

# **SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND GRATIFICATION BY ACADEMIC STAFF FOR ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ZAMFARA STATE**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated social media use and gratification by academic staff for academic activities in tertiary institutions in Zamfara state. Quantitative research methodology was adopted for this study and cross sectional survey design was also adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 1734 academic staff. 313 respondents were selected as sample size for the study using Krejcie & Morgans' table. Questionnaire was the only instrument used for data collection. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Out of the 313 copies of the questionnaire administered to the academic staff, only 285 were returned and found usable. The study found that Academic staff in tertiary institutions in Zamfara state use various types of social media platforms for academic activities. Similarly, there is also high level of gratification in terms of the usage. The study also identified challenges associated with the use of social media for academic gratification which include limited bandwidth coverage, absence of standard platforms used for academic purposes, high cost of internet subscription among others. The study recommended that the management of the surveyed institutions needs to encourage academic staff to not only concentrate on traditional social media but also academic social media platforms like research gate, academia.edu, slide share and LinkedIn, The formal employment of social media platforms in academic activities by academic staff for enhanced services and moving with current trends is encouraged.

## **Introduction**

Globally, social media is becoming an integral part of our society. It has become an important tool to most professionals, including academic staff who are responsible for carrying out academic activities such as teaching, research, information sharing and use. Tertiary institutions play a key role in the development of a nation in various areas. This has necessitated call for reforms in the landscape of tertiary institutions and effective service delivery. Social media has become a tool with potentials for knowledge advancement. Social media is defined as a group of internet-based application that's build on the ideological and technical foundation of web 2.0, and that allows the creation and exchange of user generated content (Kaplan & Heenlien 2020).

In recent times, several tertiary institutions around the globe, especially in the developed countries are using social media initiative to provide state-of-the-art services to their students and all other concerned stakeholders. It appears that the universal presence of technology devices and its attributes like social media has made it practically difficult for academic staff to ignore them. The use of platforms like social media have impacted positively and changed the way academic activities are carried out in most academic settings. Incontrovertibly, social media services are becoming the order of the day in most tertiary institutions globally.

Hence, having noted the growing trends of technology application particularly social media by academic staff in tertiary institutions around the world, this study investigated how academic staff use social media for academic activities and the gratification they

obtained from the usage in Nigeria, especially in tertiary institutions in Zamfara state so as to reap the benefits of technology application in tertiary institutions..

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, tertiary institutions in general and academic staff in particular are moving from traditional service provision (hard/physical) to a more contemporary service provision (virtual/ICT driven). The way academic staff operate have been changed by technology applications and service innovations. Social media is digital technology that allows the sharing of ideas and information, including text and visuals through virtual networks and communities. These innovations have removed the barriers of time and space in academic activities and of course the gratifications obtained.

It is a fact that, today social media services have helped tertiary institutions and academic staff to become more relevant and productive in the delivery of their services in this digital age with little or no stress. Despite the growing usage and benefits of social media platforms among academic staff in Nigeria, academic staff in tertiary institutions in Zamfara state are yet to fully exploit this opportunity and provide the best use of social media for academic activities and by extension to establish the level of gratification obtained. There is also, lack of remarkable research that have ascertained how social media tools are used by academic staff for academic activities or even the gratification obtained in

tertiary institutions in Zamfara state. The paucity of research in this area, particularly in northern Nigeria has created a knowledge gap which this study intends to bridge.

### **Research Questions**

1. What types of Social Media Platforms academic staff use for academic activities?
2. What type of gratification do academic staff obtain from using social media for academic activities in the tertiary institutions studied?
3. What challenges are associated with the use of social media platforms for academic gratification by academic staff in the tertiary institutions studied?

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Types of Social Media Platforms Used for Academic Activities**

The emergence of social media tools has changed the way academic activities are performed among staff and students. Social media tools enable information management practices by facilitating knowledge creation, sharing and collaboration among individuals and groups (Paroutis and Al Saleh, 2016). Mahmood and Richardson (2021) stated that, YouTube enhance sharing information through videos, to conduct interviews and to upload various speeches. Social network sites help fulfill communication needs and wants. It is a convenient method of communication and provides the ability to stay connected with friends and family, but on the users own rate and time (Urista, Dong and Day, 2019). White (2020) added that, social media tools are used to publish explicit ideas (papers, blog posts,

articles, tweets), to get exposure, to find knowledge from a global community of experts and to engage others to share knowledge.

