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Socio-Economic Status and Use of Social Media by Undergraduates in Redeemer's University, Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

There is a mass appeal of social media on the Internet in recent times. Perhaps, this is due to the gradually increasing amount of time that undergraduate students spend on the Internet to the detriment of their studies. The study, therefore, investigated socioeconomic status and use of social media by undergraduates in Redeemer's University, Osun State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design of the correlational type. Data were collected from 121 undergraduates of the Redeemer's University with the use of a structured questionnaire with Cronbach alpha ($\alpha = 0.78$). Data analysis was done using frequency count and percentage distribution to answer the research question 1 - 3 while the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient at 0.05 level of significance was used to answer the research question 4. The main social media use by the undergraduates includes Facebook (100.0%), WhatsApp (86.8%), Ebuddy and (82.6%). Socio-economic status of affluence for undergraduates' use of social media include: dignifying parental occupation, parental educational qualification, and steady monthly allowance. The students used social media

for chatting (71.9%), checking through wall/news (76.9%), sharing information, files, photos, and documents (100.0%). Socio-economic status has significant relationship with use of social media ($r = .816^*$; $df = 120$; $p < 0.05$). The undergraduates use different types of social media for leisure, entertainment and knowledge sharing. It was, therefore, recommended that university authorities should seek to appreciate the use of social media for academic purposes; researchers should focus more on studies of social media use in education, and so on.

Keywords: Socioeconomic status, social media, Internet, undergraduates

Introduction

In the Information Age that often refers to as 21st Century, information and communication technologies (ICTs) has become a potent force in the transformation of the social, economic and political life of people across the globe. More and more, development strategies are based on the need for developing countries to embrace information technology both as a way to avoid further economic and social marginalisation and to offer opportunities for both growth and diversification of human economies. The uneven distribution of these technologies within societies and across the world has been termed "the digital divide". It reflects a division between the information "haves" and "have nots" on many areas that often overlap within countries by race, ethnic group, socio-economic class, age,

religion, and gender, between countries; and globally, between those who have access to abundant information resources and those who do not have.

Undergraduates and other information users in developing countries appear to dominate the central point of reference in the digital divide, further removed from the Information Age than the non-students and other information users whose poverty they share. The class gap in the digital divide is of increasing concern. If access to and use of new technologies is at the change directly linked to social and economic development, then it is imperative to ensure that undergraduates and other information users in developing countries understand the significance of new technologies and their uses.

This research, therefore, is aimed at investigating undergraduates' perceptions of the use of social media in the learning

process at the university level. It is also aimed at ascertaining the alternative social media that undergraduate students visit more often for academic matters and other private purposes. The research was borne out of the need to investigate what could be responsible for the inability of appropriate authorities to successfully integrate the use of social media into the university education system in Nigeria. Particular attention was paid to variables of socio-economic status as it affects the use of social media for academic purposes by undergraduates in Redeemer's University, Osun State, Nigeria.

There are countless problems of social media usage among undergraduate students which has recently been the major focus of attention worldwide. Issues of cyber fraud, cyberbullying, cyber insecurity, identity thefts, pornography and many other negative influences associated with social media, in general, have been a cause of concern for stakeholders in universities among who are lecturers, scholars and authorities worldwide. *Rank (2014)* which is a continually updated average of

each website's *Alexa Global Traffic Rank*, and *U.S. Traffic Rank* from both *Compete* and *Quantcast* include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram, VK, Flickr, Vine, Meetup, Tagged, Ask.FM, MeetMe, and ClassMates. Most students typically use just one or two social media and do not change their profiles often. They are not very concerned about privacy and security issues, perhaps because their common practice is to place access restrictions on their social media profiles. They participate in a limited number of social media groups (one of five) and average about an hour a day using social media networks. Within this framework, students keep in touch with literally hundreds of widely dispersed friends – most of whom they have already met in person.

Several studies have been done on how social media influence the communication process among students in higher institutions of learning. Many parents are worried that undergraduates in Nigerian universities now-adays spend too much time on Facebook and other social media for mere

social interaction, leisurely entertainment and not e-nough time studying. It has been generally observed by stakeholders in the Nigerian education sector among those who are lecturers and librarians that most students cannot even spend up to an hour in many instances without checking or updating their profiles on social media. Yet, the students do not dedicate enough time to various academic activities both within and outside the university environments. Some researchers even perceived that undergraduate students from a very rich or averagely rich family background could afford to buy expensive ICT devices such as laptops, smartphones and other tools to access and use social media, and as such spend a longer amount of time on social networking than students from poor family background without smartphones. Despite all these submissions, there is a dearth of studies on the influence of socio-economic status on the use of social media by undergraduates in Nigerian universities. Such an empirical study is necessary to obtain information for policy-making by management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria,

including Redeemer's University, on how to harness social media for the educational advancement of undergraduates.

