An Assessment of the Use of Social Media Platforms for Online/Virtual Learning Activities During the COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown

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ABSTRACT

Globally, every nation is tilting towards information technology to avoid physical interaction after covid-19 shut down the whole world. The number of students owning smart phones is increasing and access to computer mediated communication is becoming very easy. The student urge to access online web base applications otherwise known as social media for learning operations is not an overstatement. Several applications which might be of greater benefits to teaching and virtual learning are emanating from software developers. Despite lofty of benefits at utilizing social media in virtual learning, there is still need for more attention on students' access to social media for virtual learning and social development. This study research design is ex post facto research and utilized a survey method where variables were studied. The target population consists of students in Lagos across three tertiary institutions namely: University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State Polytechnic and Yaba College of Technology. This study randomly sampled 150 students from each tertiary institution. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and mean. From this study it was discovered that majority of the respondents have access to smart phones and spent between 30 minutes to 1 hour daily on social media. Also, it was discovered that most of the students utilizes between 1-2gig of data monthly on social media. It can be concluded that social media is one of the common application student accessed and could facilitate virtual learning particularly in the period of COVID-19 pandemic. It is recommended that students should be encouraged to utilize social media for learning purpose and not social activity alone.

Keywords: ICT, Social media, social networking, virtual learning, internet

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, every nation is tilting towards information technology to avoid physical interaction after covid-19 shut down the whole world. One of the measure utilized to curb the spread of these dreaded diseases in developed and developing countries is avoiding physical contact. It is pertinent to note that this can be achieved through information technology and one such area that is trending is through social media platforms. Social media is an internet web-based applications and the platform; are known as veritable tool in communicating among people either literate or illiterate.

Social media is encompassing with several feature which can enable the user to do diverse of things such as the user creating content, receiving information and sending out information engagements online. According to Ford and Ravansari (2017), social media is define as web-based instrument that permit users to interact with one another by sharing opinions, interest and knowledge online these is shaping interactions in various manner among human being.

It has been observed that one of the fastest and simplest way of communicating and learning is through social media platforms. Aghazamami cited in Tijani, Uche, Ochayi and Onyekwe (2017) concluded in his work that among the vast variety of online tools which are available for communication, Social Networking Sites (SNS) have become the most modern and attractive tools for connecting people throughout the whole world. Eid & Al-Jabri, (2016) opine that students utilizes social media in discussing study materials, sharing information, networking to complete term projects and solving homework assignments Sharma & Shukla (2016) argued that young people engage in social media because of inevitable changes and busy world we found ourselves which does not allow people to physically stay in touch.

Also they engage in social media because life among tertiary institutions student can be a stressful owing to school demand (Tandoc, Ferrucci & Duffy, 2015). It might serve as a measure to reduce tension among students. Social media could be a convenient platform to collaborate and exchange ideas especially when there is lockdown and there is need to experience connectedness and happiness among themselves. Therefore, college students with lower levels of life satisfaction could seek to participate in online networks to increase their personal well-being (Ellison *et al.*, 2007).

In recent time, it was discovered that almost 94 percent of adults have a social media account which they utilized and visited regularly in the last one month (Chaffey, 2016). Also, 73 percent of adolescents utilizes social media (Lenhart *et al.*2010). Young people are active social media users (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010) There is a general believe that the major activities done on internet among tertiary institution students is social media (Akakandelwa & Walubita, 2018) Ajayi (1995) further argues that, for many people, social media use is a way of dealing with a society where spending time with humans is less valued than time with technology. Smith and Caruso (2010) discovered that 90 percent of 36,950 university students drawn from 126 U.S.A and Canadian universities use social networking websites. Scholars are beginning to identify different web-based media applications such as; wikis, mini-blogs, blogs, networking sites, instant messaging sites and podcasts. These web-based applications have clients all over the world who utilizes the applications to facilitate various activities which ranges from business operations, virtual learning, social interaction and avenue to disseminate information to a widely dispersed audience. (Mobango & Wagandu, 2017).

On the other hand, social media allow various users to connect through the platform for various academic purposes. It enables the user who makes use of the platform for virtual learning to share various ideas and gather information which could be relevant for day-to-day virtual learning activities on social networks and messaging. Studies examining use of media among college students suggest that students spend between 30 to 60 minutes on social networking (Jacobsen & Forste, 2010; Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). According to Jelenchick, Eickhoff and Moreno (2013), the average of 28 minutes is the estimated time spent on social media among older adolescents Akakandelwa and Walubita (2018) study found that students are average user of social media and they spent between 31 to 60 minutes per day.

Furthermore, O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) classify time spent on social networking sites (SNS) into three categories using the response format of high use (more than 2 hours), average use (30 minutes to 2 hours) and low use (less than 30 minutes). Although there are various reasons why tertiary institutions students' average time spent on social media is more than 30 minutes. Tertiary institution students have reached adolescent stage and they are more youth or teenagers where they are free from house and sometimes living in-dependent.

They spend most of their free time alone, free from parental control which gives them an opportunity to make choices among different social media choices that are not limited to explore the world. It is expected that college students would be heavy social media users because students are far away from home, are free from parental home supervision (Arnett, 2007). Ellison *et al*., (2007) asserts that students spend much time on social media to strengthen bond with their mates and keep in touch with old friends.

According to Rifklin, Longnecker, Leach and Ortia in Kolan *et. al* (2018), there are several benefits of utilizing social media among Ghana tertiary institutions such as improving learning motivation, offering personalized course material, developing collaborative abilities and enhancing relationship. Social media utilization is dominating the social lives of many students in developing and developed countries. The number of students owning smart phones is increasing and access to computer mediated communcation is becoming very easy.

The student urge to access online web base applications otherwise known as social media for learning operations is not an overstatement. Several applications which might be of greater benefits to teaching and virtual learning are emanating from software developers. Despite lofty of benefits at utilizing social media in virtual learning, there is still need for more attention on students' access to social media for virtual learning and social development.

1.2 Objectives
The objectives of this study are to:
(1) Examine access to smart phones among tertiary institutions students
(2) Identify students utilization of social media among tertiary institutions students
(3) Determine the data utilized among tertiary institutions students
(4) Find out frequency of usage on social media among tertiary institutions students

1.3 Research Questions
(1) What is the access to smart phones among tertiary institutions students?
(2) What is the utilization of social media on mobile phones among tertiary institutions students?
(3) What is the data utilized among tertiary institutions students in a month?
(4) What is the frequency of usage on social media among tertiary institutions students?

2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This study research design is ex post facto research and utilized a survey method where variables were studied. The target population consists of students in Lagos across three tertiary institutions namely: University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State Polytechnic and Yaba College of Technology. This study randomly sampled 150 students from each tertiary institution. In all, 450 questionnaires were administered but 439 were retrieved representing 97.5% success rate of return.

The instrument for data collection is a questionnaire with variables like gender, age, religion, access to phone, amount of data consumed, favorite social media platform and perceptions on social media utilization among students. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, absolute mean and standard deviation.

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Table 1: Sampling Frame

Schools	No of administered questionnaire	No of retrieved questionnaire
UNILAG	150	143
LASPOTECH	150	146
YABATECH	150	150
TOTAL	450	439

Table 1 shows the sampling frame across the three selected tertiary institution. It shows that equal number of questionnaire were administered to each tertiary institution but numbers retrieved slightly varies across the institutions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results
Table 2: Distribution of Respondents on access Phone

	UNILAG	LASPOTECH	YABATECH	TOTAL
Yes	139	145	144	428
	97.2%	98.6%	96.0%	97.3%
No	4	2	6	12
	2.8%	1.4%	4.0%	2.7%
	143	147	150	440
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.0%

Table 2 above reveals access to phones among respondents across various sample institutions. It reveals that majority of the students have access to phone while only 2.7% do not have phone. A larger percentage 98.6% of respondents is from LASPOTECH, 97.2% of the respondents is from UNILAG while students from YABATECH had the least percentage 96.0%. It can be concluded that students have access to phones

Table 3: Ranking Utilization of Social Media

	Frequency	Percentage	Rank	Remark
UNILAG	138	96.5	1.0	1st
YABATECH	136	91.3	2.0	2nd
LASPOTECH	130	89.7	3.0	3rd

Table 3 reveals ranking utilization of social media across the tertiary institutions. It shows that majority 96.5% with the highest proportion from UNILAG utilizes the social media, 91.3 % of the students from YABATECH utilizes social media while the least of the respondents 89.7% from LASPOTECH utilizes social media. It implies that most of the students utilized social media.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution on Utilization of Data

Gigabyte Size	UNILAG	LASPOTECH	YABATECH	TOTAL
less than 1 gig	41	64	27	132
	31.1%	48.5%	20.5%	100.0%
1-2gig	25	61	52	138
	18.1%	44.2%	37.7%	100.0%
2-3gig	24	3	9	36
	66.7%	8.3%	25.0%	100.0%
3-4gig	21	1	6	28
	75.0%	3.6%	21.4%	100.0%
4-5gig	12	3	1	16
	75.0%	18.8%	6.3%	100.0%
5--7 gig	0	3	16	19
	0.0%	15.8%	84.2%	100.0%
7-10 Gig	10	1	0	11
	90.9%	9.1%	0.0%	100.0%
Over 10Gig	3	0	0	3
	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	136	136	111	383
	35.5%	35.5%	29.0%	100.0%

Table 4 reveals the amount of data used per month. It shows that majority 36.03 % use 1-2gig, 132 34.47% use less than 1gig data subscription per month,

9.40% use 2-3gig data subscription per month, 7.31% use 3-4gig data subscription per month, 4.96 % use 5-7gig data subscription per month, 4.18% use 4-5gig data subscription per month, 2.87% use 7-10gig data subscription per month while 0.78% use over 10gig data subscription per month.

However, the prices, service provider network and usage may influence the choices of Respondents on subscription on data. It can be concluded that average data utilized by students in a month is 1-2 gig

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Table 5: Frequency Distribution on Social Media Usage

	UNILAG	LASPOTECH	YABATECH	TOTAL
<30mins	10	22	27	59
	16.90%	37.30%	45.80%	100.00%
30mins -1 hour	33	53	45	131
	25.20%	40.50%	34.40%	100.00%
1-2hours	16	19	17	52
	30.80%	36.50%	32.70%	100.00%
2-3hours	22	19	15	56
	39.30%	33.90%	26.80%	100.00%
3-5hours	29	9	18	56
	51.80%	16.10%	32.10%	100.00%
5-7hours	17	9	9	35
	48.60%	25.70%	25.70%	100.00%
Over 8 hours	16	11	10	37
	43.20%	29.70%	27.00%	100.00%
Total	143	142	141	426
	33.60%	33.30%	33.10%	100.00%

Table 5 shows number of hours spent on social media per day, it reveals 30.75% spend minimum of 30 minutes up to 1 hour daily on social media, 13.85% spend less than 30 minutes daily on social media, 13.15% spend minimum of 2 hours up to 3 hours daily on social media, 13.15% spend minimum of 3 hours up to 5 hours daily on social media, 8.22% spend minimum of 5 hours up to 7 hours daily on social media , 12.21% spend minimum of 1hour up to 2 hours daily on social media while 3.69% spend over 8 hours daily on social media. However, there might be other factors that influences time spent on the social media platform such as interest, passion, addiction, mood, happenings and information. It can be concluded that the average time students spend on social media is between 30 minutes to 1 hour daily.

3.2 Discussion of findings
This study revealed that most of the students utilized social media which is in line with Chaffey (2016) that almost 94 percent of adults have a social media account which they utilized and visited regularly in the last one month Also corroborates the study of Lentart *et al* (2010) that 73 percent of adolescents utilizes social media and support Rideout, Foehr and Roberts (2010) that young people are active social media users. It agrees with the assertion of Akakandelwa and Walubita, (2017) that the major activities done on internet among tertiary institution students is social media. This also study revealed that the average time students spend on social media is between 30 minutes to 1 hour daily. It agrees with Jacobsen & Forste (2010) that students spend between 30 to 60 minutes on social networking. Also in line with the findings of Akakandelwa and Walubita (2017) that students are average user of social me
dia and they spent between 31 to 60 minutes per day.

4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary of Findings
From this study it was discovered that majority of the respondents have access to smart phones and spent between 30 minutes to 1 hour daily on social media. Also, it was discovered that most of the students utilizes between 1-2gig of data monthly on social media

4.2 Conclusion
By and large, it can be concluded that social media is one of the common application student accessed and could facilitate virtual learning particularly in the period of COVID-19 pandemic.

4.3 Recommendations
(i) Students should be encouraged to utilize social media for learning purpose and not social activity alone.
(ii) Tertiary institutions should provide free internet facilities to their student for easy accessibility.
(iii) The need for tertiary institutions to embrace virtual learning instead of physical learning.

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