Psycho-Personal Variables on Social Media Engagement of Students in the Akwa Ibom State

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated influence of psycho-personal variables on social media engagement of students. The descriptive research design was used for the study. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A sample size of 200 was drawn from the population using simple random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire titled "Personal Variables and Social Media Engagement Questionnaire" (PVSMEQ) was used as instrument for data collection. A face validation method was adopted to establish the validity of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the test-retest method and a reliability coefficient index of 0.70 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The findings showed that: there is no significant difference in social media engagement of students based on age and gender. The result also revealed that there is significant difference in social media engagement of students based on self-concept. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that parents should encourage their children/wards to engage only in meaningful and productive social media activities.

Keywords: Psycho-Personal, Social Media, Age, Gender, Self-concept

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become popular among youths especially University students considering the fact that social media sites allow people to stay connected with friends and family, make new friends, share pictures and exchange ideas. Accordingly, Undiyaundeye (2014) noted that social media engagement can offer adolescents deeper benefits that extend into their view of self, community and the world. Engaging in various forms of social media is a routine activity that has shown to benefit children and adolescents by enhancing communication, social connection and even technical skills. Davis, Summers and Miller (2012) define social media as web-based and mobile applications that allow individuals and institutions to communicate in a digital environment in a variety of ways to create, participate in, and share user-generated new or existing content.

In today's technology driven society, social media do not only serve social purposes, they also provide huge platform for commercial and educational activities. Tayo, Adebola and Yahya (2019) averred that social media platform such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Myspace, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Google Plus help students and educators to access information and educational-related materials and allow students to interact with one another, their teachers and communities that share in their education and related activities (Pardo 2013). Although studies on social media engagement are replete, most of these studies (Bryson, 2014; Bawa and Suleiman, 2017; Koranteng, Wiafe and Kauda, 2019) have focused attention on the influence of social media engagement on learning outcomes of university students. Studies on influence of variables such as age, gender and self-concept on social media engagement have not been explored in the area.

Age refers to the length of time somebody has existed on earth. Literature on age and social media engagement are limited (Oko, 2016). While, findings from available literature are inconsistent, most of them (Zaphiris and Sarwar, 2006) indicated that social media engagement is most prevalence among younger people. Specifically, Wrzus Hänel, Wagner and Neyer, 2013) reported social media engagement decreased with increasing adult age. Koiranen, Keipi, Koivula and Räsänen (2020) found that the significance of age is higher in activities having to

do with work and politics as well as those activities linked to entertainment and leisure. Those in the prime of their careers are more likely than others to use social media for work and career purposes. Ekanem (2020) reported that there was a slight difference in students' Instagram engagement base on their age. On the other hand, Yu *et al.*, (2018) reported that, there is no significant age difference in Instagram use by students, thus students' age was a predictor of the length and frequency of Instagram engagement.

Gender comprises a range of differences between men and women, extending from the biological to the social. It refers to socially constructed and socially learned behaviours and expectations associated with females and males. Mangvwat in Nnamani and Oyibe (2016) defined gender as a specially constructed phenomenon that is brought about as society ascribes different roles, duties, behaviours, and mannerisms to the two sexes. Pfeil, Arjan and Zaphiris (2008) argues that gender differences can also be found in social media usage. Similar work (Verhaagen, 2005) has found that females, more than males, tend to participate in online chat rooms. Herring (2004) also found that females, to a greater extent than males, tend to use ICT in order to socially engage with others.

According to Kumari (2013) self-concept is the cognitive aspect of self and generally refers to the totality of a complex organized and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence. As Tabone (2011) reported: "Self-concept is a type of self-appraisal that is created through interaction with one's environment and the influence of significant others. Self-concept is one's self-perception surmise from attitudes, feelings, and knowledge about one's skills, abilities, appearance, and social acceptance" (Tabone, 2011).

Bergagna and Tartaglia (2018) reported that scholars have found contradictory results regarding the relationship between self-concept and Facebook use. Tanghins and Siedlecki (2013) found that people with lower self-concept spend more time on Facebook. Thus, people who experience difficulties in social relations, such as individuals with low self-esteem, socially anxious individuals, and introverts, are more motivated to use social networks in order to compensate for their unsatisfactory face-to-face interactions (Bergagna and Tartaglia, 2018).

Empirical Review

Booker, Kelly and Sacker (2019) conducted a study on Gender differences in the associations between age trends of social media interaction and well-being among 10-15 year olds in the UK. The aim of this study was to examine whether the changes in social media interaction and two well-being measures are related across ages using parallel growth models. Data come from five waves of the youth questionnaire, 10-15 years, of the Understanding Society, the UK Household Longitudinal Study (pooled n = 9859). Social media interaction was assessed through daily frequency of chatting on social websites. Well-being was measured by happiness with six domains of life and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. Findings suggest gender differences in the relationship between interacting on social media and wellbeing. There were significant correlations between interacting on social media and well-being intercepts and between social media interaction and well-being slopes among females. Additionally, higher social media interaction at age 10 was associated with declines in well-being thereafter for females, but not for males. Results were similar for both measures of well-being. High levels of social media interaction in early adolescence have implications for well-being in later adolescence, particularly for females. The lack of an association among males suggests other factors might be associated with their reduction in well-being with age. These findings contribute to the debate on causality and may inform future policy and interventions.

