



**SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY STUDENTS IN COLLEGES OF SCIENCE IN TWO SELECTED
PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigates the use of social media for academic practices by science students in selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The study is descriptive design and the population of the study is 505. Purposive sampling technique was employed while 80 copies of questionnaire distributed to the respondents were returned giving 100% return rate. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics. The results show that nearly all the science students use social media especially Facebook (96.50%) followed by Google+ (73.75%) and YouTube have (60.00%). Most of the students use it on daily basis to maintain existing relationship and to stay in touch with those that they rarely see in person. Receiving of unwanted messages and pictures (60.00%) together with distracted attention from main classroom activities (46.25%) were the major negative impacts of social media on the science students. The findings also revealed that the science students are knowledgeable in the use of social media while Google+ (78.75%) happened to be the most beneficial social media network. The study reveals challenges faced in the use of the social media while recommendations were made to provide adequate measure and improved the use of social media application by entire students in Nigeria and beyond.

Keywords: *Social Media, Science Students, Social network, Private Universities, Nigeria*

Introduction

It will not be out of point to state that students of nowadays have more information at their fingertips than the President of the United States did 20 years ago. During this period, communication over a distance was comparatively difficult and the idea of sharing information was not as popular as it is now in this digital age. The new development in the technology world have made the Internet an innovative way for individuals and families to communicate (Sponcil & Gitimu, 2012) while social interaction had given birth to a new dimension with the creation of social media. Excitingly, the social media has made what look impossible become possible, as one can conveniently communicate with anyone at anytime irrespective of geographical barriers and distance (Onah & Nche, 2014). It is no doubt students are using these social media to bring to light as much information as necessary on their campuses.

Hamat, Embi and Hassan (2012) opined that the success and popularity of social media sites indicates the idea of online sharing has been successfully taken to the social and personnel level. Oxford Dictionary (2013) refers to social media as websites and applications that enable users to

create and share content or to participate in social networking. Social media is also seen as a collection of Internet websites, services, and practices that support community building, participation, and sharing. Social media is being used to enhance communication among and between learners and their communities as an instrument of communication as affirmed by Khan and Bhatti (2012).

It makes use of mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, jointly create, discuss and modify user-generated contents (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It was discovered that Internet users continue to spend more time in social media than any other site (Nigel, Graham & Ant, 2012) while as at 2012, social media happened to become one of the most powerful sources for news updates via platforms such as Facebook, Blogger, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, WordPress, Google+, Tumblr, MySpace, among others according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2012). Looking at the usage of these sites, Facebook alone as at April, 2014 recorded 1.28 Billion active monthly users around the globe and 757 Millions daily global users (Smith, 2014) indicating how relevant and important the social media is at this present Internet age.

Students of nowadays are commonly referred to as millennial students, which means they grew up with computer and with Web 2.0 technologies where social media is inclusive (Voorhees, 2012). The students, young adults have grown up using social media and for the fact that they were the first to adapt and make use of this technology, believed to have more knowledge of the social media. Interestingly, social media can also help other non-traditional students in their academic and social life. Adult students can be successful with these types of technology because they continue to learn throughout their lifetime in many informal learning venues (LeNoue, Hall & Eighmy, 2011) as quoted by Voorhees (2012). This trend is a clear indication that social media is creating new platform and non-personal ways for students and people to interact with one another.

