Analysis of the Utilization of Social Media Platforms and University Students' Attitudes towards Academic Activities in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study analyzed the utilization of social media platforms and university students' attitudes towards academic activities in Cross River State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of this study comprised all the private and public university students in Cross River State. A sample of 1,600 students, which cuts across the three universities in the area of study, was selected using the convenience sampling technique. A questionnaire (r=.849) and a rating scale (r=.786) were used as the instruments for data collection. Findings emerged amongst others that the utilization status of social media platforms by university students is generally high; the utilization of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram and YouTube social media platforms has a significant composite influence (F=52.453, p<.05) on university students' attitudes towards academic activities. Relatively, utilization of Facebook was the highest predictor (t=11.222, β=.232, p<.05), followed by the utilization of WhatsApp (t=11.068, β=.229, p<.05), utilization of Twitter (t=5.977, β=.118, p<.05), and the utilization of Instagram (t=2.772, β=.056, p<.05), in that order. It was recommended that secondary school students should develop positive attitudes towards their academic activities and abhor activities that will lead to a decline in the learning outcomes.
Keywords: Utilization, Social, Media, Facebook, Attitudes, Academic, activities.

Introduction

Students' attitude towards academic activities refers to the habits and behaviour displayed by students with respect to class attendance, reading, note-taking, assignments, test or examinations, and other academic activities. The attitudes may be classified as being either favourable (positive) or unfavourable (negative). Crede and Kuncel (2008) noted that attitudes to academic activities denote the degree to which the student engages in regular acts of studying that are characterized by appropriate

studying routines (e.g. review of materials) occurring in an environment that is conducive to studying. Attitudes to academic activities can be measured directly through assessment, inventories, reports, examinations and rating scales. Attitudes to academic activities can be the students' way of study whether systematic, efficient or inefficient (Olutola, Olatoye & Olatoye, 2016). It literally means that good students' attitude toward academic activities produces positive academic performance while inefficient attitudes lead to academic failure (Ayodele & Adebiyi, 2013).

The attitudes of many university students towards academic activities have raised the curiosity of many stakeholders and have become a major issue of concern. It is not rare to find many university students at clubs, bars, drinking houses and such enjoyment-based places without any corresponding attitudes to their books. Many students are also fond of shying away from lectures even when they are in school (Owan, Nwannunu & Madukwe, 2018). They prefer instead to stay outside snapping selfies or photographs with peers, with the hope of uploading same. With the recent developments in the world of technology, university students in Cross River State have switched their attention from reading, attending classes and studies generally to such things as chatting, online dating, viewing movies and videos online, and many other such attitudes not expected of students in the university. Observations showed that many students chat and post pictures on social media platforms while in classes or during test and exams.

These poor attitudes in the use of social media may have also contributed to the high rate of examination malpractices by students since most of them are unprepared before examinations. As a means of improving students' attitude towards academic activities in the universities, orientation campaigns are now being organized for all new students to be informed on their expected attitudes and behaviours while in school. Quality assurance measures are also in place to check the activities of lecturers and students to ensure that there is conformity to set standards. Despite these measures and many others in place, the issue of students' poor attitudes towards academic activities remains unchanged. The poor products of universities these days is an indicator that apart from other variables, their attitude towards academic activities could also be a contributing factor. It was based on the persistent negative attitudes towards academic activities that these researchers sought to find out if social media utilization by students can be associated with their attitudes towards academic activities.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundation of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Tertiary institution students use social media for different reasons which include connecting to friends, for academic purposes, to exchange pictures and videos, for personal information and so

on. Through the Internet, a number of web technologies emerged, and one technology that is making waves with regard to information sharing and communication are social media networks. Mingle and Adams (2015) disclosed that the evolution of social media has cut across all facets of society with its positive and negative impacts. Social media has transformed and impacted on communication, learning, research and education in general (Mingle & Adams, 2015). Negussie and Ketema (2014), Ahmed and Qazi (2011) indicated that most students use their personal laptops and smart phones to access social network sites such as Facebook.

Arop, Agunwa and Owan (2019) asserted that with the support of the internet, such social media channels as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Eskimi, WeChat, Google-talk, Google+, Skype and others are hosted and provided. For the purpose of this study, the emphasis was based on 10 social media including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube. These social media platforms were considered in this study based on their observed widespread utilization by individuals in Cross River State. Arop, Agunwa and Owan (2019) examined the relationship between tertiary students' social media management attitudes and their academic performance in Cross River State, with a specific focus on Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram. Cluster and simple random sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 1000 students from the entire population. The results of the analysis revealed that tertiary students' Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram management attitudes did not significantly relate to their academic performance.

