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THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION LITERACY IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING

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Abstract

Social media and information literacy do not only involve accessing information and having social connections but also ascertain the dependability, trustworthiness, and pertinence of sources to discern facts, identify biases and false news, which are vital for student participation in these digital information environments when the option to enter a library is low amongst the given user to clear up misconceptions and build knowledge. It goes without saying that a descriptive research design was used for this study. The instrument used was a self-structured instrument on the influence of social media platforms on student engagement and information literacy in a university setting, a questionnaire on a 4 Likert scale format consisting of 20 items presented to produce data. Before we accepted it for use, the instrument was given to three experts in educational technology for validation purposes, and it met construct validity. A reliability index value of 0.893 was received through the Cronbach Alpha reliability method applied to ascertain the instrument's reliability. A chi-square test of independence was conducted to test the study hypotheses at a .05 level of significance. The results of the study show that there is no significant difference between the IL skills of university students who use social media for academic purposes and their counterparts who use social media for non-academic

Keywords: Social Media, Student engagement, Literacy, University Setting.

Introduction

The introduction of the Internet in the 1990s resulted in a major shift in communication processes worldwide, leading to the advent of social networking/media sites. The establishment of these social networks has revolutionized the world of communication and today, its use has been celebrated across education, entertainment, and other sectors of the world economy. Social network/media sites allow individual users to create a public or semi-public profile within a system, list other users with whom they are connected, and view and navigate both their own and other users' connections (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social media platforms typically supports posting updates, sharing images and videos, commenting, liking or reacting to posts, messaging, and following or subscribing to other users' profiles or pages. These features have become the primary ways that people can get information, learn new skills, and have fun. Social media is an umbrella term covering technologies that allow people to create, send, link, and connect with others in addition to providing information in any area of life (Angus, Thelwall & Stuart, 2008; Lewis, 2010).

Today, there are billions of people on social media platforms daily with a large percentage of them the youth (Anderson & Jaing, 2018). Howard and Park (2012) define three primary components regarding the nature of social media: a) infrastructure and tools concerning the creation and sharing of content; b) content itself (encompassing ideas, concepts, messages, information, and news); and c) decoders, or users and consumers—businesses, organizations, and individuals that provide spaces for people to create and transmit content, as well as the possibility to link up and connect with others. Apart from this, social media benefit is the ability of social media to adapt and communicate information on social platforms through the use of web-based technology. Utilizing social media in the university has several benefits, such as strengthening bonds, boosting motivation, providing individualized course materials, and fostering teamwork. This suggests that social media, especially when used by introverted students, can increase student participation in the classroom. Students who work in virtual learning groups can do so with less or no fear of having to ask questions before their classmates in person. (Fatokun, 2019).

Information literacy is the set of abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning. It includes skills, knowledge, and critical thinking to navigate systems of information and ultimately make informed decisions about using information effectively and responsibly. The concept of information literacy goes beyond simply accessing information. It encompasses the capacity to determine the reliability, credibility, and relevance of sources, to differentiate between fact and opinion, and to recognize biases and misinformation. Information literacy empowers individuals to ask thoughtful questions, analyze information critically, and apply it effectively to their specific needs and contexts (Ilogho & Nkiko, 2014)

Information literacy is extremely important for higher education institutions, there is recognition for its vital role in human daily lives. Since the information revolution has greatly expanded the capacity to obtain and use information from a variety of sources, including electronically published information, societies must possess certain skills beyond reading and writing to make the most of these resources. Research affirms that multi-skilled learners who can think critically, and solve problems, could develop into independent, lifelong learners that are required in society, (El Hassasni, 2015). When it comes to finding relevant material and assessing the reliability of sources for assignments, a lot of university students have difficulties with information literacy. Current students should know how to do research and be on their own in the online info world nowadays when there is little to no need to go to a library in person or talk to teachers to get rid of wrong ideas and make knowledge stronger. Academic work is a key part of a good college education that focuses on info skills which help students connect to smart thinking. (Kim & Shumaker, 2015; MacPherson, 2004; Tumbleson & Burke, 2013).