In Nigeria, like the rest of other countries, both young and old, muslims and Christians, rich and poor, literate and illiterate enjoy the services provided by social media (Chukwuebuka, 2013). Students have opportunity after their secondary school education to move to higher institutions of their choice such as colleges of education, monotechnics, polytechnics or universities after meeting up with the necessary requirements for further studies and specialization in their choice of discipline. As a means of interacting with one another, students of these high schools which could be public or private institutions have been found to embrace the use of social media as a new platform of sharing information.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers continue to study the Internet and the technologies that constitute it. Studies have been carried out on the use of social media by different social and professional groups. In fact, some researchers have advocated for inclusion of social media in professional practices. There are reports of studies on students' use of the social media outside Nigeria. Studies on use of social media by high school students have been reported. However, comprehensive study on university students' use of social media and its impact on their academic life have not been widely reported, especially in Nigeria. This study therefore tends to look at the types of social media used, purpose of using them and the negative effects of social media among other things on science students of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose is to investigate the use of social media for academic practices by science students in two selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. identify types of social media used by the science students;
- ii. examine how often the students use social media sites;
- iii. identify the purposes of using social media;
- iv. determine the challenges faced by students using social media;
- v. assess the student's knowledge in the use of social media; and
- vi. ascertain the negative impact of the use of social media on the science students.

Review of Related Literature

The growing interest in social media has led educators to examine its use and application for academic practice (Guy, 2012). Various research works have revealed the use and benefits of social media especially for academic gains as an area of interest for many researchers in education and social sciences (Hussain, Gulrez & Tahirkheli, 2012). The study on the use of social media technologies carried out by Poellhuber and Anderson (2011) noted that a larger percentage of male students use social media as earlier discovered by Miller, Schweingruber, and Brandenburg (2000), Jackson, Ervin, Gardener, and Schmitt (2001) who reported that male students generally demonstrate more competence and a favourable attitude toward the use of social media technology. A survey was conducted by Hussain, Gulrez and Tahirkheli (2012) on the use of social media by the students of Faculty of Education of Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan, with the use of questionnaire administered to 600 students. The findings revealed that 90% of the respondents were using Facebooks, 64% joined Google Groups and 53% used LinkedIn.

This agreed with the opinion of Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr (2010), Voorheas (2012), Sponcil and Gitimu (2012) who submitted that Facebook is the most popular form of social media among its users. On the types of social media network people often use, Bridgestock and Vamnozzi (2013) findings reported that older respondents were more likely to be regular users of professionally oriented networks like LinkedIn, while younger respondents revealed higher use of entertainment-based network like YouTube, Pinterest while Facebook is slightly more used by younger group. But, in Nigeria, Fabinu (2014) reported that the social media commonly in use include Facebook, 2go, yahoo messenger, BBM, Whatsapp, Twitter, LinkedIn amongst others.

Recent studies show that social media tools are much popular among new users' generations. With daily changes in modern information technologies, new users rely on social media and use it as a tool for communication, information sharing and discussions (Khan & Bhatti, 2012). Internet users under the age of 50 are particularly likely to use a social networking site of any kind, while those between 18 and 29 are the most likely of any demographic cohort to do so (83%) and women are likely than men to be on these sites. When it comes to how often the social media is being used, Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr (2010) noted that 45% of college students use a social media site at least once a day. Cassidy, Griffin, Manolovitz, Shen and Turkey (2011) stressed that college students use desktop computers, laptops, e-readers, tablets and cell phones on daily basis to actively engage in social networking, text messaging, blogging, content sharing, online learning, and much more.

Liu (2010) surveyed the use of different social media tools and their attitudes and perception towards these tools online and find out that, 85% use the tools for social engagement, 56% use such tools for direct communications, 47% use them for relationship building while less than 10% affirmed using social media tools for academic practice. The study of Sponcil and Gitimu (2012) reveals 78%

of college students did not use social networking websites to impress others rather posted pictures and tell others about what is happening in their lines. Again, undergraduate students have a propensity to use quite a few social media for finding and acquiring information (Kim, Sin & Yoo-Lee, 2014) as well as to reach out to close/distance friends and seek general information about academic activities (Ebele & Oghenetega, 2014).

Maintaining existing relationships with friends and family was found to be more important result of social media than meeting new friends according to the students while they also use social media for entertainment and to occupy free time when they are bored. Ezeah, Asogwa and Obiorah (2013) discovered from their research carried out on the use of social media among students in selected universities in South-East, Nigeria, that students use it to discuss national issues, getting entertainment, education/information; involve in cyber crimes and watch pornography. It was discovered by Bridgestock and Vamnozzi (2013) that most famous reasons for using social media from the sample of 900 students around the five world region covered was to “keep up to date” followed by the fact that “it was interesting”, “for useful connections” as well as “to have their say” among others.

