

The Use of Social Networking among Senior Secondary School Students in Abuja Municipal Area of Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

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Abstract

The present study examined the use of social networking among senior secondary school students in Abuja Municipal Area Council of FCT. The study employed quantitative method for data collection involving questionnaire administration. Fifteen questions with Likert model and ten yes/no responses in a questionnaire were personally administered to 400 randomly selected students. The obtained data were analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The results revealed that many students used social networking in high magnitude especially Facebook and that they spend increasing amount of quality time on these networks. This study will be of immense benefit to the Federal Capital Territory Administration as it has shown the potent dangers of uncontrolled use of these social networking by students and therefore the need to put in place measures to forestall its alluded negative effects becomes imperative.

Keywords: Federal Capital Territory, Use, Social Networking, Students.

1. Introduction/ Statement of Problem

With the rapid growth and integration of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) into every facet of life, life has radically changed for many. Today's children are the first generation defined by computers, mobile device and the internet. They are called 'digital natives' while their parents, older siblings; teachers and relatives are called 'digital migrants'. Warschauer (2002) describes the former as those born during and after the digital or ICT revolution while, the latter are born before the revolution. The explosive growth in the popularity of a technology called social networking has generated concerns among different parties.

The prevalence and excessive use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) among senior secondary school students is on the high rise and which calls for concerns by many because of its implications and effects. As a global phenomenon, a national survey of teenagers conducted by the Pew Internet & American Project (2013) revealed that more than half (55%) of all online American youth ages 12-17 use online social networking sites. Almost half (48%) visit social networking websites daily or more often; 26% once daily, and 22% several times a day. The rising amount of academic studies and discussions on social networking indicates that there is a large and growing interest in this area in the global Internet public.

1.1 Research Objectives

In the light of above, the study essentially seeks to:

1. Examine the extent of usage of social networking among senior secondary school students in terms of their age.
2. Find out the differences in the extent of usage of social networking between students in terms of gender.
3. Find out the differences in the extent of usage of social networking between students in their urban and rural location.
4. Identify the type of sites that are frequently visited by the students.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Gratifications theory stresses how and why the audience use the media Klapper(1963) as cited by Haridakis & Hanson (2009). Also, corroborating on the theory, McQuail (2010) maintain that ,one of the more successful theoretical frameworks from which to examine questions of "how" and "why" individuals use social networking to satisfy particular needs has been the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory. Therefore, the adoption of the uses and gratification theory is informed by the fact that people consciously choose the medium that could satisfy their needs. Although, motivations for Internet use (social networking) may vary among individuals, situations and media vehicles, most use and gratifications studies explore them based on some or all of the followings dimensions: relaxation, companionship, habit, passing time, entertainment, social interaction, information/surveillance, arousal and escape, (Lin, 1999).

2. Review of Related Literature

Junco (2011) identifies that today we live in the time of the social web, an interactive, engaging, and democratizing space where social capital- the resources obtained through interpersonal interactions- is of great importance. Alongside the expansion of the social web came a generation of students, who have never known life without the technologies that many have to depend on. This mobile technology makes it easier for kids to fit whatever they want to access in their pockets, while making it more difficult for parents to monitor what their kids are doing.

The early descriptive and ethnographic research on youth, Internet, and social media offer rich evidence that (a) the features of different platforms, for example, the MySpace Top 8 case, influence the social practices of youth within those online communities, (b) Social Networking Sites (SNS) are important places for youth to develop their personal identity, and (c) youth use technologies like SNS to mediate their relationships with friends, romantic partners, and broader groups of peers (Ito et al., 2009).

Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) observed that the lines between the virtual and real world is increasingly blurred for youth today: "...for today's youth, media technologies are an important social variable where physical and virtual worlds are psychologically connected; consequently, the virtual world serves as a playing ground for developmental issues from the physical world". The key questions for the field of youth and Social Networking Sites (SNS) focus on what is the emotional, social, and cognitive effects of using the technology are for adolescents. In 1995, it was estimated that only 11% of American teenagers were actively participating on social networking websites (Peter & Valkenburg, 2009).

College-aged individuals are especially interested in having a lot of friends, because many worry what others will think if they do not have as many friends as their peers (Barker, 2009). Statistic have shown from the study done on visual impression management and social networking sites that approximately 60% of students do spend more time selecting which pictures to post on their profile than actually communicating with others (Siibak, 2009). This indicates that these SNSs are not just for keeping in touch with classmates and meeting new people, but are equally used to build identities (Siibak, 2009).

