

## Challenges of Social Networking on Students' Reading Habit in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

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### Abstract

Many activities of academic life require the ability to read and write. Reading helps to develop the mind and personality of a person; it also enriches ones' intellectual abilities. But, with the current popularity of social networking, it is slowly and steadily taking over the mind of young people who are expected to cultivate good reading culture. This study therefore, sought to find out the challenges of social networking on Ahmadu Bello University students. Survey method was adopted using questionnaire as instrument for data collection. Copies of questionnaires were administered and retrieved from 200 undergraduate. Findings revealed that 189(94.5%) of the students are involved in social networking to connect with friends and relatives, the study also indicated that 72(36%) respondents stipulated that social networking distract their reading habits. Based on these findings, this paper recommended that students in tertiary institutions be given proper orientation on how to use social media as effective tool for transformation. The authority concerned should also intensify enlightenment campaign on the negative effect of all social networking on students and their academic performances.

### Introduction

Social networking is the latest technological explosion in the world of information; it is an online platform or site that focuses on building and reflecting on social relation among people, who share common interest or activities. According Adomi and Ejirefe (2012), social networking refers to activities, practices and behaviour among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinion using interactive media. The interactive media are web based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in forms of text, pictures, videos and audios. Kaplan and Halein (2010) defined social media as a group of internet – based application that build on the ideological and technological foundation of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content. Social networking site allow users to share activities, event, ideas and interest within their individual network.

Students use the social networking for various reasons. Some use it to exchange ideas, feelings, personal information, pictures and videos (Loving & Ochoa, 2010). It is used for the purpose of connecting with friends and family (regardless of location), keeping up with the latest events and happening and for academic purposes.

To consider the positive sides of social networking, Lusk (2010) posits that online communities can afford students academic assistance and support. Social networking provides easy access to virtual space which students can explore with friends having similar academic needs. Brydolf (2007) noted that students who may be reluctant to speak up in class find blogs and other interactive internet tools rewarding.

On the other hand, Wang, Chen & Liang (2011) findings on effect of social media on college students, showed that social media use is negatively associated with academic performance. They also reported that about two-thirds of the students are found using social media while in class studying or doing home work. This multi-tasking increases distraction and becomes detrimental to student performance. Also according to Kalpidon, Castia and Morris (2011) "as social media websites, such as facebook, youtube and twitter gain popularity, they are also becoming increasingly dangerous as they create modes to students to procrastinate while trying to complete homework and assignment". In their survey of 102 students, 57% stated that social media has made them less productive.

The increase use of social networking sites among student has no doubt affected students reading habit negatively. Reading habit is a deliberate effort towards understanding and acquiring knowledge. It is also a systematic conscious task of acquiring specific knowledge geared toward a set of standards. Reading habits are behaviours that are easily manifested without conscious exertion on the part of the learner (Oloyede, 2005).

Many activities of ordinary life require the ability to read. Depth reading helps to develop the mind and personality of a person, it enriches intellectual abilities, provides in sights into human problems, and influences attitudes and behaviour. In other words, reading helps to mould a person's character. This depends on the type of book that is read, the book can be entertaining and educative (Behrman, 2009).

In Nigeria, there has been concern on the possible effect of day time and sometime all night browsing on student's reading time. Many parents are worried over their children's habit on facebook and other social media sites because they are of the opinion that their children now hardly have the time to read. Oji (2007) noted that the growing incidence of students using the internet not necessarily for academic purposes, but for anti-social activities is at an astonishing rate. They use these websites for fraud, pornography, blackmail, racketeering and so on.

