

Social Literacy Skills of Tertiary Students in a Yorubaland: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract: *This paper examined the extent to which social literacy networks are used by students in a Yorubaland. The study adopted descriptive research design of the survey type. The population for the study consisted of all students in the Faculty of Education of the Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti and all students in College of Education, Ikere Ekiti. In all, 350 respondents made up of 50 students from each level (100-400) from Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti and 50 students from each level (100-300) from College of Education, Ikere Ekiti. Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the respondents. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentage scores. The study showed that SNs were used for various purposes such as development of listening and speaking skills, sharing files, music, videos, pictures, software and getting solutions to most class work, projects and group works. The study identified the problems associated with using social networks such as low internet bandwidth, high cost of subscription and distraction to users. Based on these findings, it was recommended that students should utilize social literacy sites for development of social skills that could help them in modern workplaces and improvement of their academic performance not just for fun and past times.*

Keywords: *Literacy, Social Skills, Social networks, Yoruba land*

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is very essential in all spheres of life. To be literate in this social world, the literacy skills of reading and writing cannot be overlooked. Literacy refers reading, sometimes to reading and writing and sometimes, more rarely, to reading, writing and speaking and listening (Inglis and Aers, 2008). It has been observed that tertiary students are the most users of these social networks. With the increase of technology used for communicating with others and the popularity of the Internet, "Social Networking" has become an activity that is done primarily on the Internet, with sites like MySpace, Face book, Bebo, Friendster, and Xanga (Coyle, 2008). But in a Yorubaland like Ekiti state, opinions differ greatly because of the cultural background. The Ekitis are held in high esteem when it comes to knowledge acquisition. Yet, most recently, the poor performance of students at both internal and external examinations have contradicted this opinion, thus giving room for knowledge exploration and solutions to this problem. The concern of this researcher is whether students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti are acquainted with these contemporary social networks and how it imparts their education.

The purpose of this study to provide a better understanding on how students invests their skills, time and willingness in using social networks for effective learning outcomes by communicating to share knowledge, deploy new theories and learning model, better their social relationship with others, formulate new research initiations, disseminate their final results, solve experimental or theoretical problems, get critiques and feedback for better academic achievements and examine the factors affecting their use.

So, the researchers observed that majority of College students and University students especially students between ages 18-29 belong to at least one social network such as Facebook, WhatsApp, 2go, BBM, etc. due to the fast rate of development and innovation in Information Technology which has led to the production of sophisticated mobile phones that can access internet at a very fast speed.

Therefore, social networks have become a source of regression to their academic performance which ought to be a factor to boosting their academic performance. This menace has posed distraction to an extent that students have a social network running on their phones while studying, receiving lectures and conducting personal research. The set back this has caused is to reduce students' level of assimilation, concentration and their general academic performance. It was discovered that students spend more time on social networks chatting or gist with friends on mutual purposes and not basically academic careers due to the free megabytes given by the service providers i.e. MTN network subscribers gets free 10MB (Megabytes) after recharge of ₦100 card. Students expend this free MB most times on chatting, sharing picture and sharing music with friends, families and school mates on social networks for longer hours than their study time. It has also posed students who chat by the road side to hazards of accidents.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Social networks have numerous advantages since its inception and inclusion to World Wide Web. Social networks aids information dissemination, gives opportunity to interact with higher educators, it gives opportunity to interact with foreign students, could serve as feedback medium for researchers, promotes school image, promotes good relationship spirit between students, it is cheaper to operate compared with other means of communication, it could boost students financial capacity via advertisement called blogging, it could showcase intelligent articles and can serve as motivation to other users.

Despite the numerous advantages mentioned, the use of social networks such as Facebook has varying effects on the learning outcomes of undergraduates. There is a growing outcome of researches conducted on the influence of social networks on the academic performance of undergraduates. There is a growing number of studies mostly highlighting that students are influenced by social networks in their social communication such as the use of abbreviations while chatting, pidgin English and most times incorrect construction of tenses are been used on social networks which has led to poor mastery of English Language. It is worthy of note that social networks are time wasting especially when not used on academic purposes or boost academic morale. It could distract students and deny them of the time they ought to use or invest in studying their relevant textbooks, attend to assignments, conduct research works, prepare for examination, prepare for external competitions and study lecture materials.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addressed the following research questions:

- What are the problems associated with using social networks?
- What are the effects of increased usages of SN on students' academic performance?
- What are the possible solutions to the challenges arising from using SN?