Sponcil and Gitimu (2015) researched on the use of social media by college students: Relationship to communication and self-concept. The purpose of this study was to examine social media use among college students and how it affects communication with others, and college students' self-concept. In this study, students completed a questionnaire which assessed personal use of social media, communication skills with friends and family, and effects on self-concept. Results indicated that all of the sampled college students were using at least one form of social networking website. There was a .586 Pearson correlation between usage of social media and communication with family and friends. There was a .658 Pearson correlation between usage social media and

self-concept. These findings provide implications for future research on why these social networking sites have gained popularity.
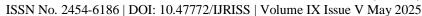
Jan, Soomro and Ahmad (2017) also conducted a study on impact of social media on self-esteem. The upward comparisons made using social networking sites have caused people to have lower self-esteems. In order to test the hypothesis 150 students from institute of business management were surveyed through questionnaires and interviews. This research was limited to the students of IoBM and Facebook, being the most popular social networking site was used as the representative of social media. Correlation and regression model was applied to the data with the help of SPSS statistics to test the relationship between social media and self-esteem. The major findings suggest that approximately 88% people engage in making social comparisons on Facebook and out of the 88%, 98% of the comparisons are upward social comparisons. Further this research proves there that there is a strong relationship between social media and self-esteem. Increase in social media usage causes the self-esteem of individuals to decrease. One hour spent on Facebook daily results in a 5.574 decrease in the self-esteem score of an individual.

Ekanem (2020) investigated the influence of psychosocial variables on social media engagement of students in the Faculty of Education, University of Uyo. The descriptive research design was used for the study. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study consisted of 6,719 Year Three (300L) students in the Faculty of Education, University of Uyo. The sample for the study consisted of 200 Year Three (300L) students in the Faculty of Education, University of Uyo. A random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample for the study. A structured questionnaire titled "Personal Variables and Social Media Engagement Questionnaire" (PVSMEQ) was used as instrument for data collection. A face validation method was adopted to establish the validity of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the test-retest method and a reliability coefficient index of 0.70 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The findings showed that: There is no significant difference in social media engagement of students based on age; there is significant difference in social media engagement of students based on gender; there is no significant difference in social media engagement of students based on self-concept.

Osharive (2015) examined the influence of social media and academic performance of students in University of Lagos. Five research questions and five research hypotheses guided the study. To achieve this, the descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study focused on University of Lagos hence, population consists of all the 24,661 full-time undergraduate students. The simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 378 students. A four-point Likert Type Rating Scale Questionnaire type, titled: social media and Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire (SMAAPOS) was used to collect data from the participants. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage, were used to analyze the demographic data while inferential statistics of Chi-square($x2$) was used in testing the research hypotheses. Research findings showed that a great number of students in University of Lagos, are addicted to social media. To this end, the researcher recommended that social media should be used for educational purposes as well; Social Networking Sites should be expanded and new pages should be created to enhance academic activities and avoid setbacks in the students' academic performance; and Students should be monitored by teachers and parents on how they use these sites This is to create a balance between social media and academic activities of students to avoid setbacks in the academic performance of the students.

Statement of the Problem

The use of social media provides students with the ability to get more useful information, to connect with learning groups and other educational systems that make education convenient. It also affords students and institutions with multiple opportunities to improve learning methods. However, frequent engagement in social media has turned most university students into addicts which affect students' ability to manage time for academic activities. In this regard, Bawa and Suleiman (2017) reported that students become distracted from academic engagement when they spend much time on Instagram or Facebook checking his/her profile to have a hint on the number of "likes" and "comments" their latest post got from viewers. This off-task behaviour results in poor performance in examinations and assignments because of less academic commitments. Tayo, Adebola and Yahya (2019) also

documented that some students have diverted social media usage towards non-educational, unethical and inappropriate actions and behaviours. This situation has resulted in the proliferation of cybercrime tendency, sexual harassment and other anti-social behaviours among tertiary institution students. The situation is further compounded by the vulnerability of students as a result of low self-concept, age, and sex. From the aforementioned issues, the study examines psycho-personal variables (age, sex, and self-concept) and social media engagement of students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine influence of psycho-personal variables on social media engagement of students. Specifically, the objectives of the study were:

1. To determine the difference in social media engagement of students based on age.
2. To assess the difference in social media engagement of students based on sex.
3. To find out the difference in social media engagement of students based on self-concept.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the mean score difference in social media engagement of students based on their age?
2. What is the mean score difference in social media engagement of students based on their sex?
3. What is the mean score difference in social media engagement of students based on their self-concept?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated for the study

1. There is no significant difference in social media engagement of students based on age.
2. There is no significant difference in social media engagement of students based on gender.
3. There is no significant difference in social media engagement of students based on the self-concept.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design was used for the study. In descriptive research which is a form of non-experimental research, questionnaire was used to gather information and the goal was to understand the opinion of the respondents about the influence of psycho-personal variables (age, gender and self-concept) on the social media engagement of students. A sample size of 200 was drawn from the population using a simple random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was used for the study. The instrument was subjected a face validation and reliability test. A reliability coefficient index of 0.70 was obtained using Cronbash Alpha statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Data generated for the study were first arranged in a coding sheet before being subjected to statistical analysis, using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The use of SPSS was necessitated on the ground of the quantity of data obtained from the 200 respondents which was very large for the researcher to embark on manual analysis.