Reher & Haustein, (2010). Categorizes social media platforms into two, conventional social media platforms, which includes social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram, Telegram, Myspace, Pintrest, Youtube, GooglePlus etc. and academic social networking sites, which includes platforms like Academia.edu, ResearchGate, LinkedIn, SlideShare, Mendeley, Zotero, BibSonomy etc

### **Social Media Use Gratification**

Gratification is the feeling of pleasure, satisfaction or fulfillment one gets when a desire, need, or expectations are met. In this context, it's a satisfaction obtained from media content (i.e social media platforms) by the user. The concept of social media use gratification largely depends on the uses and gratification theory as a parameter of providing detail information for its understanding. Satisfaction is the extent to which an individual perceives that their gratifications sought are actually obtained by media use behaviors. Uses and gratification model suggests that people can select from many media, so if they pick Twitter and stick to it, Twitter must be meeting their needs in some way. Social media is used primarily to fulfill needs including: affection, such as offering help and showing concern for others; entertainment, to have fun, relax and to get away from pressures and responsibilities (Leung, 2001). Satisfaction is a vital aspect of any medium. If users do not expect a medium to satisfy a given motive based on past experiences; they are

more likely to seek out alternatives (Rosengren & Windahl, 2022). Gina, (2010) argued that Social media allows people to gratify their intrinsic need to form relationships with other people through the habitual process of using Twitter by sending tweets and direct messages, retweeting, following people, and gaining followers. It was also stressed that, Gratification of the need to connect with others through the process of using Twitter is a para-social gratification, where people form “ritualized social relationships” (Wenner, 2019). In another study, Joinson (2020) suggests that the “keeping in touch” dimension of Facebook comprises two functions: (a) surveillance; which is the desire to see what old contacts and friends are up to, how they look, and how they behave; and (b) social searching, which is, the desire to maintain and reconnect with offline connections. The difference between gratifications obtained and gratifications sought has implications when considering the extent to which users are satisfied with their media use.

### **Challenges Associated with the Use of Social Media**

Challenges are demanding or difficult situations which can become problems if they are not well managed. Globally, social media has been identified as an icebreaker for information dissemination traversing fields such as health, education, public relations among others (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018; Keelan, 2020; Osterrieder, 2019). Despite the advantages associated with social media platforms, especially in the field of academic activities, a number of questions remain unanswered. Social media is a two-sided coin with both negative and positive effects. From a general view, in their study,

Phiri et. al (2020), stress that Interrupted power supply/ failure, lack of expertise-knowledge and skills including lack of equipment are some of the challenges faced in secondary schools when integrating.

Another study by Chukwuere (2021), revealed that some of the challenges faced while adopting social media was as a result of the management not providing enough support in adopting social media platforms for learning needs because no department is dedicated to providing support while using social media platforms for learning.

### Methodology

Quantitative research methodology was adopted for this study and cross sectional survey design was also adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 1734 academic staff. The researchers used Krejcie & Morgans' table for selecting the sample size of this study. As a result, 313 respondents were selected for this study. Questionnaire was the only instrument used for data collection. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

### Data presentation and analysis

#### *What types of Social Media Platforms academic staff use for academic activities?*

**Table 1. Types of Social Media Platform used by Academic Staff for Academic**

#### **Activities**

S/N	Social media platforms	Tick as applicable
1	Facebook	277(97.2%)

2	LinkedIn	26(9.1%)
3	Academia.edu	257(90.2%)
4	Pinterest	92(32.3%)
5	WhatsApp	282(99.3%)
6	Twitter	165(58.1%)
7	Google Plus	256(90.1%)
8	You-Tube	238(83.8%)
9	Other(s) (please specify)	0(0.0%)
10	Research Gate	170(59.9%)

Table 1 showed that majority 282 (99.3%), 277 (97.2%), 257 (90.2%), 256 (90.1%), 238 (83.8%) of the respondents indicated that they use the following social media platform for academic activities i.e. Whatsapp, Facebook, Academia.edu, Google plus and YouTube respectively. This was followed by more than half 170 (59.9%), 165 (58.1%) of the respondents who used social media platforms such as Research Gate and Twitter while the least social media platforms used by academic staff under study was LinkedIn with 26 (9.1%) response rate. The findings revealed that majority of the academic staff studied use Whatsapp, Facebook, Academia.edu, Google plus and YouTube for academic activities.

