



IMPACT OF INSTAGRAM AND X(TWITTER) SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS ON THE ACADEMIC ATTENTIVENESS OF TRAINEE COUNSELLORS IN ALVAN IKOKU FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION OWERRI, IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of Social Media tools, Instagram and Twitter(X) on the Academic attentiveness of trainee Counsellors in Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education Owerri, Imo State Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of all fifty-three (53) undergraduate students of Guidance and Counselling department. Two research questions were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of Significance. A researcher made and validated instrument name Social Media tools and Academic Attentiveness Scale (SMTAAS) with liability coefficient of 0.82 established through Cronbach Alpha was employed to generate data for the study. The data generated was analysed using mean and standard deviation statistics. The findings show that to a high extent the respondents accepted that social media tools; Instagram and X(Twitter) impact their academic attentiveness negatively. It is recommended that workshops on self-regulation and focus skills training be organised for trainee Counsellors, students should be guided to disable their phone notifications during lectures, social media literacy should be incorporated in the University curriculum among other recommendations.

Keywords: Academic Attentiveness, Instagram, Social media, Trainee counsellors, Twitter (X)

Introduction

Social media has transformed the pattern and medium of communication and connectivity globally. Its effect is observed among students within the learning environment. Students now have global link to information with unrestricted and uncensored access to connectivity and entertainment. This is made possible by multifaceted social media tools available through computer devices and smartphones. Among the many social media tools accessible to trainee counsellors, Instagram and X(Twitter) are discussed on this study.

Trainee counsellors are undergraduate students in Guidance & Counselling Department in the University, undergoing tutelage and training in counselling techniques embedded in theories of counselling. These students attend and participate in classes for a duration of three to four years, depending on the degree programme they are running. They are trained to provide educational, vocational and personal-social counselling to clients to assist them make appropriate decisions, adjust properly to life and situations of life in order to minimize, if not eliminate maladaptive behaviours. Trainee counsellors are taught and trained as undergraduate students in order to enhance their competency in behaviour modification as would-be professionals in counselling. All these require attentiveness devoid of any form of distraction and truancy to make the best of a trainee counsellor's period of schooling in the university. Kruschke (2000), affirms that attention aids the learning process because attending to lessons has a huge impact on student's immediate response. Hence, counselling involves understanding theories that are practicalized or applied through techniques and skills structured to express the core belief of these theories in professional counselling experiences, and such needs utmost attention and intentionality in training.

Most learners, if not all, trainee counsellors inclusive, are social media users, which has become a regular and daily routine for today's adolescents as social media cannot be separated from students' lives (Novaria, 2018). Many youths or students are addicted to social media. Nowadays, most students have active social media handles, and browsing and posting on these media handles translates being relevant among their peers. These social media sites are accessible on smartphones which makes it easy for students to share information and update their social media pages with posts of interest at any place or time, which sometimes can happen even in the classroom. This inevitably distracts the students and stalls optimal learning as there will be poor participation and low attentiveness. Novoria (2018), agreed that students are not using social media only at home on a computer, but also using these sites via their smartphones. Further affirming that the rapid increase in terms of the use of social media via smartphones are having serious effects on college or university students, some of which are positive and also negative if not controlled (Al-Harrasi & Al-Badi, 2014).

Social media could be referred to as any media circulated with the help of social interactions, meaning that social media may be referred to as the cybernetic and simulated relationships among people, organizations and companies, which entails the invention, sharing or exchanging of data on the form of texts, images and symbols (Oguguo, Ajuonuma, Azubuike, Ene, Atta & Oko, 2020). This brings to fore that there is social media proliferation which has infused into most, if not all sectors of human life, the academic environment being one of them, as students are becoming highly addicted and dependent on surfing the internet and engaging on the contents and features available on these social media tools, and these have negative implications on academics if not checked. According to Al-Harrasi & Al-Badi (2014), social network has been found to have negative effects, such as the lowering of students' grades, which could be due to the increased distraction for students, leading to the misuse of their time.

Among these numerous social media platforms, the Facebook, X(Twitter), Instagram and WhatsApp have been recognized as the ones commonly used by students, with reference to Nigeria, and due to the ease provided by smartphones to access and utilize these social media tools, many students spend between two to three hours checking activities and updating their profiles on these social networks even at the peril of their educational and career pursuit (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015; Oguguo et al., 2020; Al-Harrasi & Al-Badi, 2014). Despite the benefits of social media, it appears that the negative impacts of it on students is alarming as students tend to abandon their studies in a bid to catch up with

the trends and distractions of these platforms such as chatting, texting, gaming, and the likes (Omachonu & Akanya, 2019).