Olutola, Olatoye and Olatoye (2016) investigated the assessment of social media utilization and study habits of students of tertiary institutions in Katsina State. Findings revealed that there was a significant influence of students' level of social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat, Smiggle and Eskimi) utilization on their study habit (R square= 0.078, P<0.05). There was no significant difference in the study habit of male and female students of tertiary institutions in Katsina State (t= -2.206, P>0.05). There was no significant difference in the use of social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat, Smiggle and Eskimi by students of tertiary institutions in Katsina State on the basis of gender (t=1.042, P>0.05). There was a significant positive relationship between students' level of use of social media and study habit (r=+0.280, P<0.05).

Mahmoud, Lama, Walaa, Ra'ed, Tahani and Huda (2015) examined the relationship between student's grades and social media networking at the University of Jordan. The subjects chosen for study were undergraduate students of the University. The study indicated that most of the social media network users were females with ages between 20-23 years. Almost 39% of the students were spending 3 hours per day on Facebook,

while 40% of the students spent 10 hours on social media every week. The results obtained did not indicate any effect of social media on college student grades or academic achievements.

Kereke and Lucky (2014) conducted a study on the impact of social media on the Academic performance of university students in Nigeria. The causal-comparative research design was adopted. Findings showed that social media usage among students was not for academic purposes. The study also found out that the following were often used by students - Facebook 40 (40.81%), WhatsApp 20 (20.40%), 2go/Skype 14 (14.28%) while Myspace, Twitter, Badoo, Blogs/web scholars, Google+/Social bookmarking were not often used by undergraduates in the four universities for the study.

The review of the literature revealed that much has been written in terms of social media utilization and students' performance or grades. Much has also been covered specifically on Facebook and WhatsApp as social media platforms in earlier studies. This may be because of their popularity and wide usage by youths and adults. Several studies have used different methods, instruments, sample sizes, and have revealed varying results. Some studies are favouring the use of social media while others do not. Some studies have also discovered a negative effect of students' social media use and their academic performance, while others found a positive effect. Generally, this study used a different approach, methods, sample size etc to examine 10 social media sites including those rarely found in existing studies, which students are using, and how such utilization associates with their attitudes towards academic activities. This study is different from all other existing studies due to its own uniqueness, and in filling the gaps of scanty literature on social media utilization and students' attitudes towards academic activities in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study
The primary purpose of this study was to analyze the utilization of social media platforms and university students' attitudes towards academic activities in Cross River State. Specifically, this study sought to assess:
  i.   the frequency of university students' utilization of social media platforms.
  ii.   the influence of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube utilizations, on university students' attitudes towards academic activities.

Research Question

i. To what extent do university students utilize social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube?

Hypothesis

Ho1: The utilization of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube social media platforms has no significant influence on university students' attitudes towards academic activities.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which was considered due to its suitability in describing observed phenomena as they are occurring in the population using the observations from the sample. The population of this study comprised all the private and public university students in Cross River State. There are two public universities and one private university in the area of study with an unknown population standard deviation. Since the population standard deviation is unknown, the researchers adopted a convenience sampling technique in selecting a sample of 2,200 students across the three universities. The sample distribution of the study is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sample distribution of the study showing 2,200 students who were conveniently selected from three universities in Cross River State

S/N	Institution	Sample
1	University of Calabar	1,100
2	Cross River University of Technology	800
3	Arthur Jarvis University	300
	Total	2,200

The instruments used for data collection was a questionnaire and a rating scale that were both designed by the researchers. The rating scale was used in obtaining data pertaining students' social media utilization frequency, while the questionnaire was used to assess students' utilization status of social media as well as on their attitudes towards academic activities. The questionnaire was designed in two sections; section A was used to obtain respondents' demographic information, while section B comprised 40 items placed on the revised four-point Likert scale. Three items were used to measure each of the 10 social media platforms selected for this study, while 10 items were used to measure the attitudes of students towards academic activities. The instruments received face and content validity from three experts in Test and Measurement in the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Calabar. Cronbach

Alpha was used in establishing the reliability of the instruments, with .084 and .078 all obtained as the reliability estimates for both instruments. These values were high enough to consider the instruments as being internally consistent for measurement.