Due to the rising need for digital technologies, educators now have the chance to create real-world learning resources that are tailored to the needs of the students (Monahan McArdle & Bertolotto, 2008). The influence of social media on university students cannot be overemphasized which includes Communication and Connection, information and news, academics and skill acquisition, personal development, entertainment, mental wellbeing, etc. Hence the use of social media platforms to impact students' behaviour is essential to developing the information literacy skills they possess by helping individuals handle the plethora of information available, assess sources critically, and decide which content to

consume and share with others. When students possess strong information literacy skills, they approach social media platforms more critically and responsibly. Information literacy affects students' use of social media in the following ways:

- 1) **Source evaluation:** Information literacy skills help students evaluate the credibility and reliability of the information they encounter on social media. They assess the authority, accuracy, and bias of the content shared on these platforms. This critical evaluation enables them to make more informed decisions about the information they consume and share thereby reducing the likelihood of spreading misinformation or falling victim to inaccurate content knowledge and skills.
- 2) **Media literacy:** Information literacy encompasses media literacy, which involves understanding the media's messages, techniques, and potential effects. Students with information literacy skills enable them to analyze the persuasive techniques used in social media posts, advertisements, and news articles, allowing them to recognize potential biases, propaganda, or clickbait. This could assist them to cultivate a more nuanced knowledge of the content they encounter and avoid being swayed by false or misleading information.
- 3) **Privacy and security:** Information literacy skills also is an understanding of online privacy and security. Students who are information literate are more likely to be aware of the risks associated with sharing personal information on social media platforms and can take appropriate measures to protect their privacy. They critically evaluate privacy settings, understand the implications of data collection practices, and make informed decisions about what information they choose to share online.
- 4) **Digital citizenship:** Information literacy skills enhance digital citizenship. Students can learn to engage with social media platforms ethically, respectfully, and responsibly. They understand the importance of verifying information before sharing, using appropriate language and tone, respecting others' privacy and intellectual property, and engaging in constructive discussions online. This fosters a healthier and more positive social media environment for themselves and others (Al Zou'bi, 2022).

The educational system is faced with many challenges which have led to a quick decline in quality. Among social networking activities and the academic work of students, attention is diverged and dissipated. This has proven that students spend more time using social media for non-academic purposes than on their studies (Apuke, 2016). It has been observed that students choose social media rather than their studies, and the levels of exposure and addiction to different platforms vary. The way in which social media serves as a tool of interaction between students will also be assessed for its effects on academic work. The information literacy problem about social media emerges based on possible misinformation and manipulation with little critical reading skills on the part of their users.

The crux of the matter revolves around the pervasive utilization of social media platforms as primary outlets for information. These platforms have emerged as significant conduits for news, viewpoints, and other forms of content propagation. Nevertheless, the widespread availability of information on social media has also presented several challenges. The proliferation of misinformation is a critical issue that has been facilitated by social media platforms. These platforms have enabled the rapid dissemination of information, including content that is inaccurate, misleading, or false. Unfortunately, many users lack the essential skills required to assess the reliability of sources, which results in the inadvertent spread of erroneous information. This phenomenon poses significant risks to individuals and society at large, as false

information can significantly impact opinions, influence decisions, and perpetuate harmful narratives. This study the influence of social media platforms on student engagement and information literacy in university Setting aims to investigate the relationship between social media platforms, student engagement, and information literacy within the specific context of a university. While the research may not directly solve the entire problem, it will contribute to understanding the dynamics between social media, student engagement, and information literacy, thereby informing potential solutions and interventions.

Purpose of the study:

- 1) Identify the effect of information literacy skills on students who use social media for academic and those that use social media for non-academic purposes.
- 2) Investigate the effects of the duration of social media usage per day and students' information literacy skills on consumed knowledge.

Research hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the information literacy skills of university students who primarily use social media for academic purposes compared to those who primarily use it for non-academic purposes.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the duration of social media usage per day and students' information literacy skills on knowledge consumed for academic purposes.