4. METHODOLOGY

The research design was a descriptive design of survey type. This descriptive research made it possible for the researchers to have full and correct representative opinion of the characteristics of the population. The study covered a wide range of area; therefore the survey design was employed to carry out the study. The population of this study comprises all students of the Faculty of Education in Ekiti State University and the College of Education, Ikere. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample for this study. The entire Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University was first divided into four levels: 100level, 200level, 300level and 400level and College of Education, Ikere Ekiti was secondly divided into 3levels: 100levels, 200level, and 300level. Thereafter 50students was selected from each level. This means that a total number of 350students were selected as sample for this study comprising male and female students, married and single, Christians and Muslims or other religion. This instrument (questionnaire) is a self-

report data-collection form in which the participants were asked to supply relevant data/information on the subject matter. The questionnaire was broadly divided into sections A, B, C, D, E and F while section A was centered on the participants’ personal data; section B contained 10 items, section C contained 10 items, section D contained 6 items, section E contained 8 items and section F contained 7 items that carefully constructed to cover the subject matter of the study (Influence of Social Networks on Learning Outcomes).The reliability of the instrument will be ascertained by using test-retest method. This was done by administrating the questionnaire on “Influence of Social Networks on Learning Outcomes” to 20 students selected from the remaining students from Faculty of Science of Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti. These set of students were not part of the final sample used in the study. The copies of the instrument (questionnaire) were given to these students and collected back after filling and then the items were marked and recorded. After two weeks, the same questionnaire was administered to the same group of students. The copies were collected and marked as well. Then the relationship between the results of the first and second administrations was subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation. A reliability Coefficient of 0.837 was obtained. Therefore, the instrument is said to be reliable. The instrument was administered to the students. The collection, collation and sorting-out of the questionnaire were done thereafter. Data collected were analyzed using percentages and frequency counts.

5. RESULTS

The findings of this research are presented in the figures and the tables.

Question 1: What social literacy sites do students utilize and how frequently do they?

Table 1. Descriptive analysis showing the extent of usage of various social literacy sites

S/N	ITEMS	ALWAYS		NEVER	
		N	%	N	%
1	Facebook	251	77.0	75	23.0
2	Twitter	105	32.2	221	67.8
3	2go	210	64.4	116	35.6
4	WhatSapp	203	62.3	123	37.7
5	BBM	141	43.3	185	56.7
6	YouTube	70	21.4	256	78.5
7	MySpace	43	13.1	283	86.8
8	Flickr	38	11.7	288	88.3
9	LinkedIn	54	16.6	272	83.4
10	GooglePlus	195	59.8	131	40.2

The findings from Table 1 showed that 77%, 64.4%, 62.3% and 59.8% of the respondents uses Facebook, 2go, WhatSapp and Google Plus respectively. On the other hand about 32.2%, 43.3%, 21.4%, 13.1%, 11.7%, and 16.6% of the respondents uses Twitter, BBM, YouTube, MySpace, Flickr and LinkedIn.

Questions 2: What are the purposes for utilizing these sites?

Table 2. Descriptive analysis showing purpose of SNs usage among undergraduate students

S/N	ITEMS	AGREE		DISAGREE	
		N	%	N	%
1	I use SNs for friendship and communication network	296	90.8	30	9.2
2	I surf for useful information via SNs	258	79.2	68	20.8
3	I’m used to having group discussion on SNs	227	69.7	99	30.3
4	I like reading news update on SNs	267	81.9	59	18.1

5	I feel encouraged via chatting, emailing and sending instant messages to friends	262	80.4	64	19.6
6	SNs video games are well developed, so I like playing them	152	46.7	174	53.4
7	Most times, I post inspirational links and likewise blogging on SNs	218	66.9	108	33.1
8	I like the fascinating aspect of SNs like pornography	115	35.3	211	64.7
9	I shares files, music, videos, pictures, software with friends on SNs	237	72.7	89	27.3
10	I get solutions to most of my class work, projects, group work and the likes on SNs	255	78.2	71	21.8

From Table 2 above, the findings showed that 90.8% of the respondents use SNs for friendship and communication network, 79.2% surf for useful information via SNs, 69.7% use SNs for group discussion, 81.9% read news update using SNs, 80.4% chats, mail and sends instant messages via SNs, 46.7% use SNs for exciting games, 66.9% engage in posting inspirational links and blogging, 35.3% watches pornography, 72.7% share files, music, videos, pictures, software with friends on SNs while 78.2% find solution to classwork, projects and group work.

Question 3: What are the problems associated with using social networks?

Table 3. Descriptive analysis showing problems associated with using SNs among undergraduate students.

