A Thoughtful Overview of Social Media Usage among students and its Impact on their Academic Work

Abstract

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. It allows users to converse and interact with each other, to create, edit and share new forms of textual, visual and audio content. Social media has started creating a negative impact by permeating today's society with millions of us engrossed, unhealthy addiction, in the latest happenings via apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and so on. With technology booming rapidly from year to year, and the younger generations are the ones caught in this rapid change, it is, therefore, crucial to throw more light on the impact of social media on the academic performance of students.

Keywords: Social media, education, social networking sites

Introduction

Social Media is the platforms that give individuals the opportunity to interact, using two-way communications; meaning, that anyone who has online accounts can share their opinions with other social media users. In view of AntonSon and Wendels (2009) there are two types of social media users; digital natives and digital immigrants. They explained that the digital natives are the ones who were born after 1980, they came to this world when the digital media existed. However, AntonSon and Wendels (2009) further explained that digital immigrants are the ones who were born before 1980 and adapted their lives to digital media.

Social network site (SNS) is a web-based service which allows people to sign up in a bounded system, articulating group of people within the same system so as to share personal or academic-related information (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). It is believed that social media platforms vary from Web blogs, to micro-sharing platforms, to live streams to social networks and much more (AntonSon and Wendels, 2009). Social media has been utilized in so many different ways

days' social media platforms are places where people connect and share common issues relating to academics, politics, relationship or sports. With social media platforms serving as modern technology in communication has turned the entire world into a "It helps people to be better informed, enlightened, and keeping abreast with world developments. Social networking sites including Twitter, Yahoo Messenger, Facebook Messenger, Blackberry Messenger (BBM), Whats app messenger, 2go messenger, Skype, Google talk, Google Messenger are technologies that expose mankind to a better way of doing things.

However, Social network sites have attracted considerable attention among scholars and educators due to the growing popularity among students and the potential effect on academic performance. Technology like two sides of a coin, bring with it both negative and positive sides. Proponents argue that it allows users in connecting people of common interest and value while opponents claim that excessive use of these sites affects the social, mental and physical health of the users.

The Concept of Social Media

Social media refers to the means of interaction among people in which they create, share, exchange and comment among themselves in different networks. Social media is a phrase being tossed around a lot. Many are with the belief that the term social media does not have a clear definition, however, when one platform emerged, that gave people an opportunity to be content creators, controllers and transparent users, to a great extent that platform is termed as social media. In another school of thought, Kietzmannn (2012) suggested social media is that means that employs mobile and web-based technology to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and community share, co-create, discuss and modifies user-generated content. It is a website that does not just give you information but interact with you while giving you information. On social media platform, once the content is shared, it becomes a conversation, because all users who have accounts on that social media platform can interact with all posts (Moran, Seaman and Tinti-Kane, 2011). It is a group of internet-based application that allows the creation and exchange of users generated content. In research by Hartshorn (2010) he asserted that social media is the tool used to communicate with the mass audience while social networking is "the act of engagement".

Social media has become one of the major channels of chatting through platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp, 2go, BB chat, blogger and wiki. All manner of people across the world's population visits a social media site and the rate is rapidly increasing in recent times. Social media which are the same as Social networks have become thoroughly rooted in modern culture such that many people have woven these networks into their daily routines, using Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, online gaming environments, and other tools. A study by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) grouped social media into six different classes as indicated below:

- Social Networking Site (Facebook; 2go; BB chat and etc)

- Blogs and Micro blogs (Twitter)

- Collaborative Project (Wikipedia)

- Virtual Second World (Second life)

- Virtual Game World (World of war craft)

- Content Communities (Youtube)

Social media makes students interact and receive feedback from one another motivating them to learn from their peers online. With the proliferation of mobile devices, many social media platforms run on them to boost easy communication. This it differs from traditional social media as it incorporates new factors such as the current location of the user, time delay between sending and receiving. In another review, Kaplan and Haenlin (2010) suggested that social media can be divided into four types. These are:

- Quick-time (time sensitive): Transfer of traditional social media application to mobile services to increase immediacy (posting twitter messages, status update [2go], and updating display picture [dp] [bbm]).

