

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

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Abstract

The study sought to examine the impact of social media platforms on academic performance of postgraduate students in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Adopting a purposive sampling technique, questionnaire was used to collect data from one hundred postgraduate students in Faculty which was analysed descriptively using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Findings of the study revealed that Zoom meetings is the major social media platforms available for improving academic performance in the study site; Zoom meetings is also the major social platform that has high impact on academic performance. Too much academic workload, barriers to full participation in coursework units are the major barriers to utilizing social media platforms for improving academic performance of the postgraduate students. The study recommended that the faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria should create awareness on the importance of other social media platforms such as AdobeConnect, BigBlueButton, Moodle, and Vedado Virtual Classroom for improved academic performances of students and; adequate academic workload should be allocated to staff of the study area and they should be allowed to fully participate in coursework units for effective service delivery.

Keywords: Academic performance, Impact, Perception, Platform, Postgraduate, Social Media Students.

Introduction

Social media platforms have grown in popularity and their adoption in educational settings have gradually become enormous. Usage of these tools continues to proliferate; placing continued demand on instructional designers to develop appropriate applications of these Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for the benefit of learners becomes very high. The devices and their software did not necessarily arise with educational purposes in mind, but they found their way into an educational setting. Online tools must be subject to pedagogical consideration and practical instructional design (Hargittai& Shafer, 2016).

In effect, social media platforms are making students not to be confined to a particular building or restricted to any single location or moment. Chen (2013) encourages researchers to consider various technical and methodological aspects of possible educational research undertaken from social media platforms. Chen (2013) defines social media platforms as a system for delivering learning materials to students via the web or other platforms. This system includes assessment, student tracking, collaboration and communication tools. Social media platforms allow researchers to store various documents quickly and efficiently, but to use these data for subsequent analysis. They must conduct series of operations to transform and organise the data.

Social media platforms play a key vital role in the development of any nation. It has been an instrument for achieving social, economic, educational, scientific and technological development (Adedeji, 2013). Social media platforms have greatly influenced the educational sector, especially in teaching, learning, and research. The school learning environment offers opportunities for Postgraduate and undergraduate students to come together for institutional teaching and learning process. Various technological gadgets are used to facilitate the setup in this learning process. Such advanced technologies include the internet, e-mail, website, mobile phone, iPod e.t.c. (Mangal and Mangal, 2017). These advanced technologies are variable tools for rendering valuable assistance and an excellent alternative to the traditional method of education. This alternative could be in the form of a virtual classroom

The current utilization of social media platforms has revolutionised students to adopt social media online networks to communicate what they are taught, hold brainstorming sessions, manage projects, share best practices and share information without face-to-face encounters with others. According to Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zikuhr (2014), almost three-quarters of all college students (72%) utilised the social media platforms' machine to create a profile on social media, with 45% of university students using it at least once a day.

Reports show that this generation of students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria spend considerable time on networking sites and virtual communities (Henderson and Bowley, 2013).

Information sharing refers to data exchange between various organisations, people and technologies. The advent of wide distributed networks, intranets, cross-platform compatibility, application porting and standardisation of Internet Protocol (IP) have all facilitated the huge growth in global information sharing. Information sharing amongst postgraduate students has become easy and free. The lecturer in the tertiary institution can create a platform on social media networks where students interact with each other on the course outline or any assignment given to them by their postgraduate lecturers. The networks permit and favour the publication and sharing of information; self-learning; teamwork; communication, both between students and students-teachers; feedback; access to other sources of information (Imbernón, Silva, and Guzmán (2016).

Utilization of social media platforms has become the ideal space for students to exchange information and knowledge in a swift, convenient and straightforward way (Lewis and West, 2012). This implied that social media platforms can increase learners' tendency to learn multitask, develop social autonomy through added tools and a flexible learning environment. It also provides learners the extended programme beyond the four walls of the classroom anywhere, anytime, as long as learners have log-on access to virtual classrooms through the Institution's portal. Although social media platforms cannot work on their own except there is a working internet connected to a computer system, both lecturer and students possess the e-skills and knowledge to access, use, and interact with it. Therefore, in the light of the above aforementioned, this study hinged upon examining the utilisation of social media platforms for information sharing by Postgraduate students in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Brief History of School of Postgraduate Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

The Postgraduate School now School of Postgraduate Studies was established by Statute 21 of Ahmadu Bello University Law. It established Postgraduate School (now School of Postgraduate Studies) in 1980. All admitted students pursuing postgraduate programmes in Ahmadu Bello University are students of the School of Postgraduate Studies. The Academic Departments in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria are responsible for the delivery of academic programmes as well as the supervision of research activities undertaken by students.