Social networking sites have proven to be universally addictive for tertiary institutions students who tend to spend considerable amounts of their time maintaining social connections, making new acquaintances and a broad base of friends during their years of study (Loving & Ochoa, 2010). These, however reduce the amount of time they will use to read books aimed at successful completion of their studies (Ofuani & Gberedio, 2009).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Students' unwillingness to read extensively these days is a worrisome phenomenon. Students reading habits these days are distracted with the persistent use of social networking. Thus, they now become passive readers who prefer to sit back, only to be entertained, and not to put effort in reading. They prefer to spend the whole day chatting with friends instead of reading or studying. Some students even when they use the social media for academic purpose, they do so because they rely on its information accessibility to provide direct lifting of answers for their assignment. This study will like to investigate on how this behaviour reduces their focus on learning and reading habit. Also, on how it reduce academic performance of students who always carry out multi-task checking on social media sites, because, the more time student spend on social media site, the less time they spend reading their books.

Schill (2011) has noted that the social media sites encourage negative behaviour among students such as catching up with unknown friends. As such, they are exposed to frauds via e-commerce and banking, use of drugs and material that are restricted to medical prescription. Social networking sites have also become easiest point of access to pornography and other obscenities which distract student reading habits (Kur & Olisah, 2007). This study will also like to see how the illicit act through social media affect students reading habits in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Therefore this study intend to investigate the challenges of social networking on student reading habits in faculty of social sciences of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

### **Research Question**

1. What are students reasons/purpose for using social network sites?
2. How does a social networking site affect the reading habits of students in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria?
3. How much time do students spend browsing social network sites?
4. To what extent do students rely on social networking for academic purpose?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on two theories, entertainment theory and play theory. According to Baran and Davis (2009) theory is designed to describe and explain all aspects of a given phenomenon.

The notion behind entertainment here is simply an effective consequence of exposure to entertainment forms of media content, according to Bryant and Vorderer (2006), it envisions an overall process in which entertainment activity is "influenced, triggered and may even be shaped by the media product that is selected". Users do voluntarily control their selection of entertainment content, but as in information-processing theory, there are many underlying psychological process they don't consciously control. It is these processes that provide a comprehensive explanation of how and why students use social media for entertainment.

In research findings of different types of entertainment content, Zelman and Vorderer (2000) summarizes research on horror, comedy, conflict, suspense's gender and age differences and identifies a range effects resulting from exposure to these forms of content. Some of these entertainments are of benefit to audience while some are not.

Therefore the justification for the use of this theory was that social networking sites are associated with entertainment, including selective exposure, motivation, attention, comprehension information processing, disposition, empathy, identification with characters involvement, mood management, social identity and Para-social interaction.

Play theory in relation to communication deals with leisure and time information. According to Stephenson (1867) is an activity pursued for pleasure. Play theory therefore, is an approach centering on the uses of media for gratification we derive from it. This suggests that students use the social network sites as a means of escaping into a world of play.

The element of this theory supports the use of social network site for pleasure and leisure. Social

network sites are used during free hours and also to while away time. The theory provides fascinating insight of student's motivation to go online, which at times seem as distraction to their study and reading habit.

The uses of the two perspective of the theory have relationship with this study. The social networking sites as an information technology device, has the subtle power to influence students usage of social media either for the purpose of academic achievement or non-academic. Therefore they are suitable for this study to determine the extent at which the challenges of social network affect the reading habit of students in tertiary institution like Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

### Methodology

The study adapted the survey research method, using a sample size of 200 respondents drawn from the population of 2,733 students of Faculty of Social Sciences Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (as at the 2011-2012 academic sessions). This population did not include post-graduate. The decision to exclude them was informed by the fact that they are mature in their dealings. The sample size of 200 respondents was drawn from the five Departments in Faculty of Social Science (Mass Communication, Economics, Political Science, Sociology and International Studies). This means 40 respondents were drawn from each department. In each department the respondents were selected through a simple random sampling procedure respectively.

The only instrument used for data collection in this study was the questionnaire which contained close-ended items. The questionnaire was self-constructed after extensive reading of related literature in order to ensure that relevant items were included. The closed ended questions were intended to collect data that would facilitate easy analysis. Copies of questionnaire were administered by the researchers to students and retrieved immediately from them while reading for their first semester examination in the Faculty Library and Departmental Libraries of Faculty of Social Sciences of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This was in order to ensure high responses rate. Frequency count and percentages were used to analyse the data collected. This is because of the descriptive nature of the study.