Apuke (2016) postulated that it is a common thing these days for young people to become addicted to social media activities as a result, they abandon their studies and shift attention to chatting with friends, even during lectures. It was reported that an average Nigerian student spends about six to seven hours on internet daily, with some spending more hours doing all-night browsing (Ajewole & Fasola, 2012). Additionally, Oguguo et al. (2020) affirmed that many students use their phones to engage in activities which appear to be quite distracting most times. However, Bamigboye & Olusesan (2017) averred that social media tools can be very resourceful to the academic process of both male and female students.

Paying attention during teaching and learning process is paramount for one to attain academic success, hence, the use of any social media tool during classroom teaching and learning could hamper that process. Attention means concentrating on what is being said, discussed or demonstrated, by using the mind to accurately bring information into the brain (Nusrat, 2023). Attention is the capacity to actively process definite information in the environment while tuning out other details (Nusrat, 2023). Therefore, academic attentiveness entails deliberate, conscious and sustained focus and engagement on learning materials, and academic tasks which enables students to effectively process information while filtering out distractions. Going further, attentiveness is the process of careful observation of environmental information with the help of sensory receptors (Santhanalakshmi & Alma, 2021). Academic attentiveness is then a necessary and crucial skill in a student or trainee counsellor's learning and studying habit. Academic attentiveness has to do with focus, which helps improve a student's teaching and learning participation, and advertently makes positive impact on retention for future application. This is due to the fact that comprehension and recall ability are hinged on attentiveness. However, attention could be impaired if distraction ensue when teaching and learning is going on among students, and in this case, trainee counsellors.

Instagram, a photo-sharing social media platform allowing users to post photographs and videos to their profiles (instagram.ourstory, 2019). Users interact with one another using 'Likes' and 'Comments' and can follow an unlimited number of people (Turner & Lefevre, 2017). Instagram is the most popular social media tool compared to other platforms especially among young people (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018). Due to this popularity, the risk of developing an addiction or problematic use increases for some users of Instagram (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). According to Turel and Qahir-Saremi (2016), university students are at risk and prone to develop problematic Instagram use and Instagram addiction due to their excessive and uncontrolled internet usage, extensive free time, and flexible schedules. Egbe, Akuto, James & Iordaah (2023) investigated the influence of social media usage on study habit of undergraduates in North-Central Nigeria, with implications for counselling. A sample size of three hundred and eighty-eight (388) 400-level students were drawn from thirteen thousand, two hundred and ninety-two (13,292) 400-level students from four federal universities in North-Central Nigeria, using a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview for data collection. The findings of the study revealed that except for WhatsApp platform, the use of social media platforms like Facebook, X(Twitter) and Instagram negatively affect the study habits of undergraduates in North-Central Nigeria.

Twitter, recently renamed 'X' is a microblogging social media tool or platform that allow users to post messages of up to two hundred and eighty (280) characters, along with features such as hashtags, likes, replies, retweets and mentions (Malik, Heyman-Schrum & Johri, 2019). The use of social media tools such as Facebook, YouTube, X(Twitter), WhatsApp, and the likes, by students in universities today is resulting to mass failure of students in academic achievement (David, 2014). This is because students, these days, spend more time on frivolities like chatting with 'friends' rather than engaging in research or reading their books (Azih & Onwere, 2023). Oluwatoyin (2016) surveyed one thousand eight hundred and sixty (1,860) Facebook users from the Lagos State University and found that ninety percent (90%) of the students could not get a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) above 3.50 based on 5-point scale, due to spending a large amount of time on social media than on their homework and study time, which could contribute to higher grade. From the aforementioned, a growing number of Nigerian scholars agree that addiction to social media sites have become a distractive technology to students'

academic work in higher education (David, 2014; Azih & Onwere, 2023; Egbe et al., 2023; Omachonu & Akanya, 2019; Oguguo et al., 2020).

Even though social media platforms were not designed with the explicit purpose of supporting educational and other learning-related activities, their affordance for networking and content sharing have made them a natural fit for those purposes (Tess, 2013; Azih & Onwere, 2023). On the other hand, few studies have also high educational context, as these studies have emphasized the inappropriate usage, overexposure, reputation, information overload, addiction, as well as other issues associated with the content and personal privacy (Cho & Rangel, 2017). The dark side within technological evaluation has resulted in dilemmas such as the setback of real values of life, especially among students who form the majority of users interacting through the use of social media networking sites (Tinto, 2017).