- Slow-timers (neither location nor time sensitive): transfer traditional social media application to mobile devices (reading a wikipedia entry).

- Space-timers (location and time-sensitive): exchange of message with relevance for specific location and time (Face book, 2go, BB chat)

- Space-locators (location sensitive): exchange message with relevance for one specific location which are tagged to certain place (yelp, sype).

With the emergence of social media, teachers and adults are no longer the only sources of knowledge. It makes students more networked than ever. It is easier for the youth today to make friends with people all over the world, most of whom they don't know in person.

Common Social Media Sites

In recent times, there have been varieties of social networking sites like facebook, WhatsApp Messenger, 2go, twitter and blackberry Messenger for people to have access to.

Facebook is a social network site that allows anyone who claims to be at least 13 years old to become a registered user of the site. According to Roblyer (2010), users of facebook must register before using the website, after which they may create a personal profile, add other users as friends, exchange messages, and receive automatic notifications when they update their profile. Rapacki (2007) pointed out that users may join common-interest user groups, organized by workplace, school or college, or other characteristics, and categorize their friends into lists such as "People from Work" or "Close Friends".

WhatsApp Messenger is a proprietary cross-platform instant messaging subscription service for Smartphone's and selected feature phones that uses the internet for communication. In addition to text messaging, users can send other images, video and audio media messages as well as their location using integrated mapping features. In recent times several features including the messaging of pdf and word documents, voice and video calls have been added to make it friendlier for users.

2go is a Social Networking Site, chat, and instant messaging (IM) application. This social network site enables users to chat on their mobile phones for free. One advantageous points of 2go chat is its simplicity and light weight, making it available to lots of low-end phones. Base on this 2go runs on any java enabled phone, Nokia, LG, Samsung, and Sony Ericson. Additionally, 2go have gateways that enable users to chat with friends on Gtalk, Mxit, and facebook.

Twitter it is social networking service which is online base that enables its users to send and read text- based posts of up to 140 characters known as "tweets". According to Sorav (2010), twitter

users can also follow the updates of friends they "follow," send them direct messages, reply publicly to friends, or just post questions or comments as their current status. In many ways this social network site (twitter) continually provides social network for people at all ages.

Blackberry Messenger is an internet-based instant messenger application included on blackberry devices that allows messaging between blackberry users. It was developed by the manufacturer of the blackberry research in motion (RIM); messages sent via blackberry messenger are sent over the internet and use the blackberry pin system, so communication is only possible between blackberry devices. Pinging allows you to connect to friends using a ping ID, something akin to blackberry pin but easier to remember because you can pick it yourself. You can send text, messages, photos, videos and voice memos once you've shared your pin or found friends via email or twitter over a data network. Once a message is sent, a little S or D and a tick with an R indicating the message has been sent and read.

The Classroom and Social Media

For several years, using social networking sites in the classroom has been a controversial topic. In research by Kist (2012) it was suggested that many parents and educators have been fearful of the repercussions of having social media in the classroom. Due to this reason cell phones have been banned from classroom and schools have blocked many popular social networking websites.

However, many schools have realized that they need to incorporate social networking sites as a tool into the classroom and rules are changing. For instance, The Peel District School Board (PDSB) in Ontario is one of many school boards that have begun to accept the use of social media in the classroom in 2013 and have unblocked many social networking sites (Peel District School Board, 2014). Research by Fewkes and McCabe (2012) suggested several benefits of using Facebook in the classroom. It allows for both an asynchronous and synchronous, open dialogue via a familiar and regularly accessed medium, and supports the integration of multimodal content such as student-created photographs and video and URLs to other texts, in a platform that many students are already familiar with. It provides an opportunity for students to engage in critical reflection about the negotiations involved in collaborative knowledge production. In furtherance, Moody (2010) posited that the use of Facebook and other social

media in the classroom allows students to ask more minor questions that they might not otherwise feel motivated to visit a teacher or professor in person during office hours to ask. It allows students to collect their thoughts and articulate them in writing before committing to their expression. The level of informality typical to Facebook can also aid students in self-expression and encourage more frequent student-and-instructor and student-and-student communication. Facebook serves as one alternative means for shyer students to be able to voice their thoughts in and outside of the classroom.