### Findings

**Research Question 1:** what are students' reasons for using social network sites?

**Table 1:** Reasons for using social network site

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
<b>For Reading/Academic Purpose</b>		
Reading of newspapers/magazines	9	4.5
To share and exchange academic information source materials to read for exam and test	30	15
Latest world/surrounding information	18	9
To communicate with lecturer	11	5.5
<b>For Non Academic Purpose</b>		
Chatting with friends	60	30
Photo sharing	30	15
Online dating	10	5
To create/post photo (nudity)	2	1
To create groups of likeminded individual	30	15
Total	200	100

The data in table 3 above shows that students use social network for various reasons. The table indicated that majority of them uses social network for non academic purposes than for academic purposes. This indication is well expressed when the highest number of 60 (30%) respondents indicated their reasons to be for chatting with friends, others 30 (15%) respondents stated photo sharing and creating groups of likeminded individuals respectively. While 30 (15%) respondents use social media for academic purpose

**Table 2:** Preferred social network site by respondents.

Social network site	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	94	77
Blogs	6	3
Myspace	10	5
Youtube	40	20
Twitter	30	15
Friendster	13	6.5
Ryze com	3	1.5
Siz degrees.com	4	2
Total	200	100

The data from table 1 above, indicated that most of the respondents preferred facebook, they constitutes 94 (47%) respondents, follow by youtube and twitter with 40 (20%) and 30 (25%) respondents respectively. Others social media sites are also in use but the above stated three social network sites receive higher popularity among students.

**Table 3:** Means of accessing the social network site

Means	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Cell phone	104	52
Personal computer	66	33
Cyber cafes	20	10
All of the above	10	5
Total	200	100

The above table 2 shows that 104 (52%) respondents access the social networking sites through their cell phone, others 66 (33%) respondents access it through their personal computer (Laptop), those that could not afford personal cell phone or laptop used cyber café the constitute 20 (10%) respondents. While, others 10 (5%) respondents indicated that they used all the above mediums. This indicates that most of the students used cell phone to access social media sites

**Research Question 2:** How much time do students spend browsing social network sites?

**Table 4:** Frequency use of social network site

Frequency of use	Frequency	Percentage
Several times a day	136	68
Once a day	44	22
Once a week	9	4.5
Occasionally	11	5.5
Total	200	100

Table 4 above revealed that majority of the students totally 136 (68%) respondents use social network site several times a day, other 44 (22%) respondents indicated that they use it once a day. This shows that the interest to get connected to their friends makes them to frequently use it.

**Table 5:** Time spent on the social network site per visit

Time spent per visit	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 15 minutes	54	27
15-30 minutes	60	30
30-1 hours	70	35
1-2 hours	16	8
Total	200	100

The above table reveals the time students spent when they visit their site of interest. Majority 70 (35%) respondents spend between 30-1hour. This means that each time they log on to the site they spend not less than 30-1 hour. So, when related to data on table 4 it will be clear evidence that the spending of more time on social media has a tendency to reduce the time students spend on their personal readings.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent do students rely on social networking for academic purpose?

**Table 6:** An account with any social network site

Account	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	189	94.5
No	11	05.5
Total	200	100

Data from table 6 above shows that 189 (94.5 %) respondents have an account with social network site while only 11 (05.5%) do not care to register with any of the social network site. This shows that students are aware of social network site and care to have an account with their choice site.

**Table 7:** The extent at which students rely on social network for academic purpose

Students Rely on Social Network	Frequency	Percentage
To a great extent	139	69.5
To some extent	50	25
Not at all	11	5.5
Total	200	100

Table 7 above revealed that majority of the students rely on social network for their academic purpose, they constitute 139 (69.5%) respondents, and other 50 (25%) respondents indicated that they rely on it to some extent. While, 11 (5.5) respondents indicated they do not rely on it. This shows that most of the students rely on social network for their academic purpose

**Research Question: 4** How does a social networking site affect the reading habits of students in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