With advances in technology, more information becomes available to the public through a wide range of channels. Users can access information not only through traditional, printed sources but also sources in various formats via the Internet. There are increasing concerns on the use of social media for Internet crimes ranging from hacking to recruitment for terrorism. Though there is high usage of social media by Nigerian students, it did not necessarily mean that they are using it for academic pursuits. Facebook and WhatsApp have emerged as the most popular and widely used social media by university students. Hence, students believed that social media is an essential medium that helps them to interact, communicate and expose themselves to pornography. This is a dangerous trend as it negatively influenced them to engage in bad attitudes. Similarly, there is a high frequency of usage of social media by Nigerian undergraduates. There is another danger in hours

spent surfing the net, the amount of which will affect their academic output. This addiction of undergraduate students to the use of social media could be linked to their socio-economic status in the same way that socio-economic status has also been linked to students' academic imbalance in school (APA Bulletin, 2009).

Thus, socioeconomic status is not that important to build new networks but it is certainly helpful to maintain existing networks (APA Bulletin, 2009). Undergraduates' socio-economic background may greatly influence their online addictive behaviour since the individual's economic viability determines the quality and quantity as well as how long a good service could be consumed. Thus, undergraduates' access to funds and provision of technological equipment by parents and caregivers may influence their high use of information technology devices and in turn have direct access to social networking sites. The socio-economic status could be described as several measures of inequality, practice, education, and advocacy (APA Bulletin, 2009). Thus, socioeconomic sta-

tus is concerned with an individual's activities and feelings of self-worth that shape him as an economically active person.

Culture, social background, religion and education are the main elements that are explored by socio-economists. They present the economic activity and the economic classes within society and indicate the stage of development of multi-culturalism and integration within the developed states and the developing economies. Socio-economic factors, also widely spoken of as SES (Socio-economic Status), is two things: (1) Financial resources or income; and (2) level of education (Shishehgar, Dolatian, Majd and Bakhtiary, 2014). Socio-economic status is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and an individual or family's economic and social position concerning others, based on income, education, and occupation (APA Bulletin, 2009).

When placing a family or individual into one of these categories, any or all of the three variables (income, education

and occupation) can be assessed. Additionally, low income and little education have shown to be strong predictors of a range of physical, mental and psychological issues that a person may pass through at a time. These may be due to environmental conditions in schools/workplaces, or in the case of mental disturbances, that the entire cause of a person's social predicament may begin with (Shishehgar *et al.*, 2014).

Undergraduates' socio-economic background may greatly influence their online addictive behaviour since the individual's economic viability determines the quality and quantity as well as how long a good and service could be consumed. Thus, student's access to funds and provision of technological equipment by parents and caregivers may influence their excessive use of computers and in turn, SNSs use. The socio-economic status could be described as some measures of inequality, practice, education, and advocacy (APA Bulletin, 2009). However, the relationship between parental socio-economic status and youth online addictive behaviour itself is unclear. Northwestern University recently published research

state that social networking sites are not affecting students' GPAs. Ethnic background and parental education appear to have more of an influence than the amount of time used on social networking sites. Northwestern researchers believe that "social networking use did not affect the difference in GPAs between male and female or white and African American students. When researchers controlled the demographic of parental education, there seemed to be a positive relationship between Internet use and GPA.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been answered in the study:

1. What are the types of social media used by undergraduates in Redeemer's University?
2. What is the socio-economic status of undergraduates at Redeemer's University?
3. What are the activities that undergraduates in Redeemer's University carry out on social media?
4. What is the relationship between socio-economic status and the use of social media by undergraduates in Redeemer's University?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design of correlational type was adopted in the study. The population of the study consists of all 300 level undergraduate students in Redeemer's University who have been sufficiently integrated into the university educational programme for about three years. A two-stage sampling technique was adopted to ensure equal allocation of three departments to each of the three colleges in the University. The departments include Economics, Political Science and

Sociology (from College of Management Sciences); English, History and International Relations and Theater Arts (from College of Humanities); and Computer Science, Microbiology and Physics (from College of Natural Sciences). Finally, Probability Proportionate to Size (PPS) of 50.0% was used to draw the sample size giving a total of 126 respondents. However, only 121 (96.0%) copies of the instrument administered were returned with useful responses upon completion by the respondents.