The instruments were administered by the researchers and retrieved immediately after completion. The entire instruments administered were retrieved without any loss, representing a 100 percent return rate. The collected data from the questionnaire were scored appropriately for positive and negative items, while the data from the rating scale were obtained through frequency counts. The data obtained were coded accordingly on a person-by-item matrix using a spreadsheet program. Descriptive statistics (such as simple percentage, mean and bar chart) and inferential statistics (multiple regression) were employed in the analysis of data, and the results from the analysis are presented in the following section.

Presentation of results

Research question: To what extent do university students utilize social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube?

The answer to this research question is provided using the summarized results of percentages in Table 2.

Table 2: Percentage responses of university students' utilization of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube social media platforms in Cross River State

Social media platforms	Frequency of utilization							
	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Always (%)	Total (%)	Mean utilization	Rank
Facebook	43 (1.95)	62 (2.82)	307 (13.95)	512 (23.3)	1276 (58)	2200 (100)	539.25	1st
WhatsApp	309 (14)	231 (10.5)	202 (9.182)	454 (20.6)	1004 (45.6)	2200 (100)	472.75	3rd
Instagram	466 (21.2)	251 (11.4)	124 (5.636)	372 (16.9)	987 (44.9)	2200 (100)	433.5	4th
Twitter	535 (24.3)	72 (3.27)	123 (5.591)	487 (22.1)	983 (44.7)	2200 (100)	416.25	5th
WeChat	1106 (50.3)	646 (29.4)	122 (5.545)	239 (10.9)	87 (3.95)	2200 (100)	273.5	9th
Skype	1127 (51.2)	899 (40.9)	59 (2.682)	43 (1.95)	72 (3.27)	2200 (100)	268.25	10th
Snapchat	975 (44.3)	789 (35.9)	284 (12.91)	108 (4.91)	44 (2)	2200 (100)	306.25	8th
Eskimi	892 (40.5)	550 (25)	256 (11.64)	305 (13.9)	197 (8.95)	2200 (100)	327	7th
Telegram	645 (29.3)	322 (14.6)	92 (4.182)	487 (22.1)	654 (29.7)	2200 (100)	388.75	6th
YouTube	232 (10.5)	188 (8.55)	379 (17.23)	445 (20.2)	956 (43.5)	2200 (100)	492	2nd
Average	633	401	195	345	626	2200		

Note: mean utilization = (Rarely + Sometimes + Often + Always) ÷ 4

Generally, the results in Table 2 show that an average of 626 respondents use social media platforms always. Furthermore, the result indicated that an average of 345, 195, and 401 respondents utilize social media platforms often, sometimes, and rarely respectively. It was also indicated that an average of 633 respondents do not utilize any of the ten social media platforms included in this study. It was inferred also that the utilization status of social media platforms, by university students in Cross River State, is generally high as about 1567 of the respondents are either using social media

platforms always, often, sometimes or rarely. The result in Table 2 also indicated that Facebook is the most utilized social media platform, this is followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Telegram, Eskimi, Snapchat, WeChat, and skype, in that order. The results from Table 2 are further presented in Figure 1 below for clarity purposes.
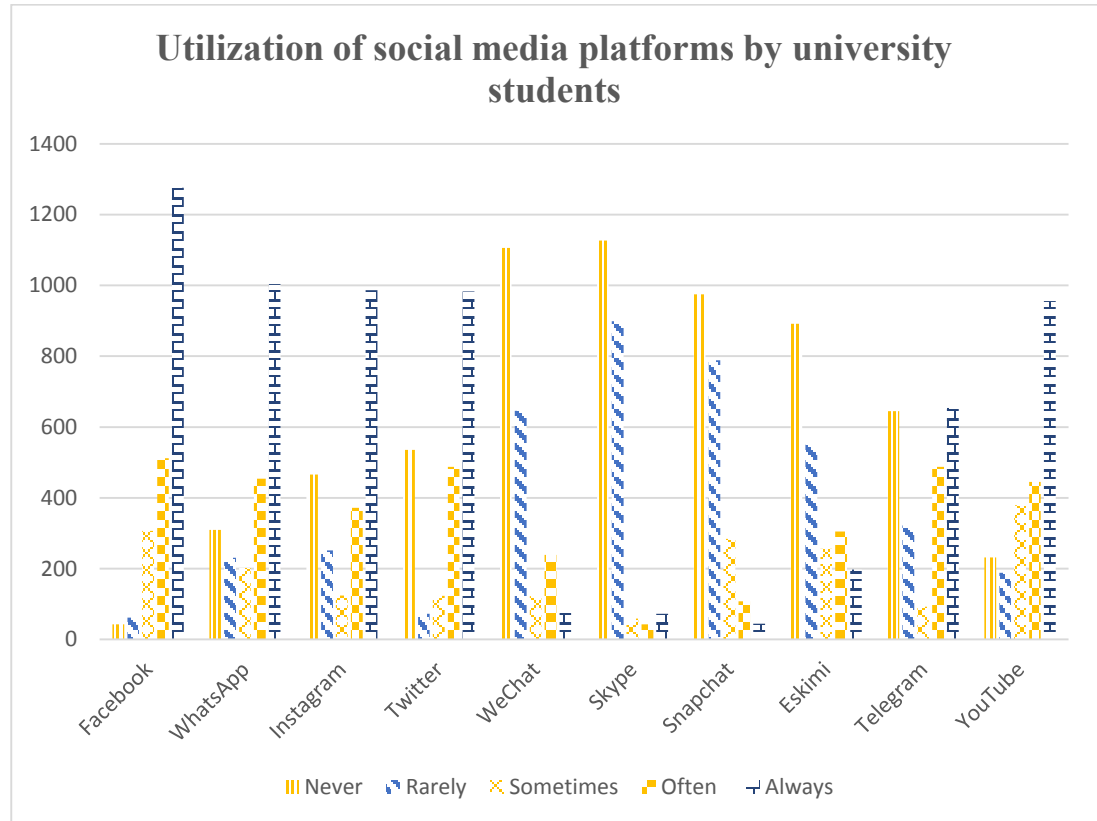

