Influence of Social Networking on Secondary School Students in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examined the influence of social networking on secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Methodology: The design of the study is descriptive survey. The population of study includes 11,279 secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State. The sample size consists of 700 students stratified into male and female and randomly chosen. Six research questions guided the study while one null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The research instrument adopted for the study was questionnaire. Arithmetic mean was used to answer the research questions and z-test was used to test the hypothesis.

Findings: The major findings of the study were as follows: Gender use of social networking sites differ, the male use of social networking sites differed significantly from the female use. 2go, Facebook, WhatsApp, Blackberry Messenger, Yahoo messenger and Myspace, are the most visited social networking sites by students. Students use these sites mostly to relate with their peers and classmates, and for communication as well as entertainment purposes. Many of these social networking sites are frequented on daily basis with students spending hours on them. The use of technological devices such as cell phones, computers and i-pads are the most used devices by students in accessing social networking sites. Social networking is not positively influencing students but negatively influencing them in their overall attitude and studies.

Implications: The study implies that school management, teachers, parents and guardians should pay more attention to the male students and guide them properly on the use of social networking sites, teach the students how best to make good use of some social networking sites by organizing discussion forums for students to participate actively and the need for them to prioritize and explore the potential benefits of these sites.

Value/Originality: The study's educational value rest on the recommendations that school management and teachers should also teach the students about time management, putting limitations to students' activities online especially while at school. They should also regulate the students' use of technological devices during school hours and ensure the students are not distracted by these but are paying adequate attention they ought to pay in the classes.

Keywords: Enugu, Influence, Nigeria, Secondary Schools, Social Networking, Students

Paper Type: Empirical

Introduction

Socialization is a lifelong process which continues as people changes jobs or roles and as society itself changes. It is an age long human activity which entails the relationship between human being and another in the environment in which they live (Haralambos, Holborn & Heald, 2008). Socialization has been long before the invention of new technologies and the development of new technologies transformed socialization into a new system in the society.

The transition to technological era saw or brought about the advent of the Internet as well as social networking. The advancement in technology has made it easier for people especially the young people to have access to Internet and thus social networking which they join in with friends (Ibrahim, 2012). Social networking has revolutionized the way social interaction takes place. It is a process by which people socialize online. Through it people seek and enjoy the companionship of others online. It supports the sharing of information and services

among individuals and groups having a common interest.

Social networking according to Young (2010) is the process of finding friends and managing friendships through the Internet. Young further explained that people who wish to meet others put up their most compelling and attractive presentations through their profile pages. Although social networking is possible in persons in the workplace, universities and high schools, it is most popular online. Thus there are number of social networking sites that focus on particular interests and others do not.

Kuss and Griffiths (2011) described social networking sites as virtual communities where users can create public profiles; interact with real- life friends and meet other people based on shared interests. Arshin (2010) referred to social networking sites as virtual places where people find themselves and share information. These social networking sites have an open membership. As soon as one opens an account and uploads his or her data on the profile page, the person is entitled to create a network of friends. However, some social networking sites are specifically designed for mobile phones, some are accessed via computers and others could be accessed using both mobile phones and computers or other information communication technologies.

These social networking sites are so numerous but a few would be mentioned, which include, 2go, friend wise, friend finder, e-buddy, Facebook, Facebook chat, Nimbuzz, Orbit, fubar, classmates, Naijapals, Netlog, Nigerian social network, blackberry messenger, friendster, MySpace, Whatsapp and so on. There are no limitations or restriction as to which social networking sites one should belong; one can be a member of as many as possible. While the social networking sites have the same key aspects, the cultures and responses around them that become apparent are varied. Most sites help strangers connect with others based on shared personal interests, political and economic views, or simply recreational activities. Some sites accommodate distinct viewers, while others attract people based on similarities, such as common languages or shared racial, sexual, religious, or nationality-based identities. Nonetheless, social networking sites have only one common goal. It is to encourage new ways to communicate and share information. It also provide great opportunities for members

including secondary school students and Librarians who use it to promote the services of the library and also get first class information about their users through interacting with them. The students on the other hand benefit from some of the postings in some sites because some postings can be informative and educative and the students after reading such posts can comment on them.