Results

The response rate on demographic information of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age, Gender, Marital Status and Religion

Age categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 20yrs	78	64.5
20-24yrs	34	28.1
25-29yrs	7	5.8
30-34yrs	2	1.7
Gender		
Male	79	65.3
Female	42	34.7
Marital Status		
Single	113	93.4

Married	8	6.6
Religion		
Christianity	119	98.3
Islam	2	1.7
African Traditional Religion	-	-
N	121	

Table 1 showed that 78 (64.5%) respondents were aged below 20 years. Only 2 (1.7%) were between ages 30-34 years. This means that respondents for the study were still in their youthful and active years of university education social life and the attendant youthful experience. Similarly, 79 (65.3%) of the respondents were males. This implies that there were more male students compared to females in the departments selected for the study. On marital status, 113 (93.4%) respondents were single. This is expected as most of the respondents were single and rightly conform to their age bracket. Finally, the majority of 119 (98.3%) respondents were Christians. This could be due to the nature of the university as a faith-based institution established by the Redeemers' Christians Church of God.

Types of social media used by undergraduate students in Redeemer's University

Table 2 presents information on the various types of social media used by undergraduate students.

Table 2: Social media use by Undergraduate Students in Redeemer's University

Years of Social Media Use by Undergraduates	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-6 months	13	10.7
6 months to a year	-	-
1-2 years	-	-
2-3 years	7	5.8
Over 3 years	101	83.5
Number of Friends on Social		

Media Network		
1-20	-	-
21-60	-	-
61-100	13	10.7
100 - 1000	26	21.5
Above 1000	82	67.8
Social Media Networks Used		
Classmate.com	-	-
Cross.tv	-	-
Blogstar	54	44.6
Academia.edu	64	52.9
Twitter	100	82.6
Facebook	121	100.0
Ebuddy	100	82.6
MySpace	94	77.7
Audimated.com	94	77.7
Flickr	116	95.9
WhatsApp	105	86.8
LibraryThing	38	31.4
GetGlue	-	-
Biip.no	-	-
hi5	-	-
My Opera	13	10.7
Netlog	72	59.5
Open Diary	101	83.5
Playfire	58	47.9
Wiki	87	71.9
Xanga	34	28.1
N		121

Table 2 shows that 101 (83.5%) of the respondents have been using social media for over 3 years. Only 7 (5.8%) have been using social media networks for periods between 2-3 years. This implies that respondents were experienced social media users. Table 2 further reveals that 83 (67.8%) respondents had more than 1000

friends on social media. It was found out that 121 (100.0%) respondents used Facebook, 116 (95.9%) respondents used Flickr, while 34 (28.1%) used Xanga. Based on the results in Table 2, the main social media used by the undergraduate students include: Flickr, Facebook, WhatsApp, Ebuddy, Twitter, Academia.edu, Netlog and Wiki in that order.

Socio-economic Status of Undergraduates in Redeemer's University

Table 3a and Table 3b present information on the socio-economic status that determines the use of social media by undergraduates.

Table 3a: Socio-economic status of undergraduates

Father's/Guardian's Highest Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Nil	-	-
SSCE	20	16.5
Grade II Certificate	35	28.9
NCE/OND	-	-
HND/First Degree	28	23.1
M.Phil/PhD	38	31.4
PhD	-	-
Mother's/Guardian's Highest Educational Qualification		
SSCE	13	10.7
Grade II Certificate	7	5.8
NCE/OND	21	17.4
HND/First Degree	34	28.1
Masters' Degree	33	27.3
M.Phil/PhD	13	10.7
PhD	-	-
Father's/ Guardian's Occupation		
Farming/Trading	14	11.6
Civil Servant/Government	94	77.7