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are becoming ubiquitous aspects of youth and young adult life. Students have become accustomed to this lifestyle much more than older generations have in recent years, as this way of living is all they know (Lewis, 2008). They use the Internet for the major part of their daily activities and information gathering, as opposed to older generations who used resources like the television or newspaper (Lewis, 2008). Similarly, Seiter (2008) observes that young people famously use digital communications—instant messaging, cell phone texting, and social networking Web sites—to maintain their social capital, at least with those peers who can afford to keep up with the costly requirements of these technologies. Kist (2008) cited a survey conducted in United States which showed that approximately ninety percent of teens have Internet access, and about seventy-five percent of these teens use the Internet more than once per day. It further revealed that approximately half of all teens who have Internet access are also members of social networking sites, and use the Internet to make plans and socialize with friends. Goodman (2007) stated that teens use [the Internet] as an extension of their personality, to show their friends-and the world- who they are, what they care about, and to build connections with other like-minded people.

Shosanya (2013) revealed that: "more than 7 in 10 teenagers (73.3%) browsed the internet for social activities in the north central part of Nigeria, while over half of the teenagers in the South-West, North-West and South-East geopolitical Zones, fewer teenagers in the South-South used the internet for the same reason. The findings here have established a trend: teenagers across the country (Nigeria) are forming the habit of making and chatting with friends using the social networking platforms as against visiting them for their academic purposes". According to Manning & Johnson (2011), teenagers are connected to an average of 1,200 friends through their social networking environments, so clearly they are heavy users of these tools.

Going by the related literature on gender use of social networking, results are mixed as to which group spends more time. Studies have revealed that boys have been online more than girls in previous decades because of earlier forms of technology such as video or computer games (Lin & Subrahmanyam, 2007). Though, in another related study cited by Giles & Price (2008) reveals that girls were reported to have been active users of social networking for things like chatting and downloading music. From most studies done on the subject matter, there is no consensus as per the amount of teenage girls and boys who are active users of these social networks (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2008).

In a sample of college students, Hargittai (2007) finds few demographic differences between users and non-users of SNS. Gender appears as a significant predictor, with females being 1.6 times more likely to use an SNS than males. In addition, having Internet access through friends or family also significantly predicted whether a college student used SNS. Though girls and boys are both likely to have a SNS account, the reasons for the accounts may vary based on gender. For girls, social networking sites are primarily places to reinforce pre-existing friendships; for boys, the networks also provide opportunities for flirting and making new friends (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2008). Girls are also more likely than boys to post sexually explicit pictures of themselves, and to talk about sexual activity in public forums (Rafferty, 2009). However, boys are more likely to create an account simply because they are trying to meet a significant other, or because they are already in a relationship with someone who has requested them to join (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2008). According to Pew Internet (2013), 74% of females were users of social networking sites, compared with 62% of male counterparts.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a simple survey research designs. According to Gravetter and Forzano (2009, p 360), "surveys and questionnaires are used extensively in the behavioral efficient ways to gather large amounts of information. By presenting people with a few carefully constructed questions, it is possible to obtain self-reported answers about attitudes, opinions, personal characteristics, and behaviors".

A sample of 400 students was randomly selected from the population. The choice of this sample size is considered for the study as determined by Krejcie and Morgan (1971) table for determining sample size from a given population. This size is considered reasonably adequate and representative of the population.

Random sampling technique was used because it gives the elements of the population equal opportunity of being part of the sample. Bichi (2004) posited that, simple random sampling is the best known of the probability sampling procedures.

To allow enough spread of the sample, the researcher purposively sampled 10 Senior Secondary Schools in AMAC, such that 5 each were selected from urban and rural areas through random sampling technique. Accordingly, from the sampled schools, 40 students from SS2 with equal numbers from males and females were randomly selected for the study.

For the purpose of this study, one measuring instrument was used. It is researcher's self-developed structured questionnaires. Ndagi (1999) opined that, "structured questionnaires consist of a prepared list of specific questions and a choice of possible answers. They are easy to administer and to fill in; they help keep the respondent's mind fixed to the subject and facilitate the process of tabulation, analysis and scientific generalizations". This instrument was used to determine their level of familiarity, usage and conversance with social networking.

Out of the total of 400 questionnaires administered to the students in the sampled schools, all were duly completed and retrieved by the researcher. From the retrieved questionnaires 377 (94.3%) were correctly filled while 23 (5.7%) were not properly and clearly filled. Out of the 377, 198 (52.5%) were identified as male students while 179 (47.5%) were female students. Similarly, 197 (52.3%) lived in urban areas where as 180 (47.7%) were located in the rural areas. For the purpose of data analysis, 377 were coded and used.