Famutimi (2013) reported that social media would assists learners to learn better, stay updated with school assignments and projects, and starting discussion around their school work. He added that it would also provide them an opportunity to develop 21st century skills required for a successful career after school. In a related issue, social media as educational tools enriches the learning experience according to Lederer (2012) by allowing students and instructors exchange ideas, foster collaboration and discussion, engage and interact using emerging social platforms. She pointed it out that social media is an effective way to increase student’s engagement and build communication skills by allowing students to feel more comfortable in expressing themselves in less intimidating environment.

She stressed further that social media assist students to find employment by establishing a professional web presence, posting a resume, and researching potential employers. She also admits that it improves communication between students’ questions, post homework, assignments and lesson plans, send messages and updates, schedules or announce upcoming events, share websites and multimedia contents. Social networks are also being used by teachers, lecturers and professors as a communication tools for discussions with their students to past assignment, tests and quizzes (Cassidy, Britsch, Griffin, Manolovitz, Shen, Turney, 2011).

However, users noted that they face some challenges in the cause of using social media. Khan and Bhatti (2012) from their study stressed that the respondents strongly agreed that in Pakistan, electricity failure is their greatest problems followed by lack of time, privacy and identity, too many social media to learn, lack of knowledge, slow speed of Internet, inadequate funds, staff and training opportunities in using social media for marketing library and information products and services. Hussain, Gulrez and Tahirkheli (2012) discovered from the research that students who use social media faces some problems as electricity failure, low bandwidth of the Internet, lack of infrastructures like computers and laptops, managing time for using social media during the semester, leakage of privacy, cyber-bullying and physical problems among others.

On the impact of social media, a study conducted in 2010 by the University of Maryland suggested that social media services could results to someone being addictive (“Social Media”, 2014) which can lead to “fear of missing out” sometimes referred to by students as “FOMO”. In a similar study, social media tool can be a distraction to the students’ attention from classroom participation and ultimately are disruptive to the learning process Lederer (2012). Lederer further stated that social media use brings about cyber bullying which is a weapon for malicious behavior while its use also

discourage face-to-face communication as it provides a safe harbor for students who are uncomfortable expressing themselves.

In Nigeria, social media stimulates the students to leave their schools to other campus in order to associate with their online-social-media friends while the time spent on their study is reduced (Ezeah, Asogwa & Obiorah, 2013). The research carried out by Ebele and Oghenetega (2014) on impact of social media on the academic performance of university students in Nigeria shows that 79.59% of the respondents perform poorly in their academic activities as a result of addiction in the use of social media. The quality times which were to be used on academic work according to Olubiyi (2012) is also wasted through idle chats and other immoral acts showing obsessive attitude of Nigeria youths towards social media use. Ndaku (2013) submit that students are negatively influenced to a large extent by the social media because their attention are now on chatting and playing music while their academic activities are neglected. It was discovered that the use of social media could lead to; insomnia, loss of appetite in eating, laziness, addicted to social media, wasting a lot of times, forgetting things easily, dating sites, increase online theft and involving in accident while using social media when walking on the road (Oghenetega, Erimieleagbon & Hope, 2014).

Scope of the Study

The work is limited to Students of Colleges of Science in two (2) selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria; Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD), Ekiti-State and Joseph Ayo Babalola University (JABU) Ikeji Arakeji in Osun State due to financial constraint as at the time of the study. It was also restricted to only 300level and 400level Students of College of Sciences.