Employed		
Artisan/Vocation Expert	13	10.7
Mother's/ Guardian's Occupation		
Farming/Trading	27	22.3
Civil Servant/Government Employed	88	72.7
Artisan/Vocation Expert	6	5.0
Household income per month		
Less than 10,000		
10,000 - 59,999	7	5.8
60,000 - 99,999	-	-
100,000 - 159,999	-	-
160,000 - 199,999	28	23.1
200,000 and Above	86	71.1
Undergraduates' Monthly Up-keep/Allowance		
Less than 10,000	7	5.8
10,000 - 59,999	63	52.1
60,000 - 99,999	51	42.1
Housing	-	-
Bungalow	9	7.4
Bungalow Flat	-	-
Duplex	10	8.3
Face me and I face you	-	-
Flat	87	71.9
Story Building	15	12.4

Table 3a shows that the fathers/guardians of 38 (31.4%) had M.Phil /Ph.D. while the mothers/guardians of 34 (28.1%) had HND/First Degree. This is adequate since the students' parents/guardians were literate persons with a minimum of SSCE educational qualification prerequisite for reading and writing skills. Table 3a further shows that the fathers/guardians of 94 (77.7%) were Civil Servant/government Employed. Similarly, the

mothers/guardians of 88 (72.7%) were Civil Servant/Government Employed. On household income, 86 (71.1%) indicated that their household income was 200,000 and above. Similarly, 63 (52.1%) affirmed that their monthly allowance ranged between 10,000-59,999. This is quite in good proportion with the students' household income.

Table 3b: Socio-economic status of undergraduates (Continued)

Residential Area	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Slum area	13	10.7
Estate	45	37.2
Developing area	33	27.3
Well-developed area	30	24.8
Housing status		
Rented apartment	40	33.1
Personally owned by parents	81	66.9
Household items owned		
Electric generator	36	29.8
Satellite dish	114	94.2
Vehicle e.g. car	115	95.0
Pit Latrine/Bushy area	-	-
Water closet toilet	121	100.0
Housing floor materials		
Cement	23	19.0
Mosaic (tile)	98	81.0
Wood	-	-
Housing wall materials		
Cement	121	100.0
Wood	-	-
Wood/Cement "disposable"	-	-
Water source		
Public well	-	-
Buy	7	5.8
Water station	-	-
Personal borehole/well	114	94.2
N		121

Table 3b reveals that 87 (71.9%) of the respondents indicated that their households live in flats. However, only 45 (37.2%) had their house situated in estates. Table 3b also shows that 81 (66.9%) of the respondents indicated that they live in houses personally owned by their parents. Table 3b equally shows that 121 (100.0%) respondents indicated that there was a water closet (WC) toilet in their house. In addition, 98 (81.0%) affirmed that their house floor was fixed with mosaic (tile), and 121 (100.0%) indicated that their house wall was plastered with cement. In addition, Table 3b shows that 114 (94.2%) respondents indicated that they used personal borehole/well as their sources of water supply. Based on the observation from Table 3a and b, the socio-economic status of the undergraduates that could influence their use of social media includes parental occupation, parental educational qualification, financial background, housing, and adequate sources of portable water.

Activities that the undergraduates in Redeemer's University carry out on social media

Table 4 presents the response rate on activities that undergraduates carry out on social media.

Table 4: Activities carried out by undergraduates on social media

Activities on Social Media	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Private/messages	80	66.1
Photos	74	61.2
Chat	87	71.9
Wall/news	93	76.9
Videos	94	77.7
Events	94	77.7
Music player	101	83.5
Notes on academic matters	114	94.2
Content links	101	83.5

Groups	101	83.5
Games	20	16.5
Activities Enjoyed more on Social Media		
Arrange to meet a group of friends	55	45.5
Find out what is happening among group of friends	114	94.2
Comment on photos/videos/other comments	108	89.3
Share information, files, photos, documents	121	100.0
Gossip/browse	13	10.7
Get back in touch with other people	108	89.3
Tell others about what I am doing	14	11.6
Make friends	108	89.3
Look for a partner/date	14	11.6
Find out what has been covered in class during non-attendance	121	100.0
Exchange useful documentation and information resources for my course of study	121	100.0
Resolve doubt about life at university	121	100.0
Find out about activities organised by the university	101	83.5
Consult recommendations on books or resources made by my lecturers	94	77.7
N	121	

Table 4 shows that 74 (61.2%) of the students used social media to share photograph pictures. In the same vein, 87 (71.9%) of the respondents used social media for chatting. However, only 20 (16.5%) of the respondents played games on social media. In addition, Table 4 shows that activities enjoyed more on social media by the undergraduate students include: 114 (94.2%) respondents who used social media to find out what is happening among a group of friends, 121 (100.0%) who used social media to share

information, files, photos and documents. However, only 13 (10.7%) respondents indicated that they used social media to gossip/browse. From the observation of responses in Table 4, undergraduates' use of social media includes: chatting, checking through wall/news, sharing information, files, photos and documents, finding out what is happening among group of friends, making friends, among others.