4. Analysis

Extent of usage of Social Networking: In order to examine this phenomenon among students generally; and in their various classifications of age difference; rural/urban; male/females, their responses to the items that investigates the extent of usage were sought and described as shown in tables 1-4 below using descriptive statistics of percentages, frequencies and histogram.

Table 1: Cross tabulation showing Extent of usage of social networking among students' across age difference in AMAC.

			Extent of usage			Total	
			Disagree	Undecided	Agree		
Age	14-16	Frequency	8	9	35	52	
		% within Age	15.4%	17.3%	67.3%	100.0%	
		% within Extent of usage	10.1%	10.8%	16.3%	13.8%	
		% of Total	2.1%	2.4%	9.3%	13.8%	
	17-19	Frequency	67	69	169	305	
		% within Age	22.0%	22.6%	55.4%	100.0%	
		% within Extent of usage	84.8%	83.1%	78.6%	80.9%	
		% of Total	17.8%	18.3%	44.8%	80.9%	
		20 and above	Frequency	4	5	11	20
			% within Age	20%	25%	55%	100%
	% within Extent of usage		5.1%	6.0%	5.1%	5.3%	
	% of Total		1.1%	1.3%	2.9%	5.3%	
Total	Frequency	79	83	215	377		
	% within Age	21%	22%	57%	100%		
	% within Extent of usage	100%	100%	100%	100%		
	% of Total	21.0%	22.0%	57.0%	100%		

From **table 1** above it can be noticed that a total of 377 (100%) responded to the items; on the extent of usage of social networking. Out of this total 52 (13.8%) have their ages between 14-16 years; while those whose ages falls within 17-19 were 308 (80.9 %) and; 20(5.3%) were 20 and above in age. Similarly again from their responses it can be observed that those who agreed to be active users of social networking across the age bracket is indifferent.

Table 2: Cross tabulation showing extent of usage of social networking among male and female students in AMAC.

		Extent of Usage			Total	
		Disagree	Undecided	Agree		
Gender	Male	Frequency	42	39	116	197
		% within Gender	21.3%	19.8%	58.9%	100%
		% within Extent of usage	53.2%	47.0%	54.0%	52.3%
	Female	Frequency	37	44	99	180
		% within Gender	20.6%	24.4%	55.0%	100%
		% within Extent of usage	46.8%	53.0%	46.0%	47.7%
Total	Frequency	79	83	215	377	
	% within Gender	21.0%	22.0%	57.0%	100%	
	% within Extent of usage	100%	100%	100%	100%	
	% of Total	21.0%	22.0%	57.0%	100%	

Table 2 above gives a clear picture of the extent of usage of social networking among male and female students in AMAC. As in Table 1, here also a total of 377 (100%) responded to the item that seeks to determine the gender difference in the extent of usage. A total of 197 (52.3%) respondents were male students, whereas 180 (47.7%) are females. Out of these, a total of 116 males, that is 58.9% agreed, while 42 disagreed and 39 were undecided representing 21.3% and 19.8% respectively. Female students on the other hand show that 99 (55%) agreed, 44 (24.4%) were undecided and 37 (20.6%) disagreed out of 180. On the comparison note, the percentages within the respective gender indicate that they are active users of social networking. Hence, while 116 (58.9%) of 197 within the male students, 99 (55%) of 180 within the female gender, though the latter was just a little above half. This is further confirmed by the number of counts of Disagreed and Undecided within the two Genders.

Table 3: Cross tabulation showing the extent of usage of social networking among students in their Urban and Rural locations in AMAC.

			Extent of usage			Total
			Disagree	Undecided	Agree	
School location	Urban	Frequency	7	78	112	197
		% within School location	3.6%	39.6%	56.9%	100%
		% within Extent of usage	8.9%	94.0%	52.1%	52.3%
	Rural	Frequency	72	5	103	180
		% within School location	40.0%	2.8%	57.2%	100%
		% within Extent of usage	91.1%	6.0%	47.9%	47.7%
Total	Frequency	79	83	215	377	
	% within School location	21%	22%	57%	100%	
	% within Extent of usage	100%	100%	100%	100%	
	% of Total	21%	22%	57%	100%	

From **Table 3** above it is evidently clear that a total of 377 (100%) responded to the item as in the previous two tables. 112 (56.9%) from urban location and 103 (57.2%) from their rural counterparts agreed to be active users of social networking as well, while 78 (39.6%) and 5 (2.8%) from both urban and rural location respectively were undecided. On the other hand only 7 (3.6%) in the urban location disagreed, and 72 (40%) of the rural students equally disagreed to be the most frequent users of social networking.

Table 4 (Histogram): Showing Type of sites frequently visited by the (adolescent) students.