As have been mentioned before, some of the postings are informative and educative while some are distracting to students. Some secondary school students have formed the habit of visiting different social networking sites that it has started influencing their overall attitude; academically, physically and socially. Therefore, the main focus of this study is to investigate the influence of social networking on secondary school students.

Ibrahim (2012) pointed out that social networking sites are seen as beneficial socializing tools especially among young people in today's global village. However, students most times abuse the use of these very socializing tools by neglecting the informative and educating benefits they offer as observed by the same Ibrahim (2012) that the neglect of educational benefits has endangered students to becoming victims of sexual predators, cyber bullying and harassment, posting or downloading of inappropriate pictures and other materials. This could affect them negatively in their reading habits, academics and social life due to the amount of time dedicated to the social world.

A student's primary objective is the academics especially at secondary school level because it is the stage of career building; therefore, the need to take their studies and reading much seriously cannot be overemphasized. Akintunde (2001) observed that the importance of developing a good reading habit by students cannot be overstated. As competence in reading enables learners to be successful and engage with the world beyond the classroom (Mabekoje, 2011). He stressed further that developing a good reading habit broadens readers' horizon; it is important for independent studies. It also helps in the development of other language skills, especially speaking and writing. The entire process of education and the development of literacy depend on printed words and reading is the crucial means through which student

develops this literacy and the knowledge about his environment (Mabekoje, 2009).

Nevertheless, students skip the time for studies and engage in long hours of social networking this in turn may be affecting them in various ways. Ibrahim (2012) posited that most students prefer being on the site than reading their books. Students are often being observed during school time in the various hiding places either discussing social networks or browsing with their phones. Long (2012) postulated that it is so common these days that many young people are addicted to social networking activities, abandoning homework and reading time in preference to chatting with friends, even at lecture times, many students are on phones engaging in one form of chatting or the other which can be quite distracting and loss of concentration most times.

Udosen (2009) asserted that the Internet chatting (social networking) are widely utilized by secondary school students both male and female in Nigeria. Some research works found out that gender interests differ in social networking activities. According to Pew Internet (2007), girls (female students) are more likely to use social networking sites than male. For girls, social networking sites are places to reinforce pre-existing friendships while for boys who use the sites, the networks provide opportunities for flirting and making new friends. In terms of knowledge gained from social networking sites, Khan (2010) is of the view that quite a number of male students use social networking sites for knowledge more than their female counterparts. He opined that gender or not, students are addicted to social networking. According to Ibrahim (2012), this addiction tends to take their time and keep them from doing other activities such as studying or socializing offline. He buttressed further that most of these students hardly read their books because of technological advancement which is believed to be largely responsible for the poor outings in most examinations taken by these students. He further stressed that they devote much time to activities that add little or nothing to their lives. For example, students employ the use of short hand style of writing in their social network interactions in writing tests which according to reports, attributed to mass failure in English language at most public examinations. Even at leisure time and late at night, the students keep pressing their phones which have adverse effect on their learning process, (Long, 2012).

Social networking with its numerous benefits should not be allowed to drift away the minds of students where in lies the development of Nigeria. Reading empowers everyone, it prepares the mind for societal challenges, therefore there is need to ensure it is back in line in order to develop and move the Nation forward. According to Solanke (2011, as cited in Benson and Areguamen, 2011) it is chiefly through books that one enjoys intercourse with superior minds, in the best books great men relate their most precious thoughts and pour their souls into others. "God be thanked for books", she buttressed further that the introduction of computers, and Internet and so on should not relegate the real book to the woods. The real book is one of the best companions that a person cultivates.

Statement of the Problem

Nowadays, the advent of technology is quickly emerging before the eyes and undeniably, it takes a vital part in people's lives today. One of the evidence of this is the development of social networking. Social networking provides instantaneous access to information at all times (Sum, 2008). With the evolution of social networking, it changes the way one communicates and how one finds and shares personal information, exchanges ideas, feelings, photos and videos at a very overwhelming rate. Social networking brought many positive implications to human life such as making the connection of millions of people from all over the world possible.

