various social media tools for information sharing and personal interaction.

Saw, G., Abbott, W., Donaghey, J. and McDonald, C. (2013) examined which social networking sites international students prefer for information dissemination activities. The findings confirm that there are differences in the social networking preferences between the groups of international and domestic students. In addition to social activities, international and domestic students are using particular social networking sites for a wide range of educational purposes, including group works, sharing and gathering of information.

Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) conducted assessment of students' use of social media and its effect on academic performance of tertiary institutions students in Ghana. The study revealed that majority of the respondents had mobile phones which also had internet facility on them and had knowledge of the existence of many social media. Also, that most of the respondents visit their social media using their phones and spend between thirty minutes to three hours per day.

In addition, the study revealed that the use of social media had affected academic performance of the respondents negatively and that there was direct relationship between the use of social media and academic performance.

Harrison, Burrell, Velasquez and Schreiner (2017) attempted to address emerging themes among the University Libraries' social media pages in some states in Midwest region of the United States. The study presented social media postings included ten different codes: archives; collections; events; exhibits; facility; library community; sentiments; services; site management; and university community. Libraries create a sense of outreach and advocacy with the goal of establishing community connection, providing an inviting environment, and access to content as needed or desired.

AlAwadhi and Al-Daihani (2019) examined the use of social media in the marketing of academic library resources and services in Kuwait and identifies the factors related to the use of social media applications in marketing academic libraries. Their findings indicated that social media tools are useful in marketing library information resources and services, in raising awareness and in providing needs analysis and satisfaction assessments. The study shows that academic libraries have positive perception toward the use of social media.

Cheng, Lam and Chiu (2020) evaluated the effectiveness of using social media as a platform in marketing through a questionnaire on the Facebook page of the University of Hong Kong Libraries (HKUL). The study indicated that: (1) the marketing practices of HKUL's Facebook page generally did not receive adequate attention and reactions from users; (2) students were more engaged than faculty members in HKUL's Facebook page, as students use more varieties of library services than faculty members; (3) user needs, social media content, and interactions generally affected user acceptance of the library's Facebook marketing. The purpose of use by institution does not confirm that marketing information resources via social media impact academic performance.

Alwagait, Shahzad and Alim (2015) undertook survey on university students in Saudi Arabia with regards to social media usage and their academic performance. The survey also explored which social network is the most popular amongst Saudi students, what students thought about their social media usage and factors besides social media usage which negatively affect academic performance. The results demonstrated that there was no linear relationship between social media usage in a week and GPA score. Students highlighted that besides social media use, time management is a factor which affects students „studies negatively.

Talae, G.M., AlSaad, A., AlRushaidan, N., AlHugail, A. and AlFahhad, S. (2018) examined the impact of social media on the academic performance of university students in Nigeria. The findings show that social media usage among students is not for academic purposes. It also found that the following social media are often used by students: Facebook 40(40.81%), WhatsApp 20(20.40%) 2go/Skype 14(14.28%). On the other hand, Myspace, Twitter, Badoo, Blogs/Web Scholars, Google+/ Social Bookmarking are not often used by undergraduates in the four universities selected for the study. The study also showed that students' use of social media for reaching out to close/distant friends and for general information about life, determines the impact of social media on the academic performance of students.

Tarek A. El-Badawy¹ and Yasmin Hashem (2015) sought to determine the impact of social media on the academic performance of students. The findings of their study demonstrate that there is no relationship between social media and academic performance; this is clearly projected in their overall grade average.

Boateng and Amankwaa (2016) examined how social media has impacted students' academic life in China. The result reveals that social media is widely used by students of higher institutions and that participants are in support of the idea that social media contribute a significant quota to the development of their academic life.

Habes, Alghizzawi, Khalaf, Salloum and Ghani (2018) attempted to highlight the impact of social media on students in the higher educational universities and its impact on the students' academic performance in Dubai. The study indicated that a large number of university students are using social media with more focus on Facebook, which in turn negatively affects their academic results.

McLaughlin Christopher J. and Sillence Elizabeth (2018) investigated the role played by social support in postgraduate taught students' adjustment to university, and how social media contributes to this support. According to the study, Facebook groups showed potential as a platform for building supportive peer networks. However, the heightened visibility of communications on this platform led some participants towards Facebook Messenger as a medium for peer contact. Study also indicated that participants benefitted most from specialized support from peers dealing with similar academic challenges.

Klar S, Krupnikov Y, Ryan JB, Searles K, Shmargad Y. (2020) examine whether there are systematic differences in the types of scholars who most benefit from social media and the extent to which there are gender differences in the dissemination of research via Twitter from America. The study finds revealed considerable evidence that, overall, article citations are positively correlated with tweets about the article.

Rahman, Ramakrishnan, and Ngamassi (2020) examined higher education students' perceptions of social media use (SMU) and the impact of SMU on their satisfaction in the United State of America. The study revealed that: (1) perceived usefulness of social media has positive effect on the use of social media in student learning; (2) perceived risk of using social media discourages the use of the tool; and (3) SMU has positive effect on student satisfaction.

Chawinga, W.D. (2017) investigated how social media facilitates teaching and learning in Malawi. The results indicated that if appropriately deployed, Twitter and blogs are catalysts for the much-hyped learner-centered approach to teaching because using these technologies, it emerged that students shared and discussed course materials, posted their course reflections and interacted amongst themselves and with their lecturer at all times of the day.