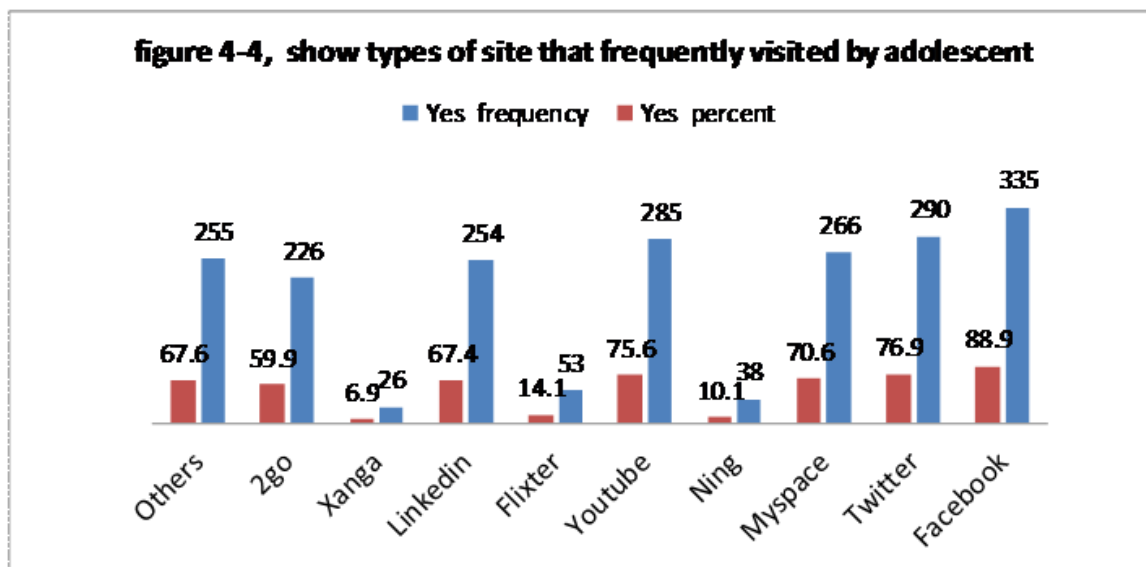


Table 4 (Histogram) above indicates that the type of sites frequently visited by the students in AMAC is Facebook which takes the lead with a total of 335 (88.9%), followed by Twitter with 290 (76.9%). YouTube followed next with 285 representing 75.6% and MySpace has 266 (70.6%) of those who visits it among the respondents. The sites that recorded the least of visitors from the sampled respondents are Xanga 26 (6.9%), followed by Ning with 38 (10.1%) and Flixster 53 (14.1%).

5. Discussion

On the strength of this study and the data so collected and analyzed, major findings came to limelight. The fundamental questions the study sought to answer were whether there is the use of social networking among students.

Discussion of the result for hypothesis one which states that:

There is no significant difference in the extent of usage of social networking among students in AMAC due to age difference.

The above hypothesis was accepted as there was no any significant difference among the students in their extent of usage of social networking due to age difference as shown in table 1. The result in table 1 further indicated that across the entire age bracket, a total of 215 (57%) out of the total respondents (377) agreed that they are active users of social networking. 83 (22%) of the responded were undecided while 79 (21%) disagreed to be active users. This indicates that the use of social networking does exist among students. This does not only indicate the existence of its usage, but that it exists in a high magnitude as the percentage of the active users is above half.

It would not certainly be strange that the high level of usage does exit especially with the pervasive nature of the networking phenomenon in our lives today. In fact, further than that certain sources from the literature did report the existence of active use of social networking among students. For instance citing a Nigerian survey conducted by Shosanya (2013) revealed that “more than 7 in 10 teenagers (73.3%) browsed the internet for social networking in the North Central States of Nigeria. Oyero (2013) also in his studies discovered that most respondents (58%) use social networks for both information and interaction. This is further confirmed by other studies that identified the use of social networking among students like Lin & Subrahmanyam (2007), Goodman (2007), Lewis (2008),

Discussion of the result for hypothesis two which states that:

There is no significant difference in the extent of usage of social networking among students in AMAC due to gender variable.

In this aspect, this study was particularly interested in determining the extent of usage of social networking in respect of respondents' gender- male/female. That is, to examine the extent of variations if any, in that regard, between the two groups. The result of hypothesis 2 revealed no significant difference between male and female students in their usage of social networking.

