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**Social Network Sites' Influence on Undergraduates' Academic Activities in Colleges of Education in Lagos State**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Social Networking Sites (SNSs) have created a new dimension to the way individuals communicate and increase their social connectivity with others. Similarly, this medium could be employed as a forum to interact with fellow students and lecturers. The study sought to examine how SNSs use has influenced academic activities and communication patterns among undergraduates in Colleges of Education in Lagos State. Two Research questions and one hypothesis guided the study, using descriptive survey research design. Population comprised an estimated 12,000 students in all the Public Colleges of Education in Lagos State. Multistage sampling, using proportionate, stratified random sampling techniques was used to select a sample size of 311 undergraduates from all the three public Colleges of Education. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage, mean scores and ANOVA. The study found that SNSs have influenced communication patterns among undergraduates positively, although its full potentials were yet to be optimally explored in academics. The calculated F-value of 0.069 was found not to be significant as it was less than the critical value of 2.63, given 2 and 308 degrees of freedom, at 0.05 level of significance. The single null hypothesis was thus accepted, implying congruity in the use of SNSs among the Colleges and appropriate recommendations were made.*

**Keywords:** Social Network Sites, Undergraduates, Method, Colleges of Education, Academic Activities, Communication patterns.

**INTRODUCTION**

Information Communication Technology (ICT), (of which social network sites are included), has helped to expand communication methods and expose learners to alternative means of reaching out and interacting with their peers. Thierer (2002) submitted that the role of technology in teaching and learning is rapidly becoming one of the most important and widely discussed issues in contemporary education policy. Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Iyamu (2005) reported that most experts in the field of education agree that, when properly used, ICT holds great promise to improve teaching and learning, in addition to shaping workforce opportunities.

In terms of communication, ICT refers to the different types of technological tools and resources used to communicate and create, disseminate, store and manage information. Computer systems, audio and video cassettes, television, Radio, along with handheld devices like smartphones and tablets are some of the technological tools used for communication. Out of these tools of communication, the smartphones are the most convenient and relatively affordable device used by undergraduates in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Smartphones enable easy connection to the internet via the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) service providers. Undergraduates find it convenient to pay for internet

subscription in order to use the applications on their smartphone. Such internet-enabled smartphone can then be used to access the social network sites. This study is focusing on the use of these handheld devices, among others, as communication and academic tools.

Different types of online platforms exist in the social media that people use to engage others in social relations through the communication media. SNS, or social media includes all socialization and networking activities conducted online using texts, pictures and videos for communication. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) see it as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the Web 2.0 and allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. This should then enable the creation of highly interactive platforms through which people can co-create, discuss and even modify the user-generated content. SNSs was defined by Boyd and Ellison (2007) as web-based services that, within a bounded system, enable individuals to construct a semi-profile and articulate a list of other users with whom they share connections and views. Asogwa, Onoja & Ojih (2015) perceived SNSs as an online community of internet users who want to communicate with other users about areas of mutual interest. SNSs such as Facebook, BlackBerry Messenger (BBM), e-mail, twitter, 2go, google+, flickr, instagram, linkedin, MySpace, and WhatsApp, among others, have become an established part of the online environment that enables individuals, institutions and organizations to maintain and view their social networks. Helou and Ab.Rahim (2014) observed that most common users of SNSs, who are called 'Digital Natives' are students in higher education. It is therefore obvious that the media has a high implication for teaching-learning exchanges between students and their lecturers, or among the student population. SNS supports and encourages people to learn together under their own terms, with the advantage of flexibility, as they get to decide who they interact with, the time, space, as well as other conveniences (Helou & Ab.Rahim op cit). These platforms can be put to different uses and

serve as a huge resource for education, apart from networking, it has huge potential for teaching (Khan, 2012). It can be used to share information, ideas, knowledge, pictures and even lifestyle and other experiences, and usually with others who share similar tastes, interests or backgrounds (Onasanya, Yahya, Akingbemisilu, & Ayelaagbe (2013). It can be used to circulate information to a wide audience and pose questions that can be answered by anyone in the media circle. It can also be used to keep people abreast of occurrences and developments, and can be a powerful tool in academia, if used correctly. SNS can thus be used to educate, entertain, or inform. A study conducted in the University of Minnesota on the educational benefits of using SNSs by students found that it was fulfilling the original intention of getting students to acquire the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that will make them successful in the modern world, but warns however, that they should be encouraged to use it positively (Greenhow, 2008). Greenhow suggests that educators can help students realize even more benefits from their social network site use by working to deepen students' still emerging ideas about what it means to be a good digital citizen and leader online.