A number of studies have been conducted to find out the impact of social media on students' academics in general. Banquill et al. (2009) stated that social media network sites affect academic performance adversely. Excessive and unrestricted use of social media tools directly cause the gradual drop in the grade of students (Novaria, 2018). Spending time on these social media handles even while teaching and learning is taking place negatively affects students' performance academically. The research carried out by Fori (2016) on the effects of social networking sites on the academic performance of the Engineering students in the University of Maiduguri, Borno state, Nigeria, using a sample size of two hundred and twenty-two (222) students, revealed that the most subscribed network sites in a hierarchical order include Facebook, WhatsApp, X(Twitter), YouTube and Google+. The research also revealed that many students are users of multiple social networking sites; and that social networks were found to have no effect on students' (users) academic performance. Oguguo et al. (2020) carried out a study to determine the influence of social media on students' academic achievement among senior secondary school students with a sample size of one hundred and fifty students (70 males, 80 females), which were drawn from five schools in Enugu South-East, Nigeria, using multi-stage sampling procedure. The finding showed that students frequently engage in social media in order to make new friends, research about their assignment and source for other educational materials, stay up to date with latest trends and news. The finding also showed that students spend an average of 2 to 4 hours daily on social media.

The research carried out by Azuonwu (2020) examined the perceived influence of social media on academic performance of students in Rivers State with focus on its implications for counselling. The population was one thousand, seven hundred and fifty (1,750) undergraduate students drawn from three universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. Sample size of three hundred and fifty (350) students was drawn using simple random sampling technique. The result revealed that a large number of students in the universities are addicted to social media. The researcher thus recommended that social media should be used for promoting educational purposes or goals; social networking sites should be broadened and new pages created to enhance academic activities and avoid poor performance in students' academics, as this would help balance students social media usage and academic activities. As much as these researches investigated social media impact on academics, their focus was mainly on academic performance. Little to nothing have been researched on the impact of these social media tools on academic attentiveness of students. Moreso, at the time of this research, there were no specific empirical research on the impact of Instagram and X(Twitter) social media tool on academic attentiveness of trainee counsellors in tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria, making this research germane.

Statement of the Problem

The use of social media among students comes with its pros and cons, and it behooves one to know how it impacts the teaching and learning environment. Students can be engrossed with electronic media tools to the detriment of their academics. Trainee counsellors are not exempted from these challenges, as there's need for requisite discipline to tailor down their social media attention to their academic advantage. Much advocacy by government and school authorities to curb the negative impact of social media tools on academic attentiveness is yet to be observed. Going by available research, several studies on the impact of social media on students' learning were focused on academic achievement and on learner's socio-economic background. Another important factor is that most studies were not focused on the impact on Nigerian students with reference to their social and/or academic milieu. Based on

literature available to the researchers at the time of study, there seems to be sparse empirical work on the impact of social media tools on trainee counsellors' academic attentiveness. On this premise, this study investigated the impact of Instagram and X(Twitter) social media tool on the academic attentiveness of trainee counsellors in Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education Owerri, Imo state, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study set out to;

1. Ascertain the impact of Instagram social media tool on academic attentiveness of trainee counsellors.
2. Determine the impact of X(Twitter) social media tool on academic attentiveness of trainee counsellors.

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated to guide this study;

1. To what extent does Instagram social media tool impact trainee counsellors' academic attentiveness.
2. To what extent does X(Twitter) social media tool impact trainee counsellors' academic attentiveness.

Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised of all undergraduate students of Guidance & Counselling Department, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo state, Nigeria, which is made up of the Degree, Direct Entry/Post NCE, Evening Programme and Sandwich students, with a total number of fifty-three (53) students.

The sample of the study comprised of all the fifty-three (53) undergraduate students of Guidance & Counselling Department, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo state, Nigeria. Census (Total Population) sampling technique was employed. Census, a complete enumeration of a population of study, involves the collection of data/information from every member or unit in a population (Asika, 2006).

A researcher-made instrument named Social Media Tool and Academic Attentiveness Scale (SMTAAS) was employed for data collection. It is a 10-item question on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). The scale is divided into two sections; A and B. The items on section-A are; Name of Institution, Respondent's Year of study, Academic programme, Sex and Age. While section-B is in two sub-sections having five questions each. Sub-section-1 presents five questions in response to research question one, while sub-section-2 presents five other questions in response to research question two.

Face and content validity of the instrument were ensured by two experts in Educational Psychology/Guidance & Counselling department and two experts in Measurement & Evaluation, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo state, Nigeria. Reliability of the instrument was determined using test-retest method, and a reliability index of 0.82 was established through Cronbach Alpha technique. All fifty-three (53) copies of the administered questionnaire were completely filled and retrieved, hence, there was no instrument mortality. The data collected for the study were analyzed using mean score and standard deviation for the two research questions.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does Instagram social media tool impact trainee counsellors' academic attentiveness.