Methodology

Research Design

The descriptive design was used for this study. Research instrument employed was questionnaire. The population of the study is 505 registered students during 2013/2014 academic session with 321 students in ABUAD and JABU has 184 students, while a purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the sample size used for the study. Eighty (80) copies of structured questionnaire were administered to students in College of Sciences which includes those in Microbiology, Biochemistry, Food Science & Technology, Industrial Chemistry, Agricultural Science, Biological Science, Human Biology, Physics, Information & Communication Science, and Computer Science in advance level in their undergraduate studies. The questionnaire was distributed in each of the universities selected in their lecture rooms and laboratories during practical classes with the permission and assistance of their lecturers. Students in 100level and 200level were excluded from the study with the believed that they are still young in the system. Two research assistant were employed to facilitate the process.

Data Collection

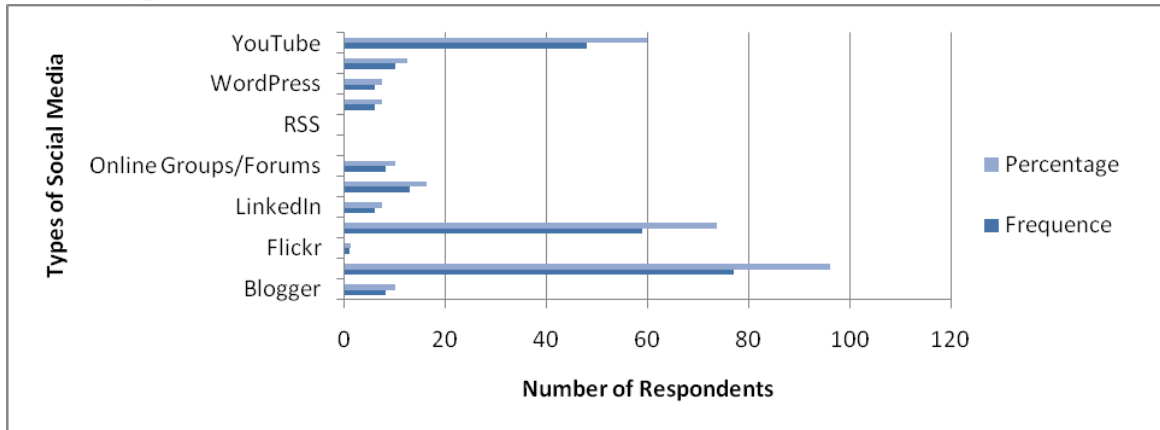
With close monitoring, within a period of five weeks, all the copies (80) of the questionnaire distributed were returned and correctly filled, thereby producing returned rate of 100%.

Data Analysis

The data extracted were analysed using descriptive statistics which includes frequency and percentage presented in charts.

Results and Discussion

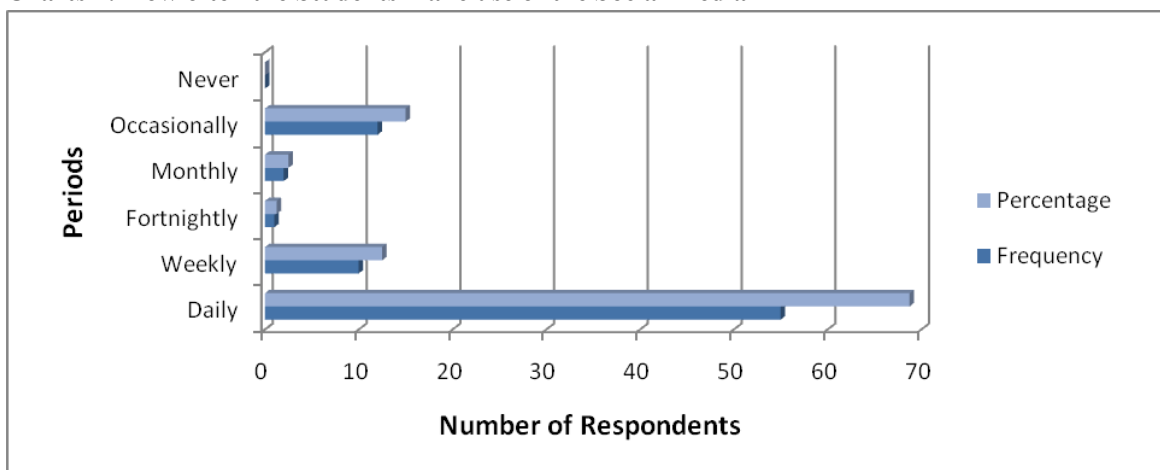
Chart 1: Types of Social Media Used



Source: Field Study (2014)