The study by Acheaw and Larson (2015) also found out what earlier studies discovered. Students of the Polytechnic of Koforidum in Ghana were surveyed, and results showed that 66.4% of the respondents identified Facebook as the most used social media, followed by Whatsapp 19.9%, Twitter 6.2%, Skype 3.3%, Myspace 2.6% and Yahoo Messenger 1.3%. As regards the frequency of use, majority of the respondents 66.3% expressed that they made use of the social media sites between 30 minutes to 1 hour; 33.2% chose between 2 to 3 hours and 1.5% between 4 to 5 hours. The results from these studies established that even though polytechnic students utilize different types of social media sites, Facebook was the most used and most of them spent considerable time using these social media. The study revealed that the use of social media sites had affected academic performance of the respondents negatively and that there was direct relationship between the use of social media sites and academic performance. This is probably because the tool was used here by student for personal pleasure which have negative impact on academic return. Social media technology is an academic advantage tool but not without its own challenges.

Challenges of Social Media Use

Not minding the benefits in the use of the social media by students and researchers, Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) identified the challenges that students face in the use of social media as lack of awareness, bandwidth problems, technophobia, lack of maintenance culture, unreliable power supply, and copyright issue. Sanusi et al. (2014) noted that the constraints that students face in the use of the social media for learning include lack of basic amenities, lack of conducive environment, lack of access to computer, cost of internet connection and lack of enthusiasm on the part of instructor.

The study by Yin and Agostinho (2014) on the engagement of social media technologies by students in Malaysia revealed that most of the respondents (81.48%) indicated that the most paramount challenge that they faced in the use of the social media for academic purpose was the blocking of some applications by the university. While 62.96% expressed that they experienced slow internet connection/low bandwidth, 44.44% identified privacy issues as constraints, 38.27% stated that all activities were being monitored and 22.22% said their social media accounts were hacked. These are some of the challenges that confront students in the use of the social media.

Therefore, since social media are intended to support collaborative creation and disseminations of knowledge. The scholars have explored their use for academic purposes. Based on the foregoing, Procter et al. (2010) reveals that there are numbers of social media services specifically targeted at the academic community, including blogs, online comments to articles, social bookmarking sites, wikis, and websites to post slides, text or videos etc.

Discussion and Recommendations

The emergence of the social media has spawned quite a lot of interest from students. The findings from the reviewed literatures showed that social media sites benefit the students and scholars based on purpose of use, by providing the podium which foster communication and lifetime learning, and also ease of access to knowledge and open education, e-learning resources, e-library as well as knowledge for pleasure. This study has further revealed that teachers that impart knowledge to students also benefit from the use of the social media as they often share academic resources, exchange opinions, follow each other's research, keep up with current research trends as well as build up their professional networks.

The literatures on social media use for academic purposes that were reviewed for this study have provided a pathway of discovery. The study has found several positive impacts of social media use for academic purposes, despite the identified challenges such as: lack of awareness by users, internet issues, technophobia, maintenance culture, electricity, copyright issue, and lack of basic amenities. Other challenges to social media use have been identified to include, conducive environment, access to computer, cost internet connection, lack of enthusiasm, privacy issues, monitoring of activities, hacked account (insecurity), blocking of applications, and relevance of the social media to academic works. The SM was found to have enhanced academic performance in higher institutions among students at all levels and their instructors. Negative impact of SM in academic performance is directly influence by individual factors, given that if the SM is used for academic purpose, it usually yields positive results, while it is if applied carelessly for pleasure, socialization and poor time management, it will definitely yield negative result. Furthermore, the study revealed various SM tools that are used for various purposes such as: Twitter, Facebook, Blogging, Orkut, Badoo, Sky Blog, Google, LinkedIn, Whatsapp, Skype, My Space, Yahoo messenger, zoom, Academic Community Blogs, online article, bookmaking wikis, lib website for academic and social activities, SkyDrive Google group. Finally, the study further revealed that studying, movies, music, photos, political, economic and general news, religion, peers communication, blogging, networking, scholarly research articles, information sharing, and group work are the main activities and purposes of SM usage amongst students. The impact of the SM uses heavily determined by the users intention.

Given the above findings, it is important that the academic managers seek to strategically select the best social media tools suitable for their academic delivery purposes, define their SM services purposes, develop policies that can guide participants and advocate strongly for academic use of such social media, as well as identify the SM use challenges and ameliorate for positive returns.

Conclusion

Conspicuously, SM use purpose amongst students is a vital statement in academics issue. The SM impact on student academics is seen to be determined by their personal values for social media, which is in turn dependent on individual factors, time factor and facilities factors. If SM is used for academic purposes, it will definitely yield positive result and if used for pleasure it certainly led to negative result. Although there appears to be a growing number of research articles on the use of social media among student of higher institutions for academic purpose, primary research regarding the impacts of social media on student use and education is scarce. The few articles included in this review do show promise in the student use of social media for academic purpose on various levels. We may need to come to grips with the idea that the SM has challenges that can also affect academic output. If we need continuous positive return, measures have to be in place to counter the technology challenges for maximization of its potentials, and advocate for positive purpose with the use of social media amongst students. Academics must identify the goal that lies ahead with the use of SM and somehow expect positive academic output, and to be able to recognize possibilities that can channel us to it. However, social media technology holds promise for improving academic engagement, knowledge sharing and community building. Social media has a future in education, basically with higher institution students.

For correspondence please contact: Njideka-Nwawih C. Ojukwu (njinwawih@yahoo.com)

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