The Colleges and Faculties oversee the Academic Departments in performing their functions in the area of postgraduate studies in the University while the Board of the School of Postgraduate Studies regulates the academic activities of postgraduate studies in the University. The Senate is the overall authority that approves all postgraduate academic programmes and activities in the university system. The seventeen (17) Faculties offer a wide range of opportunities for postgraduate programmes and research in Administration, Agriculture, Arts, Business School, Education, Engineering, Environmental Design, Law, Basic Medical Sciences, Basic Clinical Sciences, Clinical Sciences, Allied Health Sciences, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, Social Sciences, Veterinary Medicine and Centre for Distance Learning (DLC).

The Postgraduate School was later restructured in 2017 for more effectiveness and accommodate higher efficiency. The restructuring reflects the pathways which all Postgraduate students must statutorily pass through during the course of their studies in the University. Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria has made clear the registration procedure for the newly admitted postgraduate students (ABU, 2017).

Statement of the problem

The advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has eased academic activities in the university system most especially in the area of postgraduate programmes. Making use of social media platforms in the academic activities enable postgraduate students to be abreast with this technological advancement in the area of academic adventures.

Since the commencement of postgraduate programmes in the Faculty of Education Ahmadu Bello University (A.B.U) Zaria, no study has been carried out on this topic. It is on this premise that the researchers would like to bring to the fore the impact of social media platforms on the postgraduate students' academic performance in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria .so that the awareness of the use of these platforms would be made known to the public in order to block this lacuna of not being able to know the impact of social media platforms on the postgraduate students' academic performance in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Research questions

The following are the research questions put forward to guide the study.

1. What are the social media platforms available for improving academic performance of postgraduate students in the faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria?
2. What is the level of impact of social media platforms on academic performance of postgraduate students in the faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria?
3. What are the challenges faced while utilizing social media platforms for improving academic performance of postgraduate students in the faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria?

Significance of the Study

The study will be relevant to academic institutions, administrators, library committees, librarians, students and researchers. In specific terms, the findings will be significant to academic institutions' libraries. It is hoped that it will create awareness to the library committee as regards the impact of social media on academic performance of postgraduate students thereby deploying social media tools in providing information services to its users. The findings will also be useful to users by creating awareness on impact of social media on academic performance of postgraduate students. Users will get an

improvement in the information services offered as a result of the recommendations of this study. In another clime, the result of the study will add to the body of knowledge and serve as a reference material for other researchers who wish to undergo research in a related field.

Literature Review

Social media platforms have become the core gate-way to innovation and educational change. As opined by Kukulska-Hulme (2012), “time of change” has become a popular refrain in the speech about higher education. The author highlighted that the advancement in technology and services based on the technology will change experiences and the public’s expectations and perception as far as knowledge access and sharing are concerned, adding that tertiary educational institutions have to provide more online learning and content as well as more effective tools to find and use contents. The study revealed zoom meetings, cisco webex meetings, adobe connect, big blue button video virtual classroom among others. The Social media platforms for information sharing include the following:

Zoom Meetings: Zoom is a remote conferencing service that allows colleagues, students and Postgraduate students to hold virtual meetings with one another from anywhere with an internet connection. Zoom brings the team together to get more done in a frictionless and secure video environment with easy, reliable and innovative videos, unified communication platforms, video meetings, voice webinars and chat across all devices and spaces, like zoom meetings & chat, zoom video webinars, zoom room. Zoom has an option for collaborative platforms [VLEs], scheduling classes, recording and sharing resources. These options and other technical tools are used to interact with their students in the virtual classroom (Shambareet *al.*, (2012).

Cisco Webex Meetings: Cisco Webex Meetings is the world’s most popular video conferencing service for the enterprise that Postgraduate students equally use for disseminating information to colleagues and their supervisors. With Cisco Webex Meetings, Postgraduate students can meet securely with integrated audio, video, and content sharing on

the collaborative platforms on any device. Meet, connect and collaborate efficiently, securely and reliably (Heeter, (2006). Intelligent features including Webex Assistant and People Insights bring artificial intelligence to automate meeting tasks and enhance course delivery. Webex was deeply integrated into the tool used every day including Microsoft teams, google, canvas, cardplay and many more.