Chart 1 show the types of social media used by the science students in private universities where 96.25% respondents indicated that they use Facebook. Next to Facebook was Google+ with 73.75% while the use of YouTube has 60.00%. This is an indication that nearly all the science students from Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD) and Joseph Ayo Babalola University (JABU), Ikeji-Arakeji, in Nigeria use Facebook as a social media platform. This could be because of its popularity and its relevance among other types of social media available as a veritable tool for social interaction in academic environment and beyond. The result of this findings corroborate the submission of Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuh (2010), Voorheas (2012), Hussain, Gulrez and Tahirkheli (2012) that Facebook is still the most popular type of social media. In addition, it was also noticed that more than half of the students also use Google+ with another popular and entertaining social media known as YouTube.

Charts 2: How often the Students make use of the Social Media

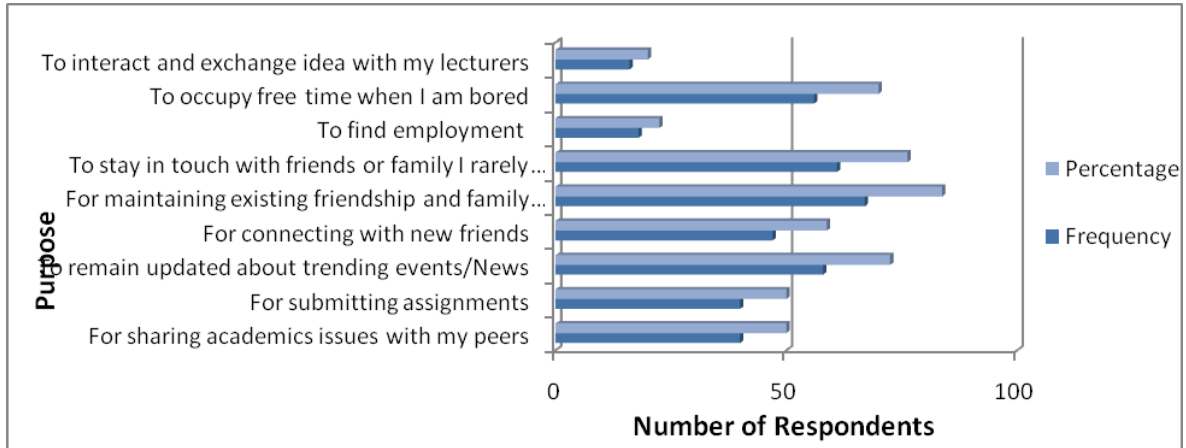


Source: Field Study (2014)

The Chart 2 above reveals that 68.75% of the respondents make daily use of the social media which was followed by occasionally use with 15.00%. The study discovered that all the science

students make use of social media since none of the respondents indicated that he or she has “Never” used social media. Most importantly the result depicts that more than half of the science students make daily use of the social media. This agreed with the findings of Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuh (2010) who noted that almost half of college students surveyed use social media site at least once a day. The platform provides a better avenue where science students engaged in web-based technology to interact, share and exchange information with their colleagues, friends, lecturers and members of their families.