In another research, Moran, Seaman and Tinti-Kane (2012) opined that YouTube is the most frequently used social media tool in the classroom since students can watch videos, answer questions, and discuss content. It has been claimed that YouTube increased participation, personalization (customization), and productivity (Sherer and Shea, 2011) and that students can create videos to share with others. YouTube provided an opportunity for peer learning and problem solving thereby improving students' digital skills. It is an accepted claim that videos kept students' attention, generated interest in the subject, and clarified course content (Eick and King, 2012).

Twitter can be used to enhance communication building and critical thinking and also promotes social connections among students. A study that reviewed literature about Twitter published between 2008 and 2011 concluded that Twitter allowed students to participate with each other in class (back channel), and extend discussion outside of class (Gao, Luo, and Zhang, 2012). Students reported that microblogging encouraged students to "participate at a higher level" Since the posts cannot exceed 140 characters, students were required to express ideas, reflect, and focus on important concepts in a concise manner. Gao *et al.*, (2012) further reported that students used Twitter to get up-to-date news and connect with professionals in their field. In another study by Junco *et al.*, (2011) to examine the link between social media and student engagement and social media and grades found that students who use Twitter in a form of the study group had higher exams and greater engagement scores than those who do not use. Therefore, this suggests that some students found the use of social networking sites in the classroom very beneficial.

Social Media Addictiveness among Students

It has been observed in recent times that students have unlimited access to the internet as well as the social networking sites. The manufacturing and distribution of equally sophisticated cellular phones has complicated the situation, as students no longer need to visit a cybercafé before they send and receive messages. Some schools are well equipped that there is internet connection made available within the school premises as well as in the library. Students connect with computer to send and receive information's anywhere on the globe. Attention has been shifted from making research in the library to overall dependence on social platforms including online Wikipedia and blogs as the main resource centers for students. It is a common thing to see a student putting the books aside on hearing the sound on the phone when reading in the library.

The usage of social media sites among students of all levels is alarming in recent times. It is believed that students engage in a variety of activities on the internet some of which may be potentially addictive (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011). Students at all levels spend more time on Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and other social networking sites through smartphones that are now in abundance among these youths. In the view of Morahan- Martin and Schumacher (2000), they explain addiction to social networking sites as the excessive use of the internet and the failure to control this usage which seriously harms a person's life. Many students cannot go for two-three hours without checking and updating their profiles on these social networks even at the expense of other activities such as educational and career pursuit.

However, there seems to be an alarming rate of social networking obsession among students today; particularly when attending to the gradually increasing amount of time students spend online. This is a trend that could affect their academic, social and spiritual lives negatively if not properly controlled. The reason students are performing poorly in school these days might not be farfetched since some youths are such social freaks that they have now carved out for themselves a world of fantasy and illusion for detached from reality. Though poor teaching cannot be left out when considering students poor academic performance but one might think harder if the phrase "Facebook frenzy" has not been heard of which is also contributing factor in this digital age. Some get carried away to the extent that even as they are walking along the high way, they keep chatting. Much focus has been shifted from visible to invisible friends, while many important ventures like study and writing are affected in the process. It is common these days to see a youth chatting insensitive and highly organized places like classroom, mosque and church

venues. It has been established that internet addiction is significantly and negatively related to students' academic performance, as well as emotional attributes (Jeong, 2005). Therefore, this phenomenon has become a source of worry to many who believe in knowledge and skill acquisition (McQuail 2008).