AdobeConnect: Adobe Connect grants Postgraduate students the real power of collaborative platforms using its versatile stage to design and deliver stellar virtual experiences for their diverse students. With Adobe Connect, postgraduate students can deliver training, give talks at webinars, and meetings in extraordinary and secure ways far beyond the reach of an ordinary classroom(Kim *et al.*, 2009). Deliver real experience: experience the real power of collaborative platforms in letting individuals reach audiences of all backgrounds and abilities across the globe. Look no further: a single platform to plan, deliver and track.

BigBlueButton: BigBlueButton is a free software and web conferencing system intended for use in online learning. It supports real-time sharing of audio, video, slides (with whiteboard controls), chat, and the screen. Postgraduate students can engage remote students with polling, emojis, multi-user whiteboard, and breakout rooms. They can also record and playback content for later sharing with others. BigBlueButton supports online tutoring (one-to-one), Flipped classrooms (recording content ahead of lectures), Group collaboration (many-to-many) and Online classes (one-to-many)(De Andrea *et al.*, 2002).

Moodle: Moodle is a widely used, free of charge, open-source learning platform. Moodle promotes a collaborative approach. It was initially made for education, training and development environments to help educators create online courses focusing on interaction and collaboration, though it has been extended to business settings lately.

Vedado Virtual Classroom: Vedado virtual classroom is an easy to secure and access live teaching platform. Vedado virtual classroom includes screen sharing, an interactive

whiteboard, document editor, break-out rooms, a synchronised media player, online storage for learning resources and gamification.

Shambare *et al.*, (2012) conducted a study on social networking habits among students, their study indicated that such Medias most commonly used by Younger's and Facebook is most widely using by a large number of communities and have multiple effects on student's life. The high speed and quickly approach to internet and the development of smart phone technology are most important drivers behind the adoption and connectivity with social networking websites and conclude that social networking platforms enhance their knowledge level. The study of Ahmad (2011) showed that social media platform networking sites have number of advantages for their users, it enables the community to keep in touch with their peers and relink with old ones and help to find new friends according to your interest from all around the environment and a great number of persons are linking with these networks. Hence the network of social media is growing globally.

Higher education providers are becoming increasingly aware of the diversity of their current and potential learners and are moving to provide a range of options for their engagement (Gillett-Swan, 2017). According to Gillett-Swan (2017), the increasingly flexible delivery modes available for university students provided multiple pathways and opportunities for those seeking further education.

Boateng & Amankwaa (2016) asserted that social media has influenced instructors, students, and other academic stakeholders to unite with each other to promote knowledge construction in teaching and learning. George & Dellasega (2011) contend that the use of social media platforms improves students' learning opportunities, fosters collaborative studies and group discussion, allows for communication outside the classroom, and enhances critical thinking. Today, students are exposed to social media platforms on a daily basis; they use desktop computers, laptops, tablets and mobilephones to actively engage in social media

platforms for chatting, blogging, content sharing and online learning purposes (Cassidy, Griffin, Manolovitz, Shen, &Turney, 2011).

Recent study conducted by the Center for Analysis and Research, University of Washington on Faculty's and student's perception and experiences with social media as an academic resource reveal that social media assists students with acquiring new information, facilitates connections with course material and peers, and improves productivity (Tara and Janice, 2015).

A one-size-fits-all approach is often used in changing between and across modes. Internal content is converted into a form deemed suitable for external delivery. However, there is a significant problem with the one-size-fits-all approach for external students who felt or experienced isolation. Compared to their internal counterparts, these students often faced several barriers to their full participation in coursework units. These barriers may not be experienced by those engaging in these same units via face-to-face or blended enrolment modes and therefore present another type of learner to consider in the planning and implementation of learning activities online. The barriers to participation appear particularly evident in group work activities. The online environment also presents challenges for academic staff who increasingly require higher technological competency and proficiency on top of their regular academic workload (Gillett-Swan, 2017).

Methodology

Questionnaire was administered online through Whatsapp and Email to the postgraduate students of the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The population of this study comprised of one thousand one hundred and eighty two (1,182) postgraduate students in the 2019/2020 academic session of the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

The sample size of one hundred (100) postgraduate students of the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria was used to represent the population. For the

purpose of this research, data was collected and analysed based on the answers and opinions of the respondents derived from the questionnaire. The data collected from the questionnaire were analysed using frequencies and percentages presented in tables and bar charts for better representation and understanding. The data were also analysed descriptively with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.