Therefore, the present study one can say has thus, confirmed the earlier studies that in the context of gender- male and female; the difference has being a subject of debate. In that regards literature related to students' gender, results are mixed as to which group uses social networking more than the other (Lin & Subrahmanyam, 2007). Some studies have shown that boys have been online more than girls in previous decades because of earlier forms of technology such as video or computer games (Lin & Subrahmanyam, 2007), however, girls have reported that they use the Internet for things like chatting and downloading music (Giles & Price, 2008). Base on this, one may conclude that girls are more likely to be attracted to social networking sites and other online social groups (Giles & Price, 2008). However, according to most studies done on the topic, the amounts of teenage girls and boys who communicate on these social networks are equally divided (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2008).

Discussion of the result for hypothesis three which states that: There is no significant difference in the extent of usage of social networking among students in AMAC due to urban and rural variable.

On the hypothesis 3 above which is on the extent of usage in the context of location, the results showed high difference between urban and rural groups. The analysis in the table above revealed significance difference in the extent of usage of social networking between urban and rural students.

There is every reason to assume differences between the two groups. In response to this, two arguments could be advanced. One of which is the differences in the socioeconomic status between the respondents in the two groups which could make it difficult for those in the rural areas to afford purchasing recharge card for air times.

The second argument is the absence of social amenities like power (electricity for charging phones), easy access to networks. In addition, civilizations in the urban centre cannot be compared in any way with that of rural settlements due to so many factors. These factors range from technical know-how, fund/capital among others. It is also known generally that the most challenging problem of every growing industry in Nigeria is power. This is not an exception when it comes to social media particularly in the rural areas.

Discussion of the result for hypothesis four which states that: There is no significant difference in the type of sites that are frequently visited by students in AMAC.

Table 4 (Histogram) showed that Facebook site ranked atop with 88.9%, signifying that majority of the respondents owns and visits their Facebook account, followed by Twitter and Youtube with 76.9% and 75.6% respectively. While the least visited by this group of respondents were Xanga (6.9%) and Ning (10.1%), which signifies that, these sites are either unpopular or not known to many respondents in the area under study.

Looking across the frequencies and percentages of the sites, Facebook, Youtube, Linkedin and Myspace are ranked the highest. This means that, as far as this study is concerned from the table referred to above, Facebook, Youtube, Linkedin and Myspace are the most visited sites. New media technologies such as Facebook, Myspace, Twitter and Youtube had transformed the entire social, political and informational practices of individuals and institutions across the globe (Shanon, 2012).

Another revelation made clear from this study is that, majority of respondents owns more than one social networking account. This is evident in the fact that the option of others from the table, more than half of the respondents indicated that they own other social networking sites accounts.

This finding is therefore, not surprising in any way as according to Alexa World Rank (2013), Facebook with the estimated members of over one billion is the best known social network sites and is positioned second place in the ranking order as the most visited site in the world. It went further to identifying some countries including Nigeria where Facebook proves to be the most visited site, surpassing other sites like Google, Yahoo and Youtube. Twitter and Linkedin were ranked second and third of the top ten social networking sites, but 12th and 14th on the Alexa World rank with the estimated members of 500 and 200 million worldwide.

6. Summary of Findings/conclusions

I. Use of social networking does exist among students in AMAC as per the opinion of the respondents.

ii. The study revealed that there is no significant difference in the extent of usage of social networking among students due to age difference.

iii. It was further discovered from the study that there is no significant difference in the extent of usage of social networking between male and female students in the area under study.

iv. However, there is significant difference in the extent of usage of social networking between urban and rural students in the sampled area, because the urban students use social networking more than their rural counterparts.

v. Similarly, there is significant difference in the type of sites that is frequently visited by the students.

7. Recommendations

► Parents/guardians should acquaint and avail themselves more about social networking even if it is from their children because they are digital natives.

► Parents should join their children's social networks and "friend" them. While it may increase parent-child conflict, they (parents) will know the substance of what their children are saying and doing on these sites and can confront them about inappropriate behavior.

► Parents should have an in prompt access to their children's mobile phones and laptops so as to know those they are chatting with and the content.

► Parents should always monitor what media their children are using and accessing including any web sites that they visit and social networking site they may be using.

► Parents should remind their children not to post photos or content of nudity that could help strangers find them in the real world. They should make sure their children limits access to facebook pages and other social networking sites to people they specifically accepts as "friends", and encourage them not to accept friend request from unknown persons.

► Parents should try to know the contents their children are consuming on social networking sites. They should spare adequate time to watch the YouTube videos, look at their friends' facebook, and play the games they play. Discuss content viewed online with them, does it agree with the known norms manners and values?

8. Suggestions for Further Research

The number of limitations in this study suggests that further research needs to be undertaken on the effects/influence of social networking participation on students social and psychological behaviors which is currently been understudied.

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