A study by Olowu and Seri (2012) posited that students are spending too much time on social networking sites at the detriment of other necessary things such as their studies and the Youths' addiction towards these social networking sites even point towards obsession. It has been widely accepted that the more time a student spends on Facebook, the lower his or her grade point average will be (Ogedebe, Emmanuel and Musa, 2012). Students are so engrossed in the social networks that they are almost 24 hours online. The bone of contention of the social networking site is the obsessive attitude of the youths towards its use (Olubiyi, 2012). He further proposed that students waste their precious time through idle chats and other sexual and immoral acts. In the end the result is that quality time that ought to be spent on academic research and other productive networking is lost as it has been observed that some students are always busy pinging, 2going, Facebooking or Whatsapping, while teaching is ongoing in the classrooms.

Effects of Social Media on Students' Academic life

Social media serves as an online directory that allows people to find their friends, family and colleagues through looking them up on social network sites. Nicole (2007) suggested that teens and teenagers have especially recognized these internet sites to be able to contact their peers, share information, reinvent their personas, and showcase their social lives. The web sites are employed in many ways like developing metropolitan areas, speaking, blogging etc. In view of Pardo (2013) he believes that this technology offers a platform for innovation, and allows its users to express their opinions about how they feel towards the information being published. These types of interaction are an essential part of how students learn new things. It is also a platform that allows students to interact with one another, with their teachers and communities that share their same education (Pardo, 2013). It is believed that social media is useful since 46% of the younger generation who access the internet use it to help them with their school assignments (Kirschner and Karpinski, 2010). In a research conducted by Rideout (2012) she mentioned that the positive impact caused by the students' use of the entertainment media according to the teachers she interviewed is their reading skills, which improved 46%, their math

skills improved 54%, their writing skills improved 39% and their science skills improved 51%. More of the positive impacts caused by entertainment media in the opinion of 63% of the teachers is their ability to look-up information and find it, and another 34% of the teachers believe it improved their skills in "multi-tasking effectively" (Rideout, 2012).

Since the introduction of these social networking sites, students' academic life has moved to a different dimension. Therefore, studies have confirmed that social networking plays an important role in students education (Wheeler, Yeomans and Wheeler, 2008; Rifkin, Longnecker, Leach and Ortia, 2009). Social networking sites have indeed contributed greatly to the facilitation of learning in the 21st century. The advantages of social media usage by students in education which included; enhancing the relationship, improving learning motivation, offering personalized course material, and developing collaborative abilities cannot be overemphasized. This was confirmed by Khan (2010) indicating that a greater percentage of students including those at the PhD level commonly use social networking sites to ameliorate their studies.

Today, social networking platforms are providing answers to the causes of flexible studies across the globe. A study conducted by Jain *et al.*, (2012) revealed that students benefit from chatting with other students, teachers and external sources to acquire knowledge. In cases where social networking site is used as an educational tool, it enriches learning by allowing both students and teachers to connect in new and very exciting ways thereby encouraging a flexible mode of learning. It supports different styles of learning including E-learning which is highly patronized across the globe (Pappas, 2013).

Moreover, flexible learning expands the choice on what, when and how people learn. It can therefore undoubtedly be concluded that social networking sites generate new opportunities to engage students education as they are remarkably effective at connecting people and facilitating the exchange of information (Arquero and Esteban, 2013; Selwyn, 2007). It is therefore clear and undoubted from these studies above the usage of that social network in the educational field cannot be underestimated.

However, on the other hand Kuppuswamy and Narayan (2010), argued in their study that social networks distracts the attention and concentration of the students toward learning and converts it towards non-educational activities such as useless chatting. There are some enumerated risks