The use of electronic handheld devices and Smartphones by individuals is a common feature in homes, buses, parks, social events, institutions and other gatherings. The usage of these smartphones transcends making calls and sending messages alone. It also involves chatting, surfing the internet, reading documents, checking mails, and updating Facebook statuses. In the education industry, communication is important in the process of training and passing across instructions to the learners. Various methods are explored to pass across instructions to the learners before they are tested to ascertain their academic achievement. Kuku (2016) says that tests and examinations are used to measure students' cognition after exposing them to specific lessons or instructions. It is thus prudent to note that SNS can be used as a learning platform and method of interaction between students and lecturers to achieve their learning objective.

In general, benefits typically associated with the use of social media have included encouraging greater social interaction via electronic mediums, providing greater access to information and information sources. It also encourages creativity among and between individuals and groups, creating a sense of belonging among users of common social media tools, and providing more choices to promote engagement among different individuals and groups, while also reducing barriers to group interaction and communications created by distance and socio-economic status. It equally increases the technological competency levels of frequent users of social media. (Mozee, 2012; Zwart, Lindsay, Henderson, & Phillips, 2011; Rosen, 2011). Though SNSs are already used to socialize among students, this can be expanded to influence their communication patterns in academic use for group discussion, assignment, and lecturers' information dissemination. Some of the media allow for pictures and others only texts, which can be used to circulate information to a wide audience and pose questions that can be answered by anyone in the media circle. Some students use the computer while others access via handheld mobile phone devices with internet connectivity. Claywell (2016) lists advantages of using the social networking sites as including worldwide connectivity, using it to network for business and academics; to access news and share information in real time, and generally to interact with others with shared interests. He further lists disadvantages to include oversharing, cyber bullying, crimes against children, risks of fraud and identity theft, and one might add 'trolling' (when people use the anonymity provided by cyber space to say things they probably will not say face to face). However, the extent to which students employ the use of SNSs during their academic activities for communication is the focus of this study. Academic activities include all interaction among students and their Lecturers for purposes of learning and achieving their academic goals. It includes what SNSs are used for in the course of achieving their educational objectives, (like using

SNS for group assignments, contact for information, group chats. etc).

The presence of SNSs may have made people more social and interactive with others, without necessarily meeting face-to-face. Although, users of social networking engage in varieties of meaningful activities, some of them employ the facilities for questionable and fraudulent practices (Onasanya et al; op cit), but many new users subscribe to the networks on daily basis for the purpose of collaborating with others around the world. In tertiary institutions, Ellison (2008) noted that SNSs are used as an organizing tool that provide the fora where students create groups to reach out to members, share information, learn about campus events, and mobilize support and action. He however warns against allowing it to cause distraction in classrooms. The typical undergraduate nowadays is tech savvy and they are less *technophobes*, as everyone seems to have embraced the inevitability of the technological age. This is in contrast to earlier findings that undergraduates have not embraced technology as Bakare (2007) found that the level of computer awareness and usage was low among university undergraduates. Most are now familiar with and use most of the available social platform technologies.

While raising caution on the amount of time students devote to SNSs applications like Facebook, WhatsApp, Badoo, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube and video games, Jagero and Muriithi (2013) reported it can significantly impact students' academic achievement. Enikuomehin (2011) noted that University students in Nigeria who use SNSs spend less time studying and these has resulted in lower Grade Points. Besides, Suhail and Bargees (2006) opine that excessive usage of SNSs causes many psychological, physical, interpersonal and educational problems to users.

Using Social Network Sites is believed to facilitate communication among groups and can be used for different purposes. In the Colleges of Education, it is expected that the use of SNSs will facilitate communication among the students and

lecturers. Such communication should include lectures, tutorial, group studying and exchange of reading materials and lecture notes, including on-line discussions in chat rooms. This method is expected to reflect on students' academic activities and consequently on students' academic achievement. A notable number of undergraduates in Colleges of Education use smartphones with internet connections. One will expect that with such devices, undergraduates will surf the internet, download and read related materials on topics taught in class to support their lectures and interact academically. In addition, undergraduates can create a number of social networking fora to share ideas and concepts with colleagues. But, the observed trend among undergraduates in the Colleges of Education might have fallen short of these expectations. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to assess the influence of use of social network sites on undergraduates' academics and communication patterns in Colleges of Education in Lagos state.