***What type of gratification do academic staffs obtain from using social media for academic activities in the tertiary institutions studied?***

**Table 2 Gratification derived from using social media platforms by academic staff studied**

S/N	Statement	on SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	(X)	Remark
1	I feel satisfied using social media platforms for my social activities	126(44.2%)	77(27.0%)	2(0.7%)	71(24.9%)	9(3.2%)	3.5	Agree
2	Using Social media for Information Seeking is satisfactory	7(2.5%)	110(38.6%)	12(4.2%)	138(48.4%)	18(6.8%)	2.5	Disagree

3	I feel comfortable using Social Media to Pass time	133(46.7%)	114(40.0%)	8(2.8%)	21(7.4%)	9(3.2%)	4.2	Agree
4	I feel satisfied using Social Media as a tool for Entertainment	59(20.7%)	120(42.1%)	7(2.5%)	59(20.7%)	40(14.0%)	3.3	Agree
5	I feel satisfied Relaxing with the aid of Social media	44(15.4%)	139(48.8%)	9(3.2%)	77(27.0%)	16(5.6%)	3.3	Agree
6	As for me, Social media can be considered as one of the best communicatory utility of our time	106(37.2%)	148(51.9%)	2(0.7%)	18(6.3%)	11(3.9%)	4.3	Agree
7	I feel satisfied expressing my opinions using Social Media Platforms	9(3.2%)	135(47.4%)	126(44.2%)	9(3.2%)	6(2.1%)	3.1	Agree
8	I'm convenient using Social Media platforms	117(41.1%)	134(47.0%)	8(2.8%)	18(6.3%)	8(2.8%)	4.3	Agree
9	I feel satisfied using Social media for information sharing activity	131(46.0%)	114(40.0%)	8(2.8%)	21(7.4%)	11(3.9%)	4.3	Agree
10	I feel gratified using Social Media for surveillance and watching of others	28(9.8%)	20(7.0%)	4(1.4%)	118(41.4%)	115(40.4%)	2.2	Disagree

Table 2 showed the types of Gratification derived from using social media platforms for academic activities, majority of the respondents indicated that they agreed on communicatory utility, conveniences and satisfactions in terms of information sharing are the major kinds of gratifications obtained with a high mean score of 4.3 each, followed by comfort while using social media to pass time with a mean score of 4.2, the mean score of 3.5 indicated that the respondents agreed on satisfaction with regard to social activities as gratification derived from using social media platforms, followed by gratification of

entertainment and relaxation with a mean score of 3.3 each. Expression of opinions was the gratification agreed by the respondents with a mean score of 3.1. However, the respondents disagreed that using social media for information seeking is satisfactory with a mean score of 2.5. Similarly, they also indicated disagreement with gratification of using social media for surveillance and watching of others with a mean score of 2.2.

***What challenges are associated with the use of social media platforms for academic gratification by academic staff in the tertiary institutions studied?***

**Table 3. Challenges associated with the use of Social Media by academic staff in the institutions studied**

S/N	Challenges	YES	NO
1	Lack of digital skills	177(62.1%)	108(37.9%)
2	High cost of internet subscription	82(28.8%)	223(78.2%)
3	Limited Bandwidth coverage	251(88.1%)	34(11.9%)
4	Insecurity	170(59.6%)	115(40.4%)
5	Internet connectivity fluctuations	128(44.9%)	157(55.1%)
6	Lack of standardized Social Media Platforms for academic activities	236(82.8%)	49(17.2%)
7	Absence of unified policy and regulation regarding how social media technologies can be use	245(86.0%)	40(14.0%)
8	Issues related to digital divide	168(58.9%)	117(41.1%)
9	Others	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)