Perhaps, this ubiquitous presence may appear innocent at the surface. However, there may be some sinister or evil characteristics within this medium that required further study. One of the issues that exist may be the influence of social networking on secondary school students. These increasing links and networks online are setting back the real values of life especially students who accept some adverse impacts from using these sites as they form the major group of social networking sites users. Out of total social networking users 70% are students (Ahmed & Qazi, 2011). These students become distracted because of the amount of time and attention being devoted to these social networking. Often times, they are observed using their mobile phones to communicate and do other social activities even during school hours when they are expected to be engaged in meaningful activities. Thus this valuable time is fritted away

on social networking, especially on activities that add no value to them. Pritchard (2008) argued that at least one third of students' Internet visits are intended to surf sexually oriented websites and chartrooms. It is also observed that some students use emails and social networking websites to post kind of distasteful comments about their friends and sometimes to harass peers and for gossips (Pritchard, 2008). This distraction causes them to lose concentration in their school work and social behavior generally. Some secondary school students don't study their lessons and work on their assignments because they are in the front of their computers using facebook (Jabay, 2012). Habitually, these students are also seen moving along the streets with their mobile phones and other technological devices consistently pressing on them without paying real attention to their environment.

Therefore, this study is an effort to understand the possible influence this social networking has on the students in relation to their study habits, academics, social life and overall attitude. This is the reason the influence of social networking on students grasp the researcher's attention more especially for the fact that to the best of the researcher's knowledge, this area of study has not been explored in Enugu state and this study is an effort to fill the research gap. The researcher hopes that this study would be a value addition to this research area.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to determine the influence of social networking on secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to;

1. Find out the extent to which gender differences influence the use of social networking

2. Identify the most visited social networking sites by students

3. Determine the students' purpose for using various social networking sites

4. Find out the amount of time students invest into social networking

5. Identify the Information Communication Technologies mostly used by students for social networking

6. Ascertain the influence of social networking on students

Significance of the study

The study will be of immense benefits to students, Parents and Guardians and School Teachers. The study will be most beneficial to students who need to learn to manage and balance their time so as to be great contributors to the development of the society. They should learn to explore the social networking potential benefits as it will boost their creativity and technical skills but not at the expense of their primary responsibility which is reading.

It will equally benefit parents and guardians as they need to wake up to their roles of monitoring their children and wards. They should ensure their children pay more attention to their studies.

This study will also serve as a guide to school teachers in order to teach the students' on the need to develop good reading habit and best ways to maximize the benefits of social networking sites.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is on the influence of social networking on secondary school students in Enugu East local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. It focuses on determining the extent to which male and female students make use of social networking, the social networking sites mostly visited, the various purposes for using the sites, the time students invest into social networking. It also focuses on the Information communication Technologies used by these students to access social networking sites.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study.

1. To what extent do gender differences influence the use of social networking?

2. Which social networking sites do students visit the most?

3. To what extent do students use social networking sites for various purposes?

4. What is the amount of time students invest into social networking?

5. Which Information Communication Technologies are mostly used by students for social networking?

6. What are the influences of social networking on students?

The Null Hypothesis.

There is no significance difference between the extent to which male and female students make use of social networking.

Literature Review

Several studies have investigated influence of social networking on secondary school students. Globally so much has been written on this subject matter. Young (2010) referred to social networking as the process of finding friends and managing friendships through the Internet. Stan (2012) defined social networking as the use of websites or other online technologies to communicate with people and share information resources. According to Dictionary.com (2010), social networking is the development of social and professional contacts, the sharing of information and services among people with a common interest. It also described social networking as the use of a website to connect with people who share personal or professional interests, place of origin, education at a particular school, for instance, classmates and MySpace are premier sites for social networking.

According to Anderson (2013), social networking is defined as the act of exchanging information, personal, or public through various forms of technology such as the Internet, cell phones and other services. It is the way that many individuals make new friends and keep connected with existing ones through the use of the Internet (ChristiaNet, 2012).