### **Problem of the Study**

Some students engage in the use of social network sites for co-curricular activities, apart from academics. If used proactively, social media can be used to transform the education system in Nigeria. It is also not unusual to find any of these platforms being misused or abused. There is cyber-bullying, distribution of pornographic contents or exposing other people's secrets, among other negative uses. The use of SNS is one of the possible methods of enhancing communication among students, as well as between students and their lecturers in a bid to improve their academic status. The level of use of these technologies, generally as a tool to improve the teaching/learning encounter, can therefore have grave repercussions at the undergraduate level. However, researches have shown a correlation between SNS use and students' poor academic achievement, stemming from the attitude of students to their academic activities (Onasanya et al; op cit; Asogwa et al op cit) and which has brought about concern on the manner SNSs are used. If SNSs are

not used productively and for educational purposes, personal and national growth will be stunted and Nigeria will be excluded from the global technological community apart from the possible lowering of academic standards.

### **Purpose of study**

The study is to explore the level of exposure of students in Colleges of Education to technology use (especially SNSs), and what they use it for. It is specifically to establish whether their use has affected their method of communication and whether this is reflected in their academic activities.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered in the study.

1. How has the use SNSs affected undergraduates' communication patterns?
2. To what extent is the use of SNSs influence academic activities among undergraduates?

### **Research Hypothesis**

1. The use of SNSs does not significantly differ among the colleges of education.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and ex-post facto in nature. The population consisted of all undergraduates in the three government-owned Colleges of Education in Lagos State with a total estimated figure of 12,000. The targeted population were full-time undergraduates who had spent at least two semesters in the College and who used internet enabled phones.

The sample size consisted of three hundred and eleven undergraduates. The sample was selected through multistage sampling technique. All three Government-owned Colleges of Education in Lagos State were used in the study. Respondents were then proportionately selected from six Schools (two each from the three Colleges) and thereafter, simple random sampling was used to select

undergraduates from years two and three (100 level students were excluded because they were new entrants), but ensuring gender sensitivity. The

distribution of the students across Schools and Colleges are represented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Selection of Respondents in Colleges of Education in Lagos State.

College	Schools	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
A	I	24	26	50
	II	25	26	51
B	III	26	25	51
	IV	25	31	56
C	V	25	26	51
	V	24	28	52
<b>Total</b>		<b>149</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>311</b>

Figures from Table 1 shows that one hundred and forty-nine male undergraduates and one hundred and sixty-two female undergraduates constituted the total sample size of three hundred and eleven selected for the study.

Questionnaire on Social Network Sites (QSNSs) was the research instrument used to collect information from the respondents. The instrument was developed and validated by the researchers. The QSNSs had two sections (A and B). Section A was used to gather information on respondents' background such as gender, college name, level of student, School, Department, etc. Section B was designed to gather information on undergraduates' opinion on the use of SNSs for academic activities and communication purposes. The section was designed as a 4-point Likert-type scale, with Strongly Agree (SA - 4), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD - 1). Section B had fourteen statements. The QSNSs was content validated by colleagues in Business Communication unit of the Department of Accounting, School of Business and Computer Science Department in the School of

Science of the Federal College of Education (Technical), Akoka. Test-retest reliability was used to determine the stability of the instrument. A value of 0.77 was the reliability coefficient derived in the process and was deemed sufficient for the study.

The researchers administered the QSNSs to the respondents with the help of four post graduate students of the Faculty of Education in the University of Lagos as research assistants. The QSNSs were given to the selected respondents to fill and completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately with a hundred percent success rate.

#### METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**Research Question One:** How has the use of SNSs affected undergraduates' communication? To provide answer to the question, simple percentage was used. The summary of the responses and analysis are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Summary of Respondents on Communication using SNSs

<i>SN</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Agree (%)</i>	<i>Disagree (%)</i>
1	I get to know my course mates via the group chat created	93 (30%)	218 (70%)
2	The group chat created is used for communicating jokes.	180 (58%)	131 (42%)
3	Announcements on birthdays, social gathering, wedding, etc. are done on our group chat.	311 (100%)	0
4	Misunderstandings and clarifications among my colleagues are settled on our group chat.	305 (98%)	6 (2%)
5	My class uses more than one social networking platform	140 (45%)	171 (55%)
6	I feel bored having to press my phone frequently	90 (29%)	221 (71%)
<b>Mean Score</b>		<b>187 (60%)</b>	<b>124 (40%)</b>

Figures from Table 2 show that 30 per cent (93) of the respondents agreed with statement one which stated that "I get to know my course mates via the group chat created" while 70 per cent (218) respondents disagreed. The response to statement 2 showed that 58 per cent (180) and 42 per cent (131) of the respondents agreed and disagreed respectively with the statement that the group chat created was used for communicating jokes.