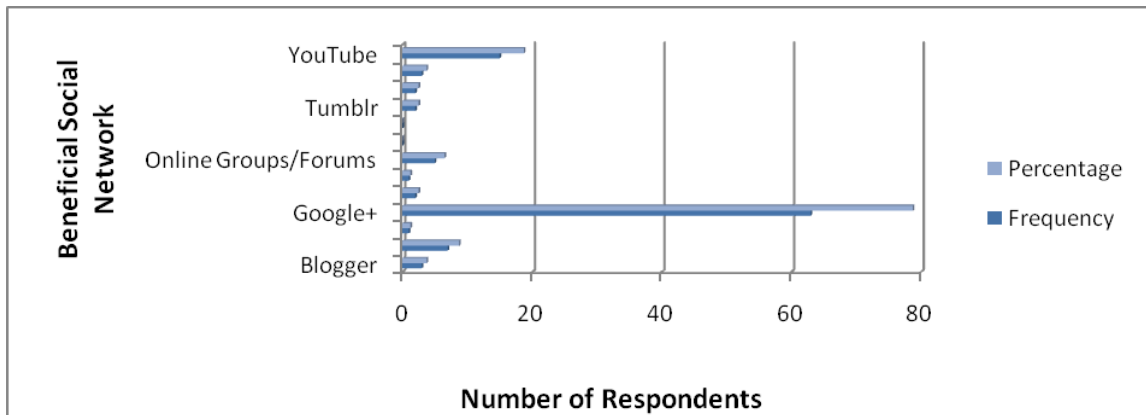
Chart 3: Purpose of Using Social Media



Source: Field Study (2014)

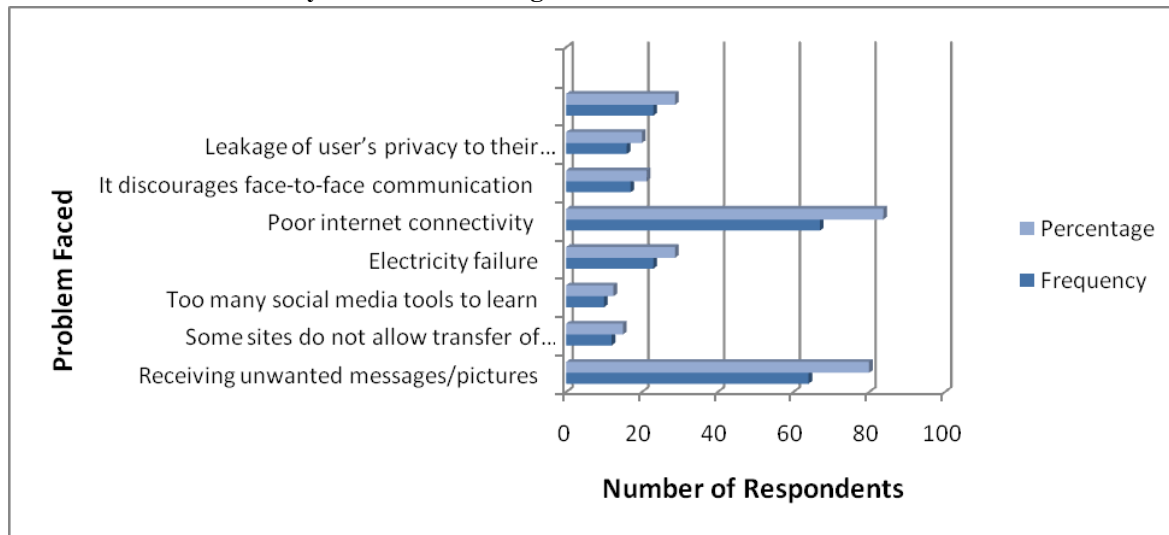
According to Chart 3, on purpose of using social media by the science students, 83.75% of them use it for maintaining existing friendship and family relationship, 76.25% use them to stay in touch with people they rarely see in person while 20.00% of the respondents indicated that the reason they use social media is to interact and exchange ideas with their lecturers. The finding discovered that science students from private universities in Nigeria use social media for at least one or two reasons. Above all, the study had shown maintaining relationship with people and to stay in touch with those that the students rarely see face-to-face were the leading reasons of using the social media amongst other reasons in their universities as also affirmed by Sponcil and Gitimu (2012).