Table 3 showed the challenges associated with the use of social media platforms by academic staff for academic gratification. Majority 251(88.1%), 245(86.0%) and 236(82.8%) of the respondents reports the challenges of limited bandwidth coverage, absence of unified policy and regulation regarding how social media technologies can be used and lack of standardized social media platforms for academic activities, respectively. The table also revealed that more than half 177(62.1%), 170(59.6%) and 168(58.9%) of

the respondents indicated the challenges of lack of digital skills, Insecurity and issues related to digital divide, respectively. Lastly, the least challenges indicated by the respondents was 82(28.8%), which is high cost of internet subscription.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

### **Types of social media platforms used by academic staff for academic activities**

The researcher found out that the most common types of social media platforms used by academic staff in the institutions studied are Whatsapp, Facebook, Academia.edu, LinkedIn, Google plus, YouTube, Telegram, Twitter, Pintrest and Myspace are the most widely used platforms by the respondents. The findings of this study is in agreement with that of Mahmood and Richardson (2021) which states that, YouTube, Facebook, twitter, Telegram enhance sharing of information through videos, to conduct interviews and to upload various speeches.

### **Gratification derived from using social media platforms**

Communicatory utility, conveniences and satisfactions in terms of information sharing were the major types of gratifications obtained by respondents with a mean score of 4.3 each, followed by comfort while using social media to pass time with a mean score of 4.2, the next kind of gratification derived is satisfaction with regard to social activities score of 3.5, followed by gratification of entertainment and relaxation with a mean score of 3.3 each. Expression of opinions was the gratification indicated by the respondents with a

mean of score of 3.1. The least gratifications were that of information seeking and surveillance/watching of others with a mean score of 2.5 and score of 2.2 respectively.

The results confirmed the findings by Leung, (2021). Who found that social media is used primarily to fulfill needs including: social activities; affection, such as offering help and showing concern for others; entertainment, utility and relaxation, to get away from pressures and responsibilities.

### **Challenges associated with the Use of Social Media by academic staff for academic gratification in the institutions studied**

The finding revealed the challenges associated with the use of social media platforms for academic gratification. Majority 251(88.1%), 245(86.0%) and 236(82.8%) of the respondents stated limited bandwidth coverage, absence of unified policy and regulation regarding how social media technologies can be use and lack of standardized social media platforms for academic activities, respectively. The findings also revealed that more than half 177(62.1%), 170(59.6%) and 168(58.9%) of the respondents indicated the challenges of lack of digital skills, insecurity and issues related to digital divide, respectively. Lastly, the least challenges indicated by the respondents 82(28.8%) is high cost of internet subscription.

The findings confirmed the work of Ventola (2014), who argued that the poor quality of information shared on social media, limited bandwidth, and unrealistic policies were the major challenges faced by professionals and in contrast the findings contradicted

the study of Phiri et. al (2020), who found that Interrupted power supply/ failure, lack of expertise-knowledge and skills including lack of equipment were some of the challenges faced in tertiary institutions when integrating technology.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the study findings and conclusions the following recommendations are made;

1. The management of the tertiary institutions need to encourage academic staff to not only concentrate on traditional social media but also academic social media platforms like research gate, academia.edu, slide share and LinkedIn.
2. The formal employment of social media platforms in information generation, sharing and use by academic staff for enhanced services and moving with current trends is encouraged. Further, it is recommended that the tertiary institutions should address major changes in management exercise and provide technological solutions to the existing problems in dispensation of academic activities.
3. The management of institutions studied need to find ways to ensure that the gratification obtained while using social media platforms by academic staff should be sustained.

### **Conclusion**

The study indicated that social media is widely accepted in academic discourse as a result of digital revolution in the present century. The wider review and the findings of this study proved that academic staff engage the use of social media platforms for academic activities. As a result of that, information is digitized and openly accessible round the clock

to the world; therefore academic staff in tertiary institutions in Zamfara state need to build their capacity towards using social media particularly, academic social media platforms to facilitate their profession and for reasons of cost and time among others. Therefore, tertiary institutions need to develop strategies for raising awareness on all types of social media platforms and its importance in academic environment.

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