Statement 3 from Table 2 also shows that all the respondents agreed that announcements on birthdays, social gathering, wedding, etc. were done on their group chats. Data presented in respect of statement 4 showed that 98 per cent (305) of the respondents agreed that misunderstandings and clarifications among their colleagues were settled on their group chats while 2 per cent (6) disagreed.

Likewise, responses of the students to the fifth statement on the Table revealed that 45 per cent (140) of the respondents agreed that their classes used more than one social networking platform while 55 per cent (177) disagreed. Regarding statement 6, 71 per cent (211) of the respondents disagreed that they feel bored having to use their phones frequently while 29 per cent (90) of the respondents agreed. The mean score response showed that 60% (187) of the respondents agreed that the SNSs affected their communication patterns while 40% (124) disagreed.

**Research Question Two:** To what extent is the use of SNSs influencing academic activities among undergraduates? The summary of the responses and analysis were presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Summary of Respondents on using SNSs for academic purposes

<i>SN</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
7	I have the option of submitting my project/assignment via my email for my lecturer/supervisor to assess.	6 (2%)	305 (98%)
8	Lectures/tutorials are announced on the group chat platform	277 (89%)	34 (11%)
9	Interactions on topics and concepts taught are discussed in the group chat	121 (39%)	190 (61%)
10	The group chart is usually used to remind members of test/examination	159 (51%)	152 (49%)
11	I am always with my phone while studying	239 (77%)	72 (23%)
12	My class has a reading group and time sent to colleagues via SNSs	193 (62%)	118 (38%)
13	My phone has been a source of distraction due to calls and chats whenever I'm studying.	183 (59%)	128 (41%)
14	Lecture materials are shared via SNSs	131 (42%)	180 (58%)
<b>Mean Score</b>		<b>164 (53%)</b>	<b>147 (47%)</b>

From the result presented in Table 3, 2 per cent (6) of the respondents agreed with statement 7 which states that "I have the option of submitting my project/assignment via my email for my lecturer/supervisor to assess" while 98 per cent (305) respondents disagreed. The response to statement 8 showed that 89 per cent (277) and 11 per cent (34) of the respondents agreed and disagreed respectively with the statement that lectures are announced on the group chat platform.

Data presented in respect of statement 9 showed that 39 per cent (121) of the respondents agreed that interactions on topics and concepts taught were discussed in the group chats while 61 per cent (190) on the respondents disagreed. Besides, responses of the students to the tenth statement on the table revealed that 51 per cent (159) of the respondents agreed that the group chat was usually used to remind members of test/examination, while 49 per cent (152) of the respondents disagreed.

Regarding statement 11, 77 per cent (239) of the respondents agreed with the opinion that they were always with their phones while studying. However, 23 per cent (72) of the respondents

disagreed. With respect to statement 12, 62 per cent (193) of the respondents agreed that their classes had reading groups and time sent to colleagues via SNSs while 38 per cent (118) of the respondents disagreed.

Statement 13 had 59 per cent (183) and 41 per cent (128) of the respondents that agreed and disagreed respectively with the statement that their phones had been a source of distraction due to calls and chats whenever they were studying. Lastly, statement 14 has 42 per cent (131) of the respondents agreeing with the statement that lecture materials were shared via SNSs, but 58 per cent (180) of the respondents agreed with the statement. In summary, 53% (164) agreed that SNSs influenced academic activities among undergraduates while 47% (147) disagreed.

The use of SNSs does not significantly differ among the colleges of education. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test if there was any significant difference in the perception of undergraduates towards SNSs in the Colleges of Education. The result of analysis was presented in Tables 4 and 5.

**Table 4:** Descriptive statistics of the use of SNSs in Colleges of Education Students

College	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
A	101	28.28	9.13
B	107	28.36	8.54
C	103	28.72	9.32
Total	311	28.45	8.97

Observations from Table 4 shows that Schools A, B and C had mean values of 28.28, 28.36 and 28.72. Likewise, the standard deviation for Schools A, B, and C were 9.13, 8.54 and 9.32

respectively. In order to determine the significance of the mean obtained from the colleges of education students, the ANOVA was used. The result was presented in Table 5.