Chart 4: Most Beneficial Social Network



Source: Field Study (2014)

From Chart 4, it is certain that most beneficial social network according to the respondents is Google+ with 78.75%. YouTube came second having 18.75% while none of the respondents said Pinterest and RSS were beneficial to them. It was clear that most of the science students benefited from the use of Google+ among other social network due to its numerous educational tools such as the Hangouts. The finding also agrees with the observation of Odell (n.d.) who in his blog titled “What Google+ REALLY Means for Higher Ed” wrote that in the case of Apps for Education, Google has brought the tools and the audience together and that for many institutions, Google+ is education’s social layer, threading together the entire student experience. The students may not be aware of the existence of Pinterest and RSS. The results was different from that of Bridgestock and Vamnozzi (2013) which shows that Pinterest was among the entertainment-based network which is highly utilized by the younger groups. It is also surprising to see how the benefit of the popular Facebook to the students’ academic practice was lowly rated.

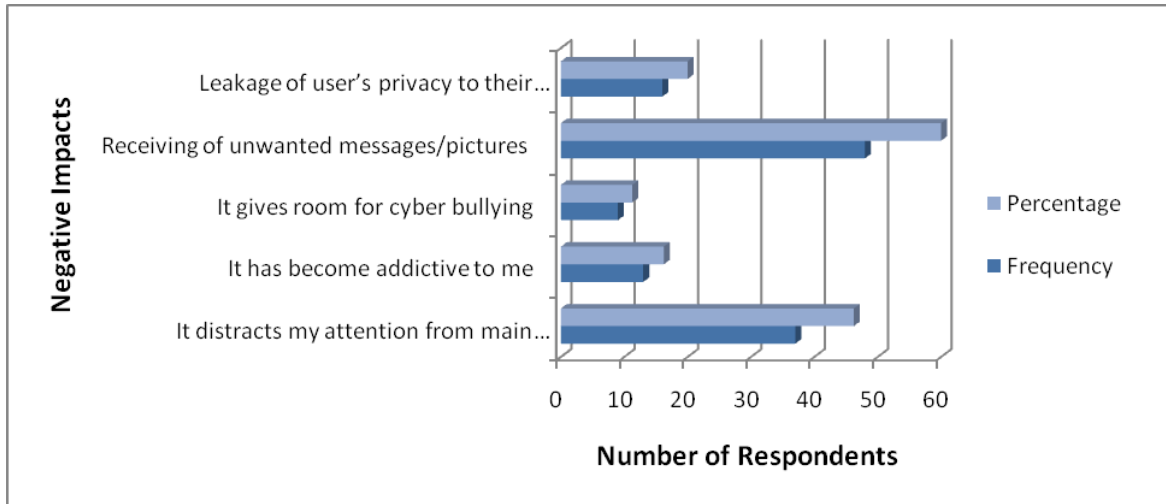
Chart 5: Problem faced by the Students using Social Media

Source: Field Study (2014)

Chart 5 show the problems faced by the science students in private university while using social media. Poor Internet connectivity has 83.75% responses while receiving unwanted messages/pictures was next with 80.00%. The least which highlighted “too many social media tools to learn” as indicated by the respondents has 12.50%. Poor Internet connectivity was discovered by the findings as the leading problem faced among others by the science students. This is not the same with the findings of Hussain, Gulrez and Tahirkheli (2012) with Khan and Bhatti (2012) which revealed that electricity failure was the leading challenges encounter from the use of social media by the science students in their studies, respectively.

Though, it was one of the problems faced as pointed out by the respondents but it is better compared to what is obtained in most public universities in Nigeria. The founders/owners of Nigerian private universities spend so much on the Internet connectivity while the students using the facilities expect the Internet services to be available 24 Hours based on the huge amount (school fees) paid by their parents. Again, receiving unwanted messages/pictures while using social media which could be from friends, colleagues and families members sometimes distracts them from their studies which if not carefully handled could have a negative influence on their academic programmes.