Results

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	52	52.0
Female	48	48.0
Are you a postgraduate student?		
Yes	63	63.0
No	37	37.0
Department		
Library and Information Science	30	30.0
Institute of Education	22	22.0
Mass Communication	20	20.0
Geography	8	8.0
Geology	8	8.0
Administration and Planning	12	12.0

Table 1 revealed bio-data of respondents where majority of the respondents, 52(52%) are males, while 48(48%) are females. Large number of participants, 63(63%) are postgraduate students while 37(37%) are not. Most of the participants, 30(30%) are in Library and Information Science department, 22(22%) are in institute of education, 20(20%) are in mass communication, 12(12%) are in administration and planning, while 8(8%) are in geography and geology, respectively.

Table 2: Types of social media platforms available for improving academic performance of postgraduate students

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Cisco Webex Meetings	40	40.0
Zoom Meetings	60	60.0

Table 2 revealed the types of social media platforms available for improving academic performance of postgraduate students. Cisco Webex meetings was revealed to be available by

40(40%), while Zoom meetings was revealed to be available by 60(60%) of participants. This inferred that Zoom meetings are the major social media platform available for improving academic performance of postgraduate students in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This is in agreement with the study of Kukulska-Hulme (2012), which stated that “time of change” has become a popular refrain in the speech about higher education. The author highlighted that the advancement in technology and services based on the technological knowhow will change experiences and the public’s expectations as far as knowledge access and sharing is concerned, adding that higher educational institutions have to provide more online learning and content such as Zoom meetings as well as more effective tools to find and use contents.

Table 3: Impact of social media platforms on academic performance of postgraduate students

Variables	High impact	Low impact	Undecided
Zoom Meetings	80(80.0%)	10(10.0%)	0
Cisco Webex Meetings	30(42.9%)	20(28.6%)	20(28.6%)
AdobeConnect	0	20(50.0%)	20(50.0%)
BigBlueButton	0	20(50.0%)	20(50.0%)
Moodle	0	20(50.0%)	20(50.0%)

In table 3, impact of social media platforms on academic performance of postgraduate students was ascertained. Zoom meetings was revealed by 80(80%) to have high impact on academic performance, 30(42.9%) has high impact, while AdobeConnect, BigBlueButton, and Moodle have low impact, respectively. These findings therefore inferred that Zoom meetings are the major social platform that has high impact on academic performance of postgraduate students, faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This in agreement with findings of Shambare *et al.*, (2012) who opined that Zoom meetings has an option for collaborative platforms [VLEs], scheduling classes, recording and sharing resources. These options and other technical tools are used to interact with their students in the virtual classroom.

Table 4: Challenges faced by the postgraduate students while utilizing social media platforms for improving academic performance

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Too much academic workload	40	40.0
Barriers to full participation in coursework units	40	40.0
Barriers to participation in group work activities	20	20.0

Challenges faced while utilizing social media platforms for improving academic performance

was revealed in table 4. Twenty participants affirmed that they were faced with barriers of participating in group work activities, while majority of the participants, 40(40%) revealed that they faced the problem of too much academic workload and barriers to full participation in coursework units respectively. This also inferred that too much academic workload and barriers to full participation in coursework units are the major barriers to utilization of social media platforms for improving academic performance of postgraduate students in the faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Findings of the study are in agreement with the study of Gillett-Swan (2017) who affirmed that online environment presents challenges to academic staff who increasingly require higher technological competency and proficiency on top of their regular academic workload.

Recommendations

Based on the study, the following recommendations are made.

- i. There is need for the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria to create awareness on the importance of other social media platform such as AdobeConnect, BigBlueButton, Moodle, and Vedado Virtual Classroom.
- ii. Awareness should be created on the benefits of AdobeConnect, BigBlueButton, Moodle, and Vedado Virtual Classroom for improved academic performance of students.

- iii. Adequate academic workload should be allocated to staff of the study area and they should be allowed to fully participate in coursework units for effective service delivery.

Conclusion

The study was carried out on perceived impact of social media platforms on academic performance of postgraduate students in the faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Findings of the study revealed Zoom meetings is the major social media platform available for improving academic performance in the study site. Furthermore, findings inferred that Zoom meetings is the major social platform that has high impact on academic performance while too much academic workload, and barriers to full participation in coursework units are the major barriers to utilizing social media platforms for improving academic performance of postgraduate students in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

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