**Table 5:** ANOVA of Respondents on SNSs in Colleges of Education

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.216	2	5.608		
Within Groups	24931.858	308	80.948	.069	.933
Total	24943.074	310			

\*Significant at 0.05; ns = Not Significant; F-critical at 0.05 (2, 308) = 2.63

Table 5 revealed that 0.69 was derived as difference in the use of SNSs among the Colleges of Education. The calculated F-value of 0.069 was not significant since it was less than the critical value of 2.63, given 2 and 308 degrees of freedom, at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implied that the use of SNSs does not significantly differ among the colleges of education students.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question One: How has the use of SNSs affected undergraduates' communication patterns? The reactions of the respondents showed that undergraduates adopted various SNSs as media through which information was shared among their colleagues. The study also revealed that undergraduates got excited using the smartphone often. In summary, the SNSs seemed to have improved communication patterns among the students. This study aligns with findings of Jagero and Muriithi (2013) who reported that students spend long periods of time on SNSs. The finding also aligns with the outcome of the study conducted by Mozee (2012) on the impact of social media use on academic performance at one urban university. The researcher confirmed the high usage of social media among College students. In addition, the finding is in line with the findings of Ahmed and Qazi (2011), who reported that students were more inclined towards non-academic activities when conducting their study on "a look out for academic impacts of Social networking sites".

Research Questions Two: To what extent has the use of SNSs influenced academic activities among undergraduates? The respondents' reaction to items raised under this question showed that SNSs (such as e-mails, etc) were not used in the submission of assignment and projects; lecture materials were also not submitted via the SNSs. Besides, the smartphones caused distractions for students during studies, and SNSs were not fully exploited as a form of interaction when new topics and concepts were taught. However, SNSs were

seen as a good platform to remind students of tutorial classes, lectures, tests and examinations and for other social interactions. In summary, the full potential of SNSs use have not been fully exploited for academic purposes among undergraduates in Colleges of education in Lagos State. The finding aligns with the outcome of the study conducted by Enikuomehin (2011) who observed that University students in Nigeria who use SNSs spent less time studying, and these has resulted in lower Grade Point. Also, Onyeka, Sajoh and Bulus (2013), while confirming that Facebook was the most used SNS by students, agreed that it was used more for social interaction than academic purposes. Furthermore, Asogwa et al, op cit., observed that the utilization of social media by students of tertiary institutions in Kogi State portends both beneficial results of the uses and gratifications highlighted in their study, which show that Facebook had a significant positive influence on, and limited danger to, the academic performance of students. The study equally revealed that lecturers do not use the social media much to promote teaching/learning encounters. Onasanya et al, op cit., reported a significant relationship between the academic achievement of students who spent more time on social networking sites and those who spend less time. However, the finding contrasted with Jagero and Muriithi (2013) who reported that students were efficient enough in meeting their studies despite spending time on SNSs. Also, in another study conducted by Helou and Ab.Rahim (2014) on the influence of social networking sites on students' academic performance in Malaysia, the researchers found out that majority of respondents agreed that social networking sites had a positive impact on their academic performance. Care must be taken though, that, while promoting the use of social media generally, the negative side must also be considered, as frequent use may make students antisocial by encouraging less of human contact, and even negatively affect their academics, especially when they become addicted to its use. This type of opinion could have led to Suhail and Bargees (2006)'s observation that excessive usage on SNSs may



cause psychological, physical, interpersonal and educational problems to users.

Hypothesis 1: The use of SNSs does not significantly differ among the Colleges of Education. The result of the findings showed that the use of SNSs does not significantly differ between the Colleges of Education. The calculated value .69 derived as difference in the use of SNSs among the colleges of education was not found to be significant since it is less than the critical value of 2.63. This revealed a similarity in the method of use of SNSs by the different Colleges. The study however showed a progression from Bakare (2007)'s finding over a decade ago that students were not as familiar with the computer and e-learning at the time.

## CONCLUSION

The study has shown that SNSs influenced the communication patterns among undergraduates in the Colleges of Education. The students employed various SNSs as a channel to share information among their colleagues, though less academic in nature. Besides, SNSs was not optimally employed by undergraduates in the Colleges of Education. The time spent by students on social network sites was not largely for academic activities. In addition, the finding showed no significant difference in the use of SNSs among undergraduates in the Colleges of Education. There is no doubt that SNSs have come to stay and there is need to embrace the potentials for use for academic purposes in order to raise individual capabilities as well as for global compliance to engender personal and national development in the nation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. SNSs applications should be incorporated as a tool of communication for transmitting academic instruction to undergraduates in the Colleges of Education. This will enable undergraduates optimize the benefits of the SNSs.
2. Undergraduates should be exposed to basic training and sustained counseling on the use of phones and time management. Such training should be aimed at assisting undergraduates to efficiently manage their time and maintain other phone etiquettes.
3. Lecturers should play their mentoring role more. This could be achieved when lecturers are members of the group chat or even web hosts. The lecturer could mentor the group on ways the undergraduates can employ SNSs in their academics. The mentorship can include concept discussion, sending and receiving assignment/project via email, among others. This, of course precludes the necessity for adequate training for the lecturers themselves as many are still not SNS compliant.

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