Research Question One: What is the mean score difference in social media engagement of students based on the age?

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in social media engagement of students based on age.

Table 4.1: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Independent t-test Analysis of Social Media Engagement of Students Based on the Age

Age	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	P-val	Remarks
Below 20	135	24.74	3.02	4.872	Not Sig.
Above 20	65	22.21	2.98		

The analysis of data in Table 4.1 shows that students below 20 years of age obtained mean and standard deviation scores of 24.74 and 3.02 respectively in social media engagement while their counterparts aged above 20 had mean and standard deviation scores of 20.21 and 2.98 respectively. This implies that students differ slightly in their social media engagement based on age. However, the test of corresponding hypothesis one reveals that the p-value of 4.872 is greater than .05 level of significance. Thus, hypothesis one is accepted implying that there is no significant difference in social media engagement of students based on age.

Research Question Two: What is the mean score difference in social media engagement of students based on the sex?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in social media engagement of students based on gender.

Table 4.2: Mean, Standard Deviation, and independent t-test Analysis of Social Media Engagement of Students Based on the Sex

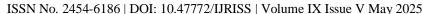| Sex	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	P-val	Remarks
Males	100	20.52	2.35		
				.002	Sig.
Females	100	31.77	3.62		

The analysis of data in Table 4.2 shows that male students obtained mean and standard deviation scores of 20.52 and 2.35 respectively in social media engagement while their female counterparts had mean and standard deviation scores of 31.77 and 3.62 respectively. This implies that students differ in their social media engagement based on gender. More so, the test of corresponding hypothesis two reveals that the p-value of .002 is less than .05 level of significance. Thus, hypothesis two is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained implying that there is significant difference in social media engagement of students based on gender.

Research Question Three: What is the mean score difference in social media engagement of students based on their self-concept?

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in social media engagement of students based on their self-concept.

Table 4.3: Mean, Standard Deviation, and independent t-test Analysis of Social Media Engagement of Students Based on their Self-concept

Self-concept	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	P-val	Remarks
Negative	96	23.02	2.57		
				.000	Sig.
Positive	104	36.59	3.86		

The analysis of data in Table 4.3 shows that students with negative self-concept obtained mean and standard deviation scores of 23.02 and 2.57 respectively in social media engagement while their counterparts with positive self-concept had mean and standard deviation scores of 36.59 and 3.86 respectively. This implies that students differ in their social media engagement based on their self-concept. More so, the test of corresponding hypothesis three reveals that the p-value of .000 is less than .05 level of significance. Thus, hypothesis three is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained implying that there is significant difference in social media engagement of students based on their self-concept.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study showed that students differ slightly in their social media engagement in favour of those aged below 20 years. However, the test of corresponding hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant difference in social media engagement of students based on age. This implies that there is no gender difference in social media engagement among students. This finding aligns with Ekanem (2020) who found that social media engagement among students did not differ based on students' age.

The findings of the study revealed that students differ in their social media engagement in favour of the female students. More so, the test of corresponding hypothesis two revealed that there is significant difference in social media engagement of students based on gender. This present finding lends support to Booker, Kelly and Sacker (2019) who had earlier reported gender differences in the relationship between interacting on social media and wellbeing.

Lastly, the findings of the study showed that students differ in their social media engagement in favour of students with positive self-concept. More so, the test of corresponding hypothesis three revealed that there is significant difference in social media engagement of students based on self-concept. This present finding agrees with the findings of Sari, Siswadi and Sriati (2018) that social media engagement was associated with positive self-concept of users. The finding is also supported by Sponcil and Gitimu (2015) who revealed that self-concept of social media users was a significant predictor of their engagement.
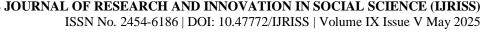
CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that; students differ slightly in their social media engagement in favour of those aged below 20 years; students differ in their social media engagement in favour of the female students; students differ in their social media engagement in favour of students with positive self-concept. Therefore, it was recommended that:

1. Parents should encourage their children/wards to engage only in meaningful and productive social media activities such as engagement in educational pages and sharing of educational ideas.
2. The school management should ensure that free regular internet services is provided to students to enable them compete technologically with their counterparts in other countries of the world.
3. Students should always have positive self-concept about themselves.

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