Literature revealed that Social Networking has influenced Students in so many ways. Cultivation theory forms the basis for discussing the influence of social networking on students in this study. It is a social theory developed by George Gerbner and Larry Gross. The purpose of the theory was to identify and track the 'cultivated' effects of media on users. They were concerned with the effects of media activities (particularly violent programming) on the attitudes and behaviors of the users. This theory also examines the long-term effects of media on users and the primary proposition of cultivation theory states that the more time people spend "living" in the media world, the more likely they are to believe the social reality portrayed on them. Cultivation leaves people with a misperception of what is true in the world. The theory claimed that because media contains so much violence, people who spend the most time in front of the screen develop an exaggerated belief in the world they live in. Gerbner's basic prediction was that heavy media users would be more likely than light users to see the social world as resembling the world depicted on the media. Research conducted on cultivation theory and media viewing reflects the idea that high amounts of social media viewing can have an effect on psycho - social health. Those who would be classified as heavy viewers experience shyness, loneliness, and depression much more than those who either do not engage or who do not participate nearly as much. This research also supports the cultivation perspective that media influences beliefs, values, and attitudes. However, **Uses and Gratifications Theory**, holds a contrary view that media fulfills certain needs for people including the need for social relationships or a sense of friendship and emotional attachment that develops between media users and media personalities. Though many arguments can be made about the possible risks of students' social networking, it is important to point out the benefits of these websites as well. Many schools have started to use these sites to promote education, keep students up to date with assignments, and offer help to those in need (Boyd, 2007). In general, the Internet and social networking sites can be a positive influence on students. Social networking sites provide an outlet for teens to express themselves in their own unique ways (Boyd, 2007). In addition, they serve both as a meeting place for teens to interact with other like-minded people and as showplaces for a teen's artistic, musical abilities and reading skills (Boyd, 2007). Some social networking sites like MySpur promote healthy competitions and creativity among students. Students are given opportunities to participate in essay and writing competitions of which they are awarded with cash prizes. These sites provide discussion forums on variety of topics for students to participate. This encourages students and helps them in developing good reading habit and exposes them to a variety of informative topics.

Secondary school students use these sites as tools to obtain information and resources for future planning. For example, students applying for college visit profiles of that college's students to view pictures and read blogs of past students to determine whether the college would be a good fit (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

They also serve as a source of information to students and it costs less for students to use social networking sites (SNSs) to reach their

schoolmates and friends. Bonds-Racke (2008, as cited in Alpizar, 2010) posited that with so many students using these friend-networking sites and spending a significant amount of their time on them, users are meeting a need by using the site as a source of information. Sadeh (2007, as cited in Ayiah and Kumah, 2011) explained that developments in web technology are creating more friendly social and fun environments for retrieving and sharing information and one of such is social networking sites. It's also cheaper for them to source for reading materials via these medium especially social sites that are equipped with educational materials. Social networking sites are also used by students to share ideas with their peers, teachers or other professors available on the media. Alpizar (2010) affirmed that the use of social networks can enhance learning, for instance, a student who may choose to log onto his or her teacher's web page for the next day's homework assignment, rather than looking in their paper assignment notebook. Gonzalez (2011) pointed out that social networking site is a new method of social interaction in this age of information and to ignore it would only isolate one from social communication and the plenty of useful or enjoyable aspects of social networking. Brooks-Young (2011) purported that social networks can dissolve classroom walls and provide good learning experiences for students.

Although, it is said that active learning from reading books is better than passive learning, such as watching television (Shabi & Udofia, (2009, as cited in Agwu & Kalu, 2011)). Notably, some researchers have observed that the decline in the reading habits of students is as a result of technological innovations such as social networking. According to Agwu and Kalu (2011), the abuse of new technologies contributes to students' poor reading. They opined that in this era of information and communication technology, the general orientation of young people has unconsciously changed from reading and the love of books to these new technologies. They further emphasized that people now live in the generation of ipod, laptop, iphone, facebook, twitter and other social networking sites, thereby reading has been literarily sacrificed on the altar of modern technologies. Shabi and Udofia (2009, as cited in Agwu & Kalu, 2011) reported that in this age where Internet browsing and playing with funky handsets seem to be the trend among Nigerian youths, reading a good book in a quiet corner of the school library or in the home has become an archaic idea. Gonzalez (2011) noted that these days nearly everyone belongs to a social networking sites, where they spend anywhere from one the several hours per day, posting their locations on facebook and any other number of windows into personal daily lives. While social networking has become a staple of social interaction, therein lays a great deal of potential dangers.