Figure 1: Multiple bar chart showing the utilization of social media platforms by university students in Cross River State

Ho1: The utilization of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube social media platforms has no significant influence on university students' attitudes towards academic activities.

The results from the analysis of data using multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Multiple regression results showing the relative and composite influence of the utilization of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube social media platforms on university students' attitudes towards academic activities

R	R^2		Adj. R^2		SE
.440a	.193		.190		1.806
Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	1710.584	10	171.058	52.453	.000b
Residual	7138.724	2189	3.261		
Total	8849.309	2199			
Model	B	SE	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.822	.254		7.159	.000
Utilization of Facebook	.235	.021	.232	11.222	.000
Utilization of WhatsApp	.229	.021	.229	11.068	.000
Utilization of Instagram	.055	.020	.056	2.772	.006
Utilization of Twitter	.119	.020	.118	5.977	.000
Utilization of WeChat	.019	.027	.019	.688	.491
Utilization of Skype	.019	.021	.019	.904	.366
Utilization of Snapchat	.028	.025	.028	1.097	.273
Utilization of Eskimi	.009	.026	.009	.361	.718
Utilization of Telegram	-.034	.026	-.035	-1.293	.196
Utilization of YouTube	.026	.020	.026	1.300	.194

a. Dependent Variable: Attitudes Towards Academic Activities
b. Predictors: (Constant), Utilization of YouTube, WhatsApp, Eskimi, Twitter, Instagram, Skype, Facebook, Telegram, Snapchat, WeChat

The results presented in Table 3 indicated that the ten predictors had weak positive multiple relationships (R=.440) with the response variable. The R square value of .193 indicates that utilization of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube social media platforms jointly accounted for 19.3% of the total variance of university students' attitudes towards academic activities. By implication, the remaining 80.7% could be explained by other variables not included in the model.

A cursory look at the ANOVA section of Table 3 shows that the p-value of .000 is less than .05 alpha level at 10 and 2189 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld, indicating that, the utilization of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube social media platforms has a significant composite influence (F=52.453, p<.05) on university students' attitudes towards academic

activities in Cross River State. Thus, the R square value of .193 obtained was not due to chance.

Relatively, a look at the individual contributions of the ten predictors shows that the utilization of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter by university students, significantly influenced their attitudes towards academic activities respectively. The utilization of WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube respectively, has no significant influence on university students' attitudes towards academic activities. Out of the four social media platforms that were significant individually in exerting an influence on students' attitudes towards academic activities, utilization of Facebook by university students was the highest predictor ($t=11.222$, $\beta=.232$, $p<.05$), followed by the utilization of WhatsApp ($t=11.068$, $\beta=.229$, $p<.05$), utilization of Twitter ($t=5.977$, $\beta=.118$, $p<.05$), and the utilization of Instagram ($t=2.772$, $\beta=.056$, $p<.05$), in that order.