S/N	ITEMS	AGREE		DISAGREE	
		N	%	N	%
1	I experience low internet bandwidth while using SNs	228	70.0	98	30.1
2	Cost of internet subscription is not affordable	167	51.2	159	48.8
3	It's not an effective medium for group discussion	158	48.5	168	51.5
4	I do experience poor power supply	189	57.9	137	42.1
5	It has been a source of distraction	168	51.5	158	48.5
6	I cannot express clear opinions about issues	135	41.4	191	58.6

The study findings from Table 3 showed that 70.0% of the total sample experience low internet bandwidth, 51.2% experience high cost of internet subscription, 48.5% considered SNs as non-effective for group discussion, 57.9% encounters poor power supply, 51.5% considers SNs as distraction while 41.4% declared their inability to express clear opinions about issues on SNs.

Question 4: What influence does SNs have on your academic performance?

Table 4. Descriptive analysis showing the influence of SNs on academic performance of undergraduate students

S/N	ITEMS	AGREE		DISAGREE	
		N	%	N	%
1	I find SNs so interesting that it takes all my time for reading and preparing for examinations, tests and project defense	170	52.1	156	47.9
2	I read news articles that keeps me updated about the new developments in my field of study	261	80.1	65	19.9
3	SNs has helped me to get solutions to difficult class work, assignments, and practical works in school				

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		258	79.2	68	20.9
4	SNs has increased my level of literacy	247	75.8	79	24.2
5	Since I started using SNs, my GPA has increased	181	55.6	145	44.5
6	SNs usage has influenced my level of personal relationship with others positively	239	73.3	87	26.7
7	SNs usage has improved my communication skills drastically	224	68.7	102	31.3
8	I like using SNs while lecture is on, so it has hindered me from gaining substantial lessons from each class	112	34.4	214	65.6

The study findings from Table 2 revealed that 52.1% of the total sample finds SNs as distraction to their adequate reading and preparation for examinations, tests and project defense, 80.1% read news articles that keeps them updated about the new developments in their field, 79.2% finds SNs useful to get solution to difficult classwork, assignments and practical works in school, 75.8% realized that SNs has increased their level of literacy, 55.6% noticed an increase in their GPA since they started using SNs, 73.3% have influenced their level of personal relationship with others positively, 68.7% improved their communication skills through SNs while 34.4% like using SNs while lecture is on.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings showed that Facebook had the highest number of users compared with other SNs such as 2go, WhatSapp, and Goggle plus as opposed Ellison (2007) who ranked Facebook as the seventh most popular site on the World Wide Web with respect to total page views.

The findings showed that SNs were used for friendship and communication, source of useful information, discussion, chatting, mailing of messages, reading news updates, source of inspirational links and blogging, sharing files, proffering solution to academic problems. This agrees with Amao, Ayodele and Egboron (1999) who defined communication as having some mind in sharing verbal or nonverbal symbols. They further stated that communication involve interaction between individuals or objects, involves the transmission of information from person to person and effective when it is interactive and involve feedback which is done for the purpose of entertaining, persuading, informing and instructing. This finding is in relation to the research conducted by the University of New Hampshire (2009) that revealed that majority of students use social networking for social connections and entertainment, but are also using it for education and professional reasons.

This study revealed some problems associated with the usage of SNs such as low internet bandwidth, high cost of internet subscription, poor power supply to charge electronic and portable devices. Further findings of this study revealed that students often find SNs interesting that it constitutes their major activity for the day which takes most of their time for reading and preparing for examinations, tests and project defense. These findings conforms with the recent investigation of University of New Hampshire (2009), which revealed that current college students grew up in the technology era and social networking is now just a part of a student's daily routine. The proposal of Oskovei (2010) also agreed with this finding that internet is advantageous to both students and teachers if used as a tool of knowledge creation and dissemination i.e. if not used for knowledge creation; it will hinder them of paying adequate attention to their academic pursuit.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Basedon the findings of this study, the conclusions are drawn: SNs is used majorly for friendship and communication network, surf for useful information, having group discussion, reading news update, encouragement via chatting, emailing and sending instant messages to friends, posting inspirational links, blogging, share files, music, videos, pictures and get solutions to problems. SNs influence on academic performance are: it takes time, keeps users update about the new developments in their field of study, it increases users level of literacy, in helps build interpersonal relationship with others, improves communication skills and in turn aids the

increase of GPA of students. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made: University and College authorities should ensure the prohibition of cell phones or other related electronic devices in lecture halls so as to increase the concentration of students during lecture for maximum comprehension of what has been taught. Likewise effective group discussions should be held with lecturers on their relevant courses in order to channel students' interest to positive usage of SNS. Since practice makes perfection, students who do not know how to multi-task should be taught. To avoid distractions that may arise from SNS usage; test, assignments and continuous assessment could be conducted for students and lecture notes could be uploaded on SNS for motivating students to read in order to help students' have a better learning outcome. On the other hand, World Wide Web access could be restricted to research sites in school area and finally seminars on effective time management should be organized for students seasonally to sensitize them on how important time is to them.

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