Relationship between socioeconomic status and use of social media by undergraduates in Redeemer's University

Table 5 presents information on the relationship between socio-economic status and the use of social media by undergraduates at Redeemer's University.

Table 5: The relationship between socio-economic status and use of social media by undergraduate students

Variables	N	r	df	Sig. (p)	Remarks
Socio-economic status	121	.816**	120	.000	Significant
Use of social media	121				

Table 5 shows that there is a significant relationship ($r = .816^{**}$; $df = 120$; $p < 0.05$) between socio-economic status and use of social media. This implies that students from a very high socio-economic class are likely to use social media more than their contemporaries from a low socio-economic class.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that the main social media used by the undergraduates at Redeemer's University include: Flickr, Facebook, WhatsApp, Ebuddy, Twitter, Academia.edu, Netlog and Wiki. The findings, therefore, corroborates the *eBizMBA*

Rank (2014) list of social media that were commonly used by people which include: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram, VK, Flickr, Vine, Meetup, Tagged, Ask.FM, Meet Me, and Class Mates. The finding equally conforms with Flores (2009) who mentioned the new

technological tools (social networks such as Facebook, blogs, Twitter, Instagram, Badoo, ebuddy, LinkedIn, Twitter, video platforms, and so on).

It was found out that socioeconomic factors that contribute more to the undergraduates' use of social media include: parental occupation, parental educational qualification, financial background, housing, and borehole/well as main sources of water supply. The findings support the assertion of APA Bulletin (2009), that undergraduates' socio-economic background may greatly influence their online addictive behaviour since the individual's economic viability determines the quality and quantity as well as how long a good and service could be consumed. Perhaps, this is why Shishegar, *et al.* (2014) posit that socio-economic factors, also widely spoken of as SES (socio-economic status), are two things: (1) Financial resources or income, and (2) level of education.

Results revealed that undergraduate students' use of social media includes: chatting, checking through wall/news, sharing information, files, photos, documents, finding out what is

happening among a group of friends, making friends, among others. The findings support Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) who indicated that social media provide a virtual platform where people of similar interests may gather to communicate, share and discuss ideas.

The study established that there is a statistically significant relationship between socio-economic status and the use of social media. The finding is in line with Brooks *et al.* (2011) who submitted that higher socioeconomic status relates to larger and denser networks but not networks with more clusters so they concluded that socioeconomic status is not that important to build new networks but it is certainly helpful to maintain existed networks.

Conclusion

The use of the Internet to access and use social media for various purposes by undergraduates in Nigeria including the Redeemer's University undergraduates is becoming increasingly popular. The majority of the undergraduates especially at Redeemer's University use different types of

social media for leisure, entertainment, knowledge sharing and different academic activities. The parents/guardians of the students were literate individuals, have dignifying occupations, were averagely rich and could afford to give a substantial amount of money as a monthly allowance to the students. These attributes constitute the major affluence that probably helps the students to have access to requisite ICT devices that enhance their use of social media judiciously for leisure, entertainment and academic purposes. Therefore, there is an empirical link between socio-economic status and undergraduates' use of social media not only for entertainment but also for educational purposes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made after having a careful look at the findings of this study:

1. Social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Podcast, ClassMate, Academia, and so on are not only gaining popularity each year, they are becoming the primary form of communication

between tertiary institution students wherever they go. Knowing this, Nigerian university authorities should explore these sites to find out what attracts students to this type of communication and thus look for the appropriate ways to channel its use towards academic matters.

2. The findings that relate to the purpose of use of social media by the undergraduate students, for example, chatting, checking through wall/news, sharing information, sharing files and photos is an indication that more attention needs to be placed on understanding social media platforms and their significant features and be able to identify the particular media for supporting the education of tertiary institution students. Thus, the management of universities needs to not only be aware of what sites students are participating in but also the significant role that these sites have in the lives of students. Though most of the social media platforms have the potential to distract students from studying, homework, or other

academic requirements, they can also benefit students if used properly and appropriately.

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