Social Media and Educational Development of Youths in Nigeria

Elekwa, Josephine Ebere (Ph.D), Douglas-Chukwu Ozioma
Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State

Abstract: Social media is one of the greatest forums that has fast-tracked communications and social development in all walks of life. In the field of education, while some scholars view social media as the learners’ friend some consider it a foe. This study therefore discussed the effect of social media on the educational development of youths in Nigeria. It was discovered that social media is instrumental to the educational development of youths in terms of accuracy in data analysis during research, speedy dissemination of instructions or information, and note taking during lectures. On the other hand, it was discovered that social media leads to addiction among students whereby the youths engaged in endless interaction with their peers on issues that are counterproductive to their studies. Based on these findings, the researchers made some recommendations.

Keywords: Social Media, Education, Educational Development, Youth Development.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Introduction

It is unquestionable that students (youths) are actively engaged in social media networking communities. So many things are achieved and done through social media. Ndubueze (2013) asserts that one of the breakthroughs in information and communication technology (ICT) in the 21st century was the discovery and emergence of the new media which has facilitated the creation of the different platforms for social interaction. The potentials of the social media are seamless and boundless in terms of interactions, interrelationship and information sharing and exchanges of ideas and opinions. Spurgeon (2008) contends that the internet is considered the most interactive of all communication media because it is engineered to support and facilitate all modes of interpersonal, mass and computer-mediated communication. The social media plays a significant role in the knowledge industry and pave the way for educational development among peoples and nations. Abubakar (2011) has it that social media are both internet and mobile based apparatus that allow people to easily share and discuss information. Thus, the role of the different social media platforms, namely phones, television, radio, etc in enhancing sociocultural, economic, political and technological development of any nation as well as its citizens can never be over emphasized. More importantly, social media is being used to promote scholarship for students in institutions of higher learning across the globe.

Social media platforms could be activated and actively used for the promotion, acquisition and distribution of knowledge based information. However, the key question that arises is to what extent has the youths of Nigeria converted the potentials and possibilities of the social media platforms for networking academic materials for scholarship and academic excellence? The advent of social media has changed the lives of the youths in diverse ways. Today, it can be used as a very helpful tool in changing a student’s life but at the same time can cause conflicts which can have negative impacts.

The Social Media

The term social media is a broad concept encompassing diverse interactive media channels that allow two way, interaction and feedback (Kent, 2010). In a more specific and explicit term, social media are computer mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of
information, idea, career interest and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. Obar, Jonathan, Wildman & Steve (2015) asserts that social media are web enabled interactive applications. According to Daluba and Maxwell (2013), social media are a means of interactions among people of different ages in which they create, share and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and network. There are different forms of the social media but the ones that are prominent here are the computers and the mobile phones. Data retrieved from World internet statistics (www.worldinternetstatistics.com) shows that the total number of persons that make use of Facebook from Nigeria is estimated at 37.9 million that is aside Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp and YouTube. The data also show that the dominant populace of the social media platforms and the internet are the youths.

Social Media and the Youths of Nigeria

Since the advent of internet and social media, interesting discourse is going on in the academic world looking critically and objectively at both the positive and harmful/negative effects of social media on students’ performance all over the world and also trying to school whether social media are by themselves good or evil. Social media like Facebook, Twitter, 2go, Skype and many others are becoming increasingly popular among Nigerian youths. At a time when academic performance especially in the Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) is disturbingly poor and university students/graduates tagged unemployable, there is a concern within a school of thought that social media may be negatively influencing the performance of students. It is against this backdrop that Anza (2012) opines that with the advent of social media, access to information has become almost completely free. Account holders on Facebook for instance can subscribe to news feeds of interest to them. Whenever they sign into their accounts, the information they need is available for their use. Youths/Students who need information about scholarships can simply subscribe to the Facebook pages of the sites providing this information. Though this means, they are sure of not missing the chance whenever it is available.

Social media have reduced drastically the cost of communication among youths. The mobile chatting application, 2go for example was a variable tool among students for disseminating information about fixed lectures, assignments and other academic activities. Those days, anyone looking for information on when any school conducts its post-unified tertiary matriculation examination only needs to post a status update seeking such information. Within minutes, responses will pour in from his/her friends and soon he or she will establish contact with reliable information. This is quite convenient and eliminates unnecessary cost. Ruggiero (2000) asserts that information transforms any society; it is an essential ingredient that makes human beings survive and interact meaningfully with one another. They communicate with one another to share, to inform, to persuade, to influence relationships, to discover and uncover information. Information, through social media, makes the youths creative and knowledgeable. This in turn brings about development in all facets of life. Information is power.

Social Media and Educational Development

The advent of social media has affected educational development tremendously in recent times. The social media have made information accessible to people in all walks of life. Paxson (2010) avers that the social media have solved the problem of getting information. One doesn’t necessarily need to get the hard copies of books before having access to the information therein. One can Google any published book/articles and the needed information will be made available. Umar (2010) points out that doing long essays (projects), assignment is easily achieved through and with the help of the social media. According to him, through the social media, one can browse and get information about what is happening in other climes. Educational philosophies of other nations could be known through the internet. This makes one an armchair traveler. Social media create awareness. The CBTC computer based test) carried out today is the product of the social media. It has taken education to the next level.
The educational development of youths of Nigeria is laudable in recent times as a result of the internet. Accurate analysis of data is done through the computer. The social media have contributed to the efficacy of education of the youths. Efficacy is synonymous with effectiveness and efficiency that is producing the desired result. Self-efficacy is achieved through the use of the social media. Self-efficacy simply means people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercises influence over events that affects their lives (Sharma & Nasa, 2014).