associated with social networking site which included criminal activities such as identity theft and fake contacts which is prevalent today, sexual abuse or harassment and unsuitable advertising (Davies and Cranston, 2008). In a similar study they mentioned cyberbullying, online harassment, sexting, facebook depression, and privacy concerns as some of the challenges associated with social networking (O'keeffe and Clake-pearson, 2011). In another school of thought, it is established that social media users devote lesser time to their studies in comparison to nonusers did and subsequently had lower exams scores than the non-social media users (Karpinski, 2009). Within the last couple of decades, internet addiction has consequently given rise in internet usage. It is in this view that Englander *et al.*, (2010) posited that social media usage is negatively associated with academic performance of the student and is a lot more momentous than its advantages. It has therefore been realizing that addicted social media users prefer using internet setting to back their personal and professional responsibilities which ultimately leads to poor academic performance (Nalwa and Anand, 2003). Jonah (2013) argues that twitter affects behaviour by causing psychological disorder via addiction to the access of the social network. In addition, Jaclyn (2011) also suggested that twitter affects behavior because the network is open to all. Among various unique distractions of every single generation (Karpinski and Duberstein, 2009), Social networking sites remains a major distraction of this current generation with the users often time experiencing poor performance academically (Khan, 2009).

Challenges Faced through Social Media Usage

There are many challenges which are being faced through the use of social media, they are as follows:

- Cyber Bullying
- Privacy Concern
- Other Challenges

Cyber-Bullying: According to Mesch (2009) Cyber-bullying is the use of communication technology, such as Social networking sites, to harm or "bully" others. In the view of Tokunaga (2010) cyber bullying is "any behaviour performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others". The causes of cyberbullying according to Calvete *et*

al.,(2010), was significantly related with the use of proactive aggression, justification of violence, exposure to violence and less perceived social support of friends. Because the Internet allows students to remain anonymous on websites or create false profiles, cyber-bullying has become a serious issue with over 13 million children between the ages of 6 and 17 reporting victims of cyber-bullying (Mesch, 2009). Forms of cyber-bullying include harassing emails, web pages, hateful instant messages, text messages, and cruel posts on social networking sites (Mesch, 2009). The result of being a victim of cyber-bullying can be an embarrassment, feelings of belittlement, low self-esteem, and even suicide (Mesch, 2009).

Privacy Concern: The rate at which people post or share fake information calls for alarm and it is difficult to ascertain that, what people say and post are truly who they are. Preibusch *et al*., (2007) argued that the privacy options offered by most social networking sites (SNSs) do not provide users with the flexibility needed to handle conflicts with individuals who have different conceptions of privacy. In some cases individuals' private information are publicly displayed on some of these social networks and malicious people take advantage and perpetrate all kinds of harassment. Many others including students start believing very easily on strangers and share their private talks which may be misused. This is a concern that everyone involved in social media is faced with.

Other Challenges: Through social media, person has a lot of friend but the quality and integrity of these friendships is most questionable. While social media sites provide an opportunity for individuals to present a positive and accurate self-image, yet data on these social networking sites for a person is not always true and reliable, and they do not verify personal details (age, location, etc.) of their members. Therefore, having many friends through social media sites is likely to be more harmful than good.

A section of our teens including students join social media not to post their pictures but to find friends with whom they can share their thoughts, and sometimes it goes wrong and they interact with bad people and such relation could lead to raping, kidnapping and so on.

Due to the use of social media sites on our smartphones and computers for long hours, it create multiple health issues. Because of continuous accessing of social media sites, this may create an eyesight problem, back pain because of sitting in same position for long hours and many more.

Summary and conclusion

Research by scholars dating back to the decades ago has established that social media usages among students have enormous benefits and its side effect both in the cognitive and social realms. Previously, the conveying and free sharing of information among individuals were confined by long distances and lack of facilities. The new universe of social media networking permits free sharing of thoughts, pictures, videos, news, business, brands and other updates. This paper suggests that social media can prove to be a helpful research tool for students and can help them in their studies. On the other hand, from the literatures, the biggest disadvantage of using social media among students is that it has a negative impact on their grades and studies.

However, our literature suggested that majority of the students spend hours on social media daily. Additionally, many teachers use social media and other social networking sites to upgrade themselves and students learning capacity to empower students and make them active individuals in the learning process. Overall, it can be concluded that, though they have their side effects, if appropriately used, the social media sites can prove to be a very useful source of learning, sharing and healthy activities.

COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:

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