Research Methodology

This study makes use of a descriptive survey design. Descriptive design is feasible for this study since it helps in the collection, organization, analysis, and presentation of data to give an account of an event concerning a sample of people. The study population comprised the students of Lagos State University of Education, LASUED, Lagos State. A simple random sampling technique was used to choose 100 respondents from the target population, spread over seven colleges in the university. Data were collected with the aid of a self-structured Questionnaire, set at a 4-Likert scale format, to draw responses from the respondents. Questionnaire copies were handed to three lecturers in the Department of Educational Technology from the institution to validate the instrument, after which construct and content validity were achieved. In order to check for reliability within the instrument, a Cronbach Alpha reliability test was carried out, yielding a value of the index of reliability of 0.893, thus rendering the instrument suitable for the study. The Chi-square inferential statistic tool was used to test the research hypotheses at a level of significance of 0.05.

Results

Demographic Data

FIG 1. Gender

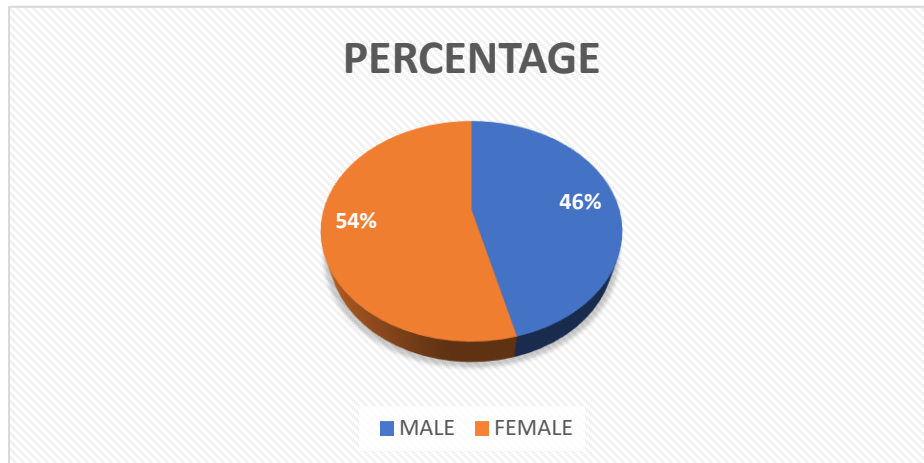


FIG. 2. Colleges

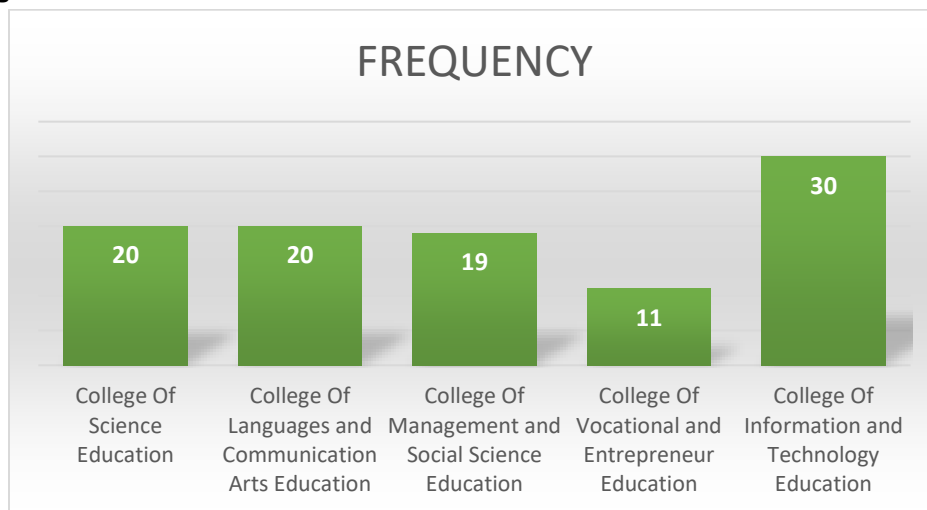


Fig. 3: Time spent on social media daily

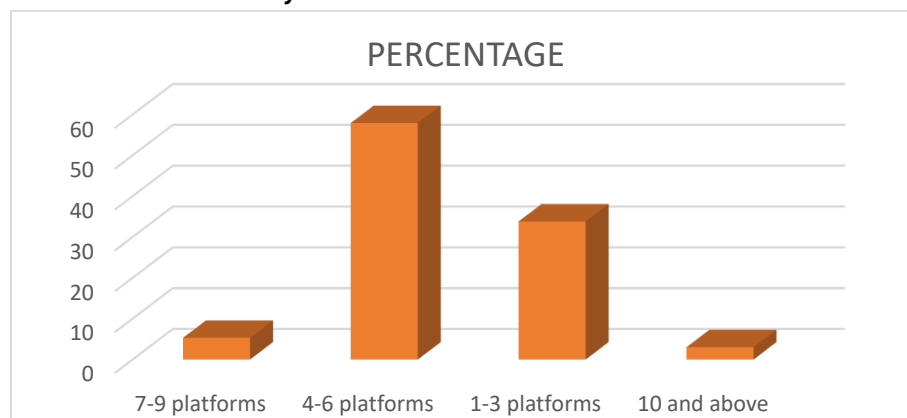


Fig. 4: Use of social media for academic purpose

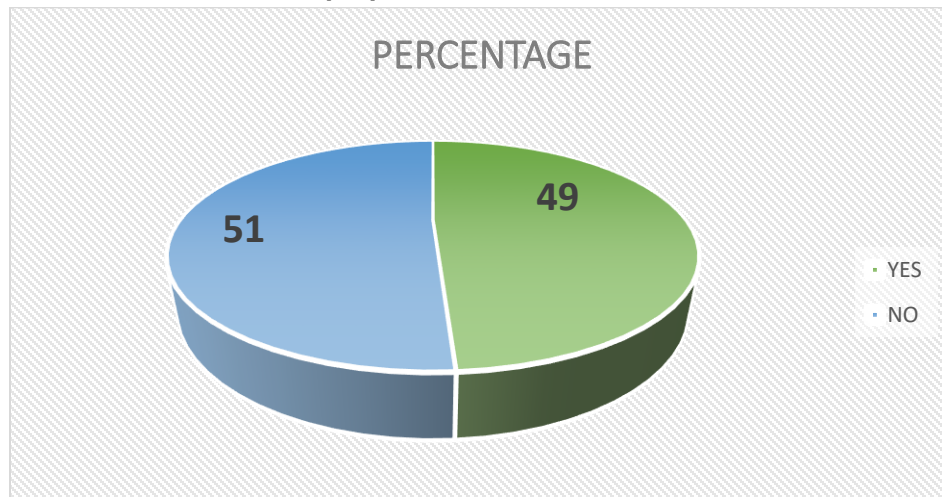
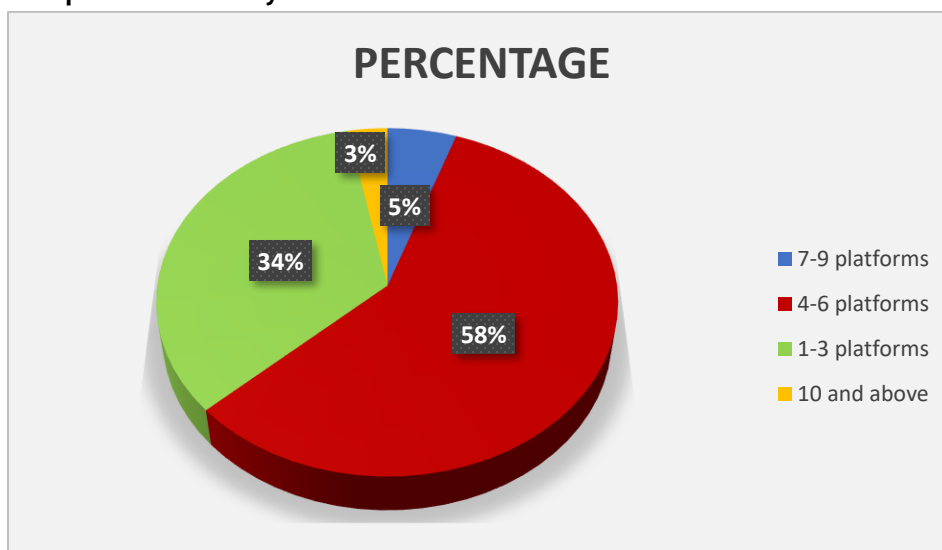


Fig.5: Social media platform used by students



Hypothesis One

H₀: There is no significant difference in the information literacy skills of university students who use social media primarily for academic purposes compared to those who use it primarily for non-academic purposes.