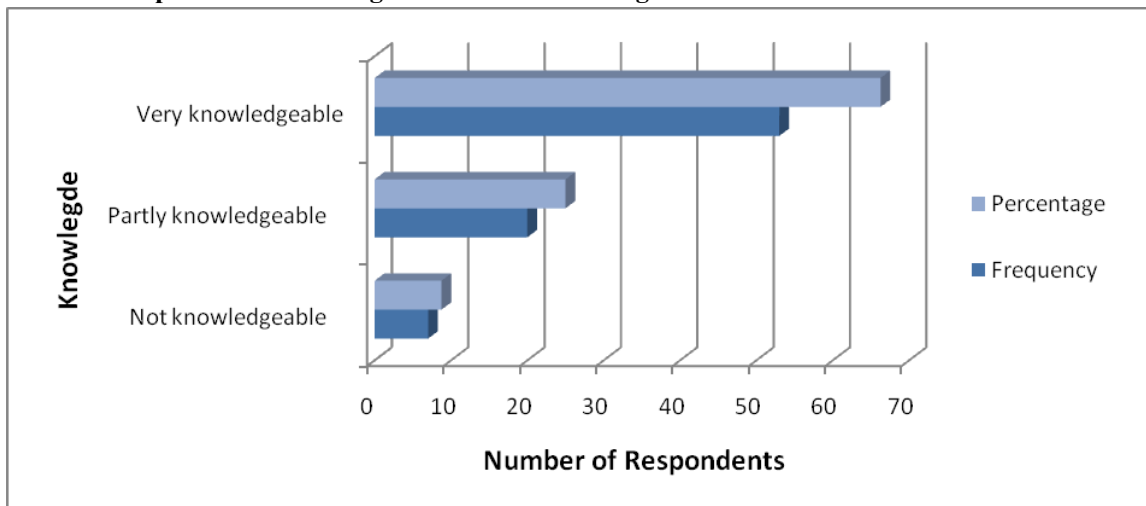
Chart 6: Negative Impacts



Source: Field Study (2014)

Chart 6 above presented the negative impacts of social media on the students. The respondents indicated that receiving of unwanted messages/pictures with 60.00% is the most negative impact of social media followed by 46.25% of them who believed that it distracts students' attention from main classroom activities while only 11.25% of the respondents show it gives room for cyber bullying. As the use of social media is very much beneficial, it also has negative impacts as receiving of unwanted messages/pictures was the leading factor on the science students of ABUAD and JABU. This could disturb as well as make such students to be restless to the extents of losing concentration in his /her studies. The distraction of the students' attention from main classroom activities as earlier stated agreed with the findings of Lederer (2012) on the impact of social media.

Chart 7: Respondents knowledge in Social Media Usage



Source: Field Study (2014)

As indicated in Chart 7, 66.25% of the respondents are very knowledgeable and 60.00% are partly knowledgeable in the use of social media while only 8.75% are not knowledgeable. This implies that majority of the science students in private universities are knowledgeable when it comes to the use and application of social media in communicating, sharing information and interacting with one another within and outside the academic environments.

Conclusion

This paper investigates the use of social media for academic practices by science students in two selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Given the wide impact of social media technologies on our lives and the continued change they have brought worldwide, one can hardly imagine a citizen of the modern world without social media relevance. Our study found nothing to the contrary as nearly all the science students in the private universities surveyed use social media especially the mainstream Facebook. It is desired that social media become integrated into the learning process just like in other climes so that Nigerian university students can take full advantage of the new platform of social interaction and maximize the Internet for effective learning in this Web 2.0 era.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore made from the findings of the study:

- i. Poor Internet connectivity which constitutes the major problems faced by the students using social media should be a thing of concern for the owners of private institutions and the Nigerian government by looking at a best way of improving the Internet services.
- ii. Lecturers should create their own blog and post some information that will be of beneficial effects to their students, thereby engaging students on social media platforms to make academic gains of students' addiction to social media.
- iii. There should be a law making the use of phone and other mobile devices by students during lectures to be an offence, which will attract punishment so as to avoid being distracted from classroom activities through the use of social media.
- iv. Tertiary institutions should organize a seminar to enlighten students on the use, applications, and negative effects of social media to student's academic practices.

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