**Table 8:** Effect of social network site on students reading habit

Effect of social networking site	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
Distract while reading or in class	67(33.5%)	72(36%)	40(20%)	8(4%)	13(6.5%)
Increase socialization contact with friends	129(64.5%)	60(30%)	1(.5%)	-	10(5%)
Reduce time for reading	68(34%)	85(42.5%)	24(12%)	8(4%)	15(7.5%)
Easily make one late to class or miss lecture	59(29.5%)	63(31.5%)	36(18%)	10(5%)	23(16%)
Exposure to illicit act	35(17.5%)	49(24.5%)	41(20.5)	23(11.5%)	52(26%)

From table 8 above, it is clear that social networking site has an effect on the reading habit of students. The first indication is that they get distracted when friends communicate with them while they are reading. These constitute 72 (36%) respondents who are the highest number that strongly agree to this. It is also clear that because they want to make friends, their social contact increases daily, they constitute the highest number of 129 (64.5%) respondents that agree. Others 85 (42.5%) strongly agreed that social network site reduce time for reading. Also 63 (31.5%) respondents strong agree that their concentration on social network site can make one forget time and go to class late or even miss lecture. While 52 (26%) respondents could not make their position known if actually social network site expose them to illicit acts, but the fact still remain that those that agree and strongly agree constitute the highest number of 35(17.5%) and 49(24.5%) respondents respectively.

From this table it can be easily deduced that these are all factors that pose challenges to reading habit of students.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings here will be related to research questions earlier mentioned to have an insight to the study, as follow:

The findings show that the reason for most students' involvement in social network is for chatting with friends. Table 4 shows that 60 (30%) respondents attested to this. Adomi (2012) stated that majority of student use facebook for connecting with friends/relatives and others, also as a platform for keeping in touch with close acquaintance, this however discourage reading habit among students.

The findings also show that the time spent on social network site as indicated in table 4 and 5 is worrisome as that make them spent less time reading. According to Shabi and Udofia (2009) reading habit is quite clearly diminishing these days among youth. This is an ugly trend which has been reported globally and is quite disheartening.

Most of the students rely on social networking for their academic purpose only when they have an assignment to write, or test or exam, table 7 depicted these as their reason for using it academically. This means that they specifically use it to provides answer and not learning. This is however detrimental to students' academic performance because they are lazy to read extensively to find solution problems.

Findings on effect of social network site on students reading habit clearly shows that despite the positive academic advantage of social network site many students uses it negatively. Table 8 depicted most students are distracted while in class or reading because of their involvement in using the social media. This study can be related to Jacobsen and Forste (2011) finding which indicates that electronic media use is negatively associated with lower grades.

The study realizes that, most of the students use social media as an entertainment media that is attractive and which provides a good way to release pressure. To some extent this reduced their focus on learning and reading time. Ofuani and Gbenedio (2009) noted that reading empowers the mind, broadens the reader's vision and deepens his mind. It widens students' horizon, thought and knowledge and wisdom are obtained among others. But, student that does not read extensively is narrow minded and thought less

## Conclusion and Recommendation

It is clear that most of the students in Ahmadu Bello University have taken advantage of social networking sites to enhance their social relationship with friends, relations and others. They also use the social medium to share and exchange academic information. Though they enjoy these benefits from social network, some of the students reported that the social media has resulted in distraction in classroom and reading habit because of reduction in time spent reading.

Since technology is the main order of the day, the study therefore concluded that social networking could be used wisely, not only for keeping in touch with friends, but could be used wisely to source for vital information that would be of great benefit to the student and the society of large.

The following are recommendation in views of the findings of this study:

1. Proper orientation on when and how to operate social network sites such as facebook, 2go and so on should be given to students in tertiary institutions.
2. Since most of these students access social network sites with wireless network (cell phones) these wireless network should not be put on during lecture hours.
3. The social media being an effective tool of transformation should be use intensify campaign enlightenment on the negative effect on student's future as leaders. This campaign should be reinforced by way of interpersonal communication among individuals and groups in schools and gathering places, the message should be imparted through music, drama, lectures displays and other forms of interaction.

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