Discussion of findings
The first finding of this study discovered that an average of 626 respondents use social media platforms always. Furthermore, the result revealed that an average of 345, 195, and 401 respondents utilize social media platforms often, sometimes, and rarely. It was also indicated that an average of 633 respondents do not utilize any of the ten social media platforms included in this study. It was also exposed that the utilization status of social media platforms by university students in Cross River State, is generally high. This finding is in line with that of Kereke and Lucky (2014), which discovered that the following are often used by students - Facebook 40 (40.81%), WhatsApp20 (20.40%), 2go/Skype 14 (14.28%) while Myspace, Twitter, Badoo, Blogs/web scholars, Google+/Social bookmarking are not often used by undergraduates in the four universities for the study. This finding shows that many university students utilize social media for many reasons including non-academic reasons. Thus, they spent a lot of their time on these platforms communicating with known or unknown people, posting and reading posts, and commenting or having people comment on their post and so on.

The second major finding of this study established that Facebook is the most utilized social media platform, followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Telegram, Eskimi, Snapchat, WeChat, and skype, in that order. This finding is consistent with the finding of Mahmoud, Lama, Walaa, Ra'ed, Taisir, Tahani and Huda (2015), which indicated that almost 39% of the students were spending 3 hours per day on Facebook, while 40% of the students spent 10 hours on social media every week. Mingle, Adams and Adjei (2016) also revealed that majority of respondents from the private schools used WhatsApp and Facebook more often.

The most popular and easily accessible social media platforms appear to be the most utilized by university students in Cross River State. Facebook, for instance, is widely used perhaps because of its supports on small phones with web 2.0 browsers as opposed to WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter that runs conveniently on smartphones and computers (which some students do not own). The students without smartphones or computers will not have any other option than to resort to Facebook which is supported in most cases by their java or j2me phones, which explains why Facebook is the most utilized social media platform. For smartphone users, the use of WhatsApp is also common due to students' perceived security guarantee of the platform. Instagram and Twitter may also have commanded a wide usage perhaps because of their ability to connect with verified celebrities online. YouTube also commanded a wide usage due to its captivating videos that let some students watch movies and interesting academic videos and tutorials online. Thus, the other social media platforms like Skype, WeChat, and Snapchat, may have attracted only a few users perhaps due to their perceived non-popularity among students.

The third finding of this study uncovered that the utilization of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube social media platforms has a significant composite influence (F=52.453, p<.05) on university students' attitudes towards academic activities in Cross River State. This finding corroborates the finding of Olutola, Olatoye and Olatoye (2016) which revealed that there is a significant influence of students' level of social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat, Smiggle and Eskimi) utilization on their study habit (R square= 0.078, P<0.05). This finding, however, disagrees with the finding of Arop, Agunwa and Owan (2019) which discovered that tertiary institutions' students' Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram management attitudes did not significantly relate to their academic performance. The finding also disagrees with the finding of Mahmoud et al (2015) which did not indicate any effect of social media on college student grades or academic achievements.

However, this finding comes as no surprise when it established a significant influence of social media platforms utilization on students' attitude towards academic activities, because a student who uses his time always on social media, will not have enough time for reading books, attending lessons and other academic activities. The finding may have disagreed with the finding of some scholars due to variations in the areas of study, the instruments used, the characteristics of respondents, and the construct measured.

Conclusion
It was concluded that university students' utilization of social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, Skype, Snapchat, Eskimi, Telegram, and YouTube) for several reasons is generally high. The use of these social

media platforms can be used jointly to predict students' attitudes towards academic activities in universities. Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are the most widely utilized social media platforms by university students in Cross River State.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:
   i.   University students should develop positive attitudes towards their academic activities and abhor activities that will lead to a decline in the learning outcomes. Proper time management should be the top priority of students.
   ii.   Facebook utilization should be drastically minimized by students, especially during school sessions. It should not be used on a daily basis so that students will have enough time to study their books.
   iii.   WhatsApp is recommended for use only for academic purposes due to its wide usability as a platform for hosting several academic groups. This should be managed effectively, and used only as a source for getting relevant information and not for chatting all day.
   iv.   The use of Instagram and Twitter by university students should be totally avoided as they lack academic substance for contributing to students' education due to the high rate of pornographic activities on these platforms.
   v.   YouTube is also recommended for use strictly for viewing academic contents that can enable knowledge expansion, and for self-development. It should not be used for watching movies and comedy all the time.

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