Marsh (2012) noted that social networking sites like every good things, has a flip side as well. Sites such as facebook, MySpace and tumblr can also have a negative effect. He relented that social networking are time-consuming as students are gradually becoming addicted to them. The hours and time spent on these sites is enough to be used to acquire knowledge rather such study and useful time is spent social networking. This is the reason Bature (2010 as cited Mbachu, 2011), pointed out that Nigeria is not a reading nation, that statistics of illiteracy ratio (those who cannot read) and those who refused to read continue to increase on a daily basis. He also stated further that, "a white man once said if you want to hide anything from a Blackman, hide it in a book". In other words, social networking is taking greater part of students' studying hours and the negative effects abound. Students skip the time to engage in meaningful activities such as reading and utilizing the school library and engage in social activities such as chatting, posting pictures and videos and so on as pointed out by Mbachu (2011) that since the advent of Internet, libraries have witnessed low patronage. Researchers and students prefer the use of Internet for their research works. He noted that the library is now being perceived by those who prefer Internet as the fastest means of research, thereby throwing up the current challenge of dwindling reading habit in Nigeria. In spite of the numerous benefits derived from the use of school libraries that will enable students develop the habit of reading; they prefer their social networking habits which has become a detriment to them. Such effect includes their poor academic performance in schools. As some writers would posit that social networking is a form of distraction and the act of multitasking has led to poor academic performance of students. Karpinski (2009) reported in her findings that the majority of students who use facebook every day are underachieving by as much as an entire grade compared with those who shun the site,

facebook users may feel socially successful in cyberspace but they are more likely to perform poorly in exams.

Rouis, Limayem and Salehi-Sangari (2011) noted that students and other active users engage in long discussions about daily issues, checking their facebook profiles from home and their cell phones. Students also check their updates while preparing their homework, which interferes with their homework preparation. They stressed further that these students are distracted from their main occupation. Their working memory load allocated to these tasks makes it difficult for them to be focused and prepare their homework effectively. They also affirm that this leads to poor reading habits and instable results and likely decreases in their global achievements due to their participation with facebook. Ultimately, the split attention paid to multiple tasks causes' individual to become distracted from their reading, the time that should be spent studying is spent on social networking (Rouis, et al., 2011). The act of procrastination and cramming rather than studying as a result of social networking usage among students are on the rise. Banquil, et al. (2009) stated that students also show the act of procrastination and cramming because of these social networking sites that exist in the present day. As a result, in their study, they proved that every day habit of procrastination and regular cramming of homework and studying of lesson have been the most tremendous factor of acquiring substandard scores, the cause of which is the excessive usage of social networking sites. They suggested that one should learn to balance one's time and to know one's priorities first before engaging one to other activities and therefore as a student, it is important to remember that the number one priority should be studies rather than entertainment.

Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) reiterated that new media may be depersonalizing the process of interpersonal communication. Instead of viewing new media as another means to boost communication between close peers and schoolmates, it may be negatively affecting face-to-face communication because of the overwhelmingly impersonal attributes. Poukhan (2010) stated that educators tend to see social media as encouraging poor traditional literacy skills (writing, grammar, vocabulary) and could largely be disruptive to learners' studying skills needed in the school environment. Students are developing skills in "code-switching" (for instance, the use of 'time' written as 'tym', through as 'tru' and so on) in order to adapt to different web environments. Alpizar (2010) buttressed that despite the students prowess in using new media, they may lack imagination and basic skills such as, how to use a dictionary or thesaurus. Marsh (2012) emphasized that social networking is the cause of poor language use mostly by students. The language used has become poorer with many grammatical mistakes. This supports Ogbonna's (2011) on his view in utilizing spare times effectively. He suggests that spare times are good times to improve on one's diction and word use. Good novels stretch the mind and the language of those who engage in regular reading. Often times, students just wander about with no real direction or the spare time is frittered away with gistings. He further explained that there are positive ways a student can engage themselves during spare times other than spending time recklessly all flopped for hours in front of the television or in front of mindless and meaningless web pages or blogs. These hours could be converted into moments of value and ensure that they are adding a little something to themselves at all times. These are times to catch up on studies and address issues that one may have with a particular subject (Ogbonna, 2011). He concluded that students should make their time valuable and develop the key disciplines that allow one to mine something out of nothing.

Depression is another negative influence of social networking on students, a depressed mind finds it difficult to read and understand. Depression causes student to find it difficult to concentrate and study. Marsh (2012) indicated that researchers proved that there appears to be a positive correlation between hyper networking, which is more than three hours of Internet time and negative health behaviour such as depression, drug abuse and isolation among teenagers. Adeyemo (2012) affirmed that studies found out that facebook can trigger feelings of depression and anxiety. According to Medline Plus (as cited in Cloe, 2007), depression is thought to be caused by abnormal levels of neurotransmitters which disrupts the balance of activity in the brain. When there is an imbalance in the brain, how well can a student read, understand and assimilate. Novas (2011) posited that facebook depression is part of the concerns people have about children's social media. According to him, a recent report by the American Academy of Pediatrics defines

facebook depression as depression that develops when teens and preteens spend time on social media sites and then begin to exhibit classic symptoms of depression due to the intensity of the online world.

Internet is today becoming the easiest point of access to pornography and other obscenities by students. Moreover, latest pornographic diagrams are summarized in text message (instant messaging (IM) by deviant people. Perhaps, this negativism in the introduction of GSM made Umosen (2002) to state that, this is one of the pains of GSM with which Nigerians have had to come to grips with. These films take away the useful time students could have invested into reading, perhaps it is observed that they prefer pleasure to reading. As such made Mierzwa (2011) to point out that a famous English writer (Aldous Hidcley) lamented that "technological progress has merely provided the society with more efficient means for going backwards".

Kuss and Griffiths (2011) reported in an online survey of some Internet users showed that people who uses social networking sites more in terms of time spent on it were perceived to be less involved with real-life connections to peers and hence a negative social identity tend to use social networking more in order to compensate for this. This however could also be the case with students who invest a lot of their time into social networking. They relented further that adolescents who received predominantly negative feedback had low self esteem which in turn led to low well being. Banquil et al (2009) lamented that social networking is the cause of damage in students' chances of being well-off in the future.

Marsh (2012) reiterated that accidental leakage of confidential information is a negative influence of social networking. Many slips happen and in the case of social media connection, certain confidential information can be released and once it happens, cannot be retrieved. Since, it reaches a wide audience; the effect is a lot greater had the leak been in a more "real" setting. This is the case most Nigerian students find themselves not knowing the extent of information to divulge on the social networking sites or to their online friends.

Health related risks of excessive usage of social networking abounds. Greenfield (2007, as cited in Banquil et al., 2009) asserted that the negative aspects of the usage of these social networking sites are much more imminent than those of its positives ones. These technologies are infantilizing the brain into the state of small children, who have a small attention span and who live for the moment. She stressed that the usage of these Internet sites are also particularly harmful to children and could be behind the observed risk in cases of attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder. She lamented further that if the young brain is exposed from the outset to a world of fast action and reaction of instant new screen images flashing up with the press of a key, such rapid interchange might accustom the brain to operate over such time scales. Her study indicated an evidence that the usage of social networking sites roots unfavourable causes on students learning system since the brain is somewhat affected by these technologies.

Emewu (2012) pointed out that Nigeria has been hit by the Internet bug much more than any other country in Africa. He reported that because of the currency of the Internet rave in the country like in other parts of the world, the minister of communications technology notes that there is the need for louder calls, "for international agreement on why and how it should be managed and governed". An instance of this is the case of a Nigerian student who was murdered by friends she met on a social networking site. According to Glamtek (2012), it has been over the news, how a young Nigerian female student Miss Osokogu was allegedly lured and murdered in Lagos from her Abuja base, by friends she met on facebook. This is perhaps only one of the examples of negative influence of excessive social interaction on social networking sites.

Conclusively, one should also remember that the successful and continual protection of the society require that we have a better way of ensuring that Internet is put into better use. The habit of reading on daily basis enhances good academic records and development of reading for pleasure and self sustenance. The more familiar one handles a book the more mutual respect one cultivates, giving added respect both for the book and for oneself (Williams, 2011). It is only by reading that one can transport oneself to different adventures and different cultures (Kumolu and Oke, 2012 as cited in Tambuwal, 2012).

Some empirical studies have been conducted such as Pierce and Vaca (2007) who carried out

a study to examine the differences in academic performance between teen users and non-users of various communication technologies. 517 high school students were sampled, the ages of the participants ranged from 14-20 years. The sample consisted of 201 males and 316 females. This study was purely survey research. The purpose of the study was to look at teens' use of social networking sites, cell phones, and instant messaging (IM) to determine if there are differences in academic achievements between users and non-users of those communication devices. The results revealed that there is a difference in grade fluctuation between those who had MySpace account, IM account and those with a cell phone and text messaging. Those who had social networking site account reported significantly lower grade than those who did not have any social networking site account. While those who had a cell phone reported significantly lower grades than those who did not have a cell phone. Those who said they typically kept their MySpace open while doing homework reported significantly lower grades than those who did not keep their MySpace (or other Social Networking Sites) open while doing homework. Almost half of the students reported text messaging someone during class time. This study suggested that students may not be paying attention as carefully in class as they could. This too may be an additional distraction to their studies and a factor that influences their grades.

Khan (2010) undertook a study on the impact of social networking websites on students. 168 students were sampled, 101 male and 67 females. A descriptive survey method was adopted and the instrument for data collection was questionnaire. The purpose of the study was to explore the impact of social networking websites on students.

Results revealed that male students mostly use social networking sites more than the female students. They use these sites more for knowledge gain when compared to the female students. While the female students use social networking websites for communication purposes. Invariably, from the findings of the study it can be inferred that social networking sites do not have any adverse effect on students as only a few indicated that it is time killing but can be used for knowledge gain. It is also a distraction to female students as they only use them for entertainment purpose.

Flad (2010) carried out a study on the influence of social networking participation on students academic performance across gender lines 41 students were surveyed, 54% were female and 46% were male. The purpose of the research was to examine the influence of social networking participation among a sample of high school students to determine how this involvement affects academic performance, future plans and overall attitude towards school. Facebook and MySpace are the most utilized social networking sites by students and these sites are visited once a day. When looking at differences in answers based on gender, the most significant finding was that more female students visit these sites regularly than the male students. A majority of the students disagreed that social networking interfered with their ability to hand in a homework assignment on time and their studies. The findings of the study also revealed that students learn more in schools than learning on social networking sites. The result of this study indicated that females are more likely than males to engage in social networking. Though males and females may both have access to these websites in various forms, females invest more time in maintaining their accounts. Females were more likely than males to participate in social networking but were also more likely to have higher grades and take more rigorous classes. This study has shown that social networking can have a negative influence on study habits and completion of homework assignments; but there was not a drastic difference between students who spend a lot of time on these sites and those who do not.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The area of study was Enugu East Local Government Area, Government-owned secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The population of the study according to Record from Enugu state post primary school board shows that Enugu East local government area has ten (10) Government- owned secondary schools with 11,279 students. The sample comprised seven hundred (700) students selected from the ten (10) secondary schools in Enugu East LGA. The students were selected using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted to ensure that each student in the population participated in the study in the same proportion as they existed in the population. A structured questionnaire was

used for data collection. The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient formula. Data obtained in the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Arithmetic mean was used to answer the research questions and the null hypothesis was tested using z-test at 0.05 significance level.

Result and Discussion

The findings of the study are presented under the following sub-sections in the same manner the research questions were phrased, namely: use of social networking by male students, use of social networking by female students, the most visited social networking sites by secondary school students, purposes of using social networking sites by secondary school students, time spent on social networking by secondary school students, most used information and communication technologies for social networking by secondary students and then a discussion on the way forward.

Table 1

Mean (x) scores of the responses of male students' on the use of social networking

S/NO	Items	Mean $\left(\overline{X}\right)$	Remark
1.	I use social networking to relate with my peers and classmates	3.50	Very High Extent
2.	I use social networking for entertainment (pleasure)	3.44	High Extent
3.	I use social networking for communication purposes.	3.14	High Extent
4.	I use social networking sites to keep vigilance about happenings in the world (news)	2.77	High Extent
5.	I use social networking as an information link.	2.58	High Extent
6.	I use social networking mostly for my assignment (educational purpose).	2.46	Low Extent

Table 1 above shows that male students scored 2.50 and above in items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. This shows that to a very high extent students' use social networking to relate with their peers and classmates and to a high extent they use social networking for entertainment purpose, for communication, to abreast of news and as an information link. The table also shows that male students to a low extent use social networking for their assignments.

Table 2

Mean (x) scores of the responses of female students' on the use of social networking

S/NO	Items	Mean $\left(\overline{X}\right)$	Remark
1.	I use social networking sites to relate with my peers and classmates	3.26	High Extent
2.	I use social networking sites for communication purposes.	3.12	High Extent
3.	I use social networking sites basically for entertainment (pleasure)	3.01	High Extent
4.	I use social networking sites mostly for my assignment (educational purpose)	2.67	High Extent
5.	I use social networking sites to keep vigilant about happenings in the world (news)	2.65	High Extent
6.	I use social networking sites as an information link.	2.62	High Extent

Table 2 shows that female students scored 2.50 and above in all the items. These indicate that they use social networking mostly to relate with their peers and classmates, entertainment and for communication to a high extent. The table also shows that female students use social networking for assignments, to keep vigilance about happenings in the world (news) and as an information link.

Table 3
Mean (x) scores of the responses of secondary school students on the most visited social networking sites (SNSs)

S/NO	Items	Mean $\left(\overline{X}\right)$	Remark
1.	2go	3.44	High Extent
2.	Facebook	3.35	High Extent
3.	WhatsApp	3.23	High Extent
4.	Blackberry messenger	3.06	High Extent
5.	Yahoo messenger	3.03	High Extent
6.	MySpace	2.63	High Extent
7.	Classmates	2.47	Low Extent
8.	Naijapals	2.36	Low Extent
9.	LinkedIn	2.25	Low Extent
10.	Fubar	2.21	Low Extent
11.	MySpur	2.16	Low Extent
12.	Google Buzz	2.14	Low Extent
13.	Bebo	2.09	Low Extent
14.	Orkut	1.97	Low Extent
15.	Web Biographies	1.97	Low Extent
16.	Tumblr	1.93	Low Extent

Table 3 shows that social networking sites including Classmates, Naijapals, LinkedIn, Fubar, Myspur, Google Buzz and Bebo are used at a low extent, as well as Orkut, Web Biographies and Tumblr by students. From the table, it should also be seen that 2go, Facebook, Whatsapp, Blackberry Messenger, Yahoo messenger and MySpace, are used to a high extent by secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Table 4
Mean (x) scores of the responses of secondary school students purposes for using social networking sites

S/NO	Items	Mean $\left(\overline{X}\right)$	Remark
1.	I use social networking sites to relate with my peers and classmates	3.40	High Extent
2.	I use social networking sites basically for entertainment (pleasure)	3.24	High Extent
3.	I use social networking sites for communication purposes.	3.17	High Extent
4.	I use social networking sites to keep vigilant about happenings in the world (news)	2.42	Low Extent
5.	I use social networking sites mostly for my assignment (educational purpose)	2.42	Low Extent
6.	I use social networking sites as an information link.	2.31	Low Extent

Table 4 above shows that secondary school students scored 3.40, 3.24 and 3.17 for items 1, 2 and 3, respectively. This shows that students use social networking sites to relate with their peers and classmates, entertainment (pleasure) and for communication purposes.

Table 5
Mean (x) scores of the responses of secondary school students' time spent on social networking.

S/NO	Items	Mean $(\overline{X})$	Remark
1.	I visit social networking sites on daily basis	3.28	Agreed
2.	I spend my leisure hours on social networking sites.	3.19	Agreed
3.	I spend three hours on social networking sites.	2.99	Agreed
4.	My social networking account is active all through the day.	2.95	Agreed
5.	Social networking sites are visited on weekly basis.	2.51	Agreed
6.	I spend an average of one hour on social networking.	2.30	Disagreed
7.	I visit social networking sites once in a month.	1.88	Disagreed
8.	I rarely visit social networking sites.	1.75	Disagreed

Table 5 above shows that secondary school students scored below 2.50 in items 6, 7, and 8. This indicates that they disagreed with the amount of time they invest into social networking such as "spending one hour on these sites, visiting social networking sites once in a month and rarely visiting social networking sites". Secondary school students also scored 2.50 and above in items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. This shows that they agreed to be spending a lot of time on social networking sites. Generally, the result reveals that students spend most of their time on social networking sites.

Table 6
Mean (x) scores of the responses of secondary school students' most used Information Communication Technologies for social networking.

S/NO	Items	Mean $(\overline{X})$	Remark
1.	GSM/Cell phones