The Challenges of Social Media

One cannot have one’s cake and eat it. Good as the use of social media is, there are also harmful effects that arise from excessive obsession with or abuse of them. One of such effects is waste of time that should be used for productive academic engagements. The ability of social media to cheaply bring into contact two or more people at a time strongly tempts student’s to always engage in prolonged online chatting about trivial issues that do not contribute to any positive development of the students involved. Anza (2012) laments that with so many social networking sites displayed on the internet, students are tempted to abandon their homework and reading times in preference for chatting online with friends. The social media frenzy is becoming an addiction. Some students cannot do without assessing their account within an hour. They like to stay up-to-date. And they do this irrespective of whether lectures are going on or not, that is, when lectures are going on, they still chat with friends online, which distract their concentration.

Another harm social media do to students manifests in the form of instant-messaging abbreviations. Today, informal communication through abbreviation permeates every formal writing and this is evident all over the print media. For instance, the use of figures in place of some words – 2 for ‘to’ or 4 for ‘for’ and the use of some English alphabet for some words u for ‘you’ or ur for ‘your’ have become so rampant. The need to say much with, few words has led to the formation of unconventional abbreviations like OMG (oh my God), FOC (free of charge), YTM (You are too much), MOG (man of God), etc. And some fellows have so used these abbreviations that they have gradually lost the ability to spell English words correctly. As a result, the quality of written English has deteriorated and this has serious academic consequences for students. Junco (2011) points out in Anza (2012) that social media are not in themselves friends or enemies of students. They can become either depending on the use to which they are put. Specific uses of social media are related to positive outcomes while others are related to negative ones.

Brown (2017) Adumbrates sixteen negative effects of social media on the youth. Among them are addiction, increased violence, distraction, reduced productivity, increased threats, spending more money, less sensitivity. In a research conducted by Tatina (2017) she finds that the negative consequences of social media are more than positive ones and she concludes by saying “I am sure that social media advance the impact of isolation, obesity, depression and sleep deprivation. It takes away face-to-face interaction with family connections, and even worse, health, leaving our youth isolated.

Social media cause distractions among youths. The handsets (phones) cause distractions; students and youth do chat even in the classroom and explore social media contents regardless of the teacher’s presence. To this end, teachers will not know who pays attention or not in the classroom. According to Osharive (2015), students are so engrossed on the social media to the extent that they are present online for almost 24hours a day. This simply causes distraction.

Social media aid fraud and nonchalance to schooling. Recent findings revealed that majority of young Nigerians, especially the male folks, have withdrawn from school or shown lackadaisical attitude towards schooling. These are the youths who vehemently engage in internet fraud, popularly known as ‘yahoo yahoo?’ More disheartening, various reports have shown that the international community has labeled Nigerians youths as most untrusted and fraudulent globally. This is due to their active participation in internet fraud and theft. Majority of cyber fraud that takes place in recent times is done by youths who defraud foreigners they meet via social media.
platforms. According to Lewis (2016), with the increased use of social media, there are opportunities than ever before to steal identities and perpetrate fraud online.

Furthermore, social media reduce library patronage. Before now, students are expected to go to libraries and consult archives to access information relating to their area of study or research. The advent of social media has made libraries as mere facility with low patronage. Daduba and Maxwell (2013) mention that the major reason for setting up a library is to stimulate educational advancement, expose students to acquisition of knowledge through the use of the library. However, in this present era of fast internet and speedy connecting students would only consult the internet for research and assignments.

Social media distort reading habit. Reading enriches and enhances intellectual abilities. Dept in reading helps to develop the mind and personality of the reader; it provides insight into human problems and influences attitudes and behavior (Behrman, 2009). In other words, reading helps boost one’s intellectual sagacity and enhances individual’s survival in a mentally challenging situation. Moreso, reading of books can be a well stimulating exercise for building oneself. Reading habit is a deliberate effort towards understanding and acquiring knowledge (Shehu & Shehu; 2014).

The advent of the internet (Social media) and its interactive power has been distorting the reading habit of many, not only the youth or students. According to Muhammad (2016), social media have lowered the standard of education in Nigeria. He adds that social media have grabbed the attention and concentration of students and diverted them towards non-educational, unethical and inappropriate actions such as examination malpractices.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

It is a truism that there are beneficial aspects of social media as it concerns educational development of Nigerian youth and students. However, there are also negative effects of social media on students/youths in particular and education in general. The negative aspects or side of social media seems to outweigh the positive, if social media can waste time, reduce library patronage distort reading habit, affect written and spoken English, then how does it help the youth, how does it aid personal productivity and how does it enhance educational development of youths? Therefore, if not properly utilized, social media negatively affect academic excellence/productivity, especially for the youths who are regarded as the leaders of tomorrow. Meanwhile the youths are meant to improve their knowledge base to enable them take up the mantle of leadership in time to come. Although the social media have the positive side, the persuasive interactive nature of various social media platforms and the multiple contents and varieties they offer can lure students or youths to be distracted rather than being helped or improved.

Social media use per se is not detrimental to educational outcomes; it depends on how it is used, hence it should be encouraged in the academic system.

Efforts should be made by education authorities to further enlighten students or youth on the good and bad aspects of social media especially as it affects scholarship.

**REFERENCES**