TABLE 1.1

	Do you use social media platforms for academic purposes	
	Yes	No
ILSAP Strongly Disagree	0	2
Disagree	20	22
Agree	23	22
Strongly Agree	6	5

TABLE 1.2. Pearson Chi-Square Tests

		Do you use social media platforms for academic purposes
ILSAP	Chi-square	2.169
	Df	3
	Sig.	.538

Interpretation

Since the calculated value 0.534 from Table 1.2 above is significantly higher than the significance value of 0.05, the null hypothesis which holds that there is no significant difference in the information literacy skills of university students who primarily use social media for academic purposes and those who primarily use it for non-academic purposes is not to be rejected.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between the duration of social media usage per day and students' information literacy skills on knowledge consumed for academic purposes.

TABLE 2.1

		Duration spent per day on social media platforms?			
		1-3 hours	4-6 hours	7-9 hours	10 hours and above
		Count	Count	Count	Count
ILSCK	Strongly Disagree	1	5	3	2
	Disagree	12	14	14	5
	Agree	9	11	7	13
	Strongly Agree	0	2	0	2

TABLE 2.2

Pearson Chi-Square Tests		
		Duration spent per day on social media platforms?
ILSCK	Chi-square	12.044
	Df	9
	Sig.	.211

Interpretation

Since the (P) calculated value .211 from table 2.2 above is significantly higher than the significance value of .05, the null hypothesis which holds no significant difference between the amount of time students spend on social media each day and their information literacy skills regarding the information they consume is not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Regarding hypothesis one which indicated that there is no such thing as a significant difference between the information literacy skills of university students who use social media primarily for academic purposes contrasted against those who use it for non-academic purposes, there is no difference regarding how

information is processed by students depending on which is their primary reason for using social media/networking sites. As noted in a study by Oluwaseye and Oyetola (2018) finding a positive correlation between information literacy skills and the use of social media by secondary school students in Ibadan, Nigeria this carries that students with better information literacy skills are more likely to use social media appropriately for social and academic purposes. It further indicates that students will use social media platforms for both academic and non-academic purposes, irrespective of their information literacy skills. A study by Zai et al finds that since social media networks help individuals develop in all spheres of life and thrive in the modern times, it is impossible to ban them from using it for a particular purpose.

Hypothesis two states that there is no difference between the time spent on social media per day and the information literacy skills of students on consumed information. The study by Lawanson et al. (2016) revealed that across all disciplines, students generally gave 1-3 hours for their various activities, which includes studying and online activities. However, time devoted to social media activities is more than time devoted to exclusive academic activity. According to Tantarangsee, Kosarussawadee and Sukwises (2017) Social media has become an inevitable component of our routine and educational environments. The data indicates that a sizable portion of students utilize social media. However, an in-depth review of social media-based activities indicates that receptive language skills rather than productive ones are prioritized. This is in line with research findings that indicate the volume of knowledge assimilated for academic work is not proportional to the time spent on social media platforms.

Conclusion

The study draws the following conclusions. First, the study indicated that information literacy skills do not significantly influence the purposes for which students use social media platforms, whether for academic or non-academic reasons. Second, the research findings suggest that the time spent on social media does not necessarily correlate with the amount of academic information consumed. A crucial implication that arises from these observations is that rather than condemning the use of social media for academic purposes, there should be a concerted effort to enhance the information literacy skills of students. This shift in emphasis holds the potential to positively impact the effective integration of social media into academic pursuits.

Recommendations

This study recommends that:

- 1) Digital literacy programs should be developed and implemented for undergraduates, focusing on enhancing critical thinking, source evaluation, and effective information consumption skills.
- 2) Encourage school administrators to incorporate social media platforms into academic activities, fostering a positive and purposeful use that aligns with academic goals.
- 3) Encourage collaboration between information literacy educators, technology specialists, and subject-matter experts to develop interdisciplinary approaches to digital literacy education.

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