Table 1 showing response on impact of Instagram social media tool on trainee counsellors' academic attentiveness.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	Total	X	Decision
1	I often check my Instagram while lectures are going on.	92	36	18	9	155	2.92	Accepted
2	I get sleepy in class when I stay awake late-night on Instagram.	72	57	22	10	161	3.04	Accepted
3	Sometimes when I am on Instagram, I skip going for lectures.	84	42	18	9	153	2.89	Accepted
4	I sometimes spend time on Instagram and forget to do my assignment.	44	51	36	8	139	2.62	Accepted
5	My grades decreased since I started spending more time on Instagram.	52	33	28	15	128	2.42	Accepted
	Grand Mean	3.47						

Table 1 contained questionnaire items 1-5. Each was responded to by 53 respondents. The result of the finding revealed mean values 2.92 for item 1, 3.04 for item 2, 2.89 for item 3, 2.62 for item 4 and 2.42 for item 5. The grand mean value of 3.47 of the respondents was within the real limit number range of 2.50-3.49 of high extent. This implies that to a high extent, the respondents accepted Instagram social media tool impact trainee counsellors' academic attentiveness.

Discussion of Results

Research Question One: Table I

To what extent does Instagram social media tool impact on trainee Counsellors' academic attentiveness. The result of research question one in table, one implies that to a high extent, the respondents accepted that Instagram social media tool impact negatively on trainee counsellors academic attentiveness. This finding collaborates with the study carried out by (Egbe, Akuto, Jamesand Lordaah 2023) whose findings revealed that the usage of social media platform like Facebook, X(Twitter) and Instagram negatively affect the study habits of undergraduates in North Central Nigeria. In furtherance, the finding also contravenes the research carried out by Fori (2016) which revealed that many students are users of multiple social networking sites; and that social networks were found to have no effect on students' (users) academic performance. The findings suggest that while Instagram can serve as a supportive academic tool for Guidance and counselling students, uncontrolled use leads to reduced concentration and divided attention.

Research Question 2: To what extent does X(Twitter) social media tool impact trainee counsellors' academic attentiveness.

Table 2 showing response on impact of X(Twitter) social media tool on trainee counsellors' academic attentiveness.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	Total	X	Decision
6	I sometimes Tweet instead of taking notes while in class.	60	51	26	8	145	2.74	Accepted
7	I get distracted whenever I check my X(Twitter) notifications while in class.	36	60	36	6	138	2.60	Accepted
8	When tweeting during school, I barely pay attention to class activities.	40	75	18	9	142	2.68	Accepted
9		108	36	10	9	163	3.08	Accepted

10	I get distracted when I study and Tweet at the same time. My grades decreased since I started spending more time on X(Twitter).	24	54	22	18	118	2.23	Accepted
	Grand Mean	3.33						

Table 2 contained questionnaire items 6-10. Each was responded to by 53 respondents. The result of the finding showed mean value of 2.74 for item 6, 2.60 for item 7, 2.68 for item 8, 3.08 for item 9 and 2.23 for item 10. The grand mean value of 3.33 of the respondents was within the real limit number range of 2.50-3.49 of high extent. This implies that the grand mean of 3.33 indicate high level of acceptance among respondents that X(Twitter) social media tool impact trainee counsellors' academic attentiveness.

Discussion of Results

Research Question 2 on table 2.

To what extent does X(Twitter) social media tool impact trainee counsellors' academic attentiveness. The result of research question 2 in table 2 implies that X(Twitter) social media tool Impact on the academic attentiveness of trainee counsellors to a high extent. Implying that trainee counsellors are distracted during lectures by their use of X(Twitter) social-media tool. This result is in tandem with the result of study carried out by Turel and Qahur-Saremi (2016) which revealed that except for WhatsApp platform, the usage of social media platforms like Facebook, X(Twitter) and Instagram negatively affect the study habits of undergraduates. The finding also contradicts the study carried out by Fori (2016) which revealed that many students are users of multiple social networking sites; and that social network was found to have no effect on students (users) academic performance.

Conclusion

Instagram and Twitter social media tools have a negative impact on the attentiveness of trainee counsellors at Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education.

Frequent engagement with these social media tools interrupts lectures and study time and digital distractions reduce students' ability to focus effectively on academic tasks.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

Institutions of higher learning should implement digital discipline programmes to guide students in responsible social media use.

Awareness campaigns should be conducted on the effect of social media distractions on learning by use of bill boards, jingles, pictorials, among other.

Social media literacy should be incorporated in the university Curriculum.

Workshops on self-regulation and focus-skills should be organised for trainee counsellors.

Lecturers should guide students to disable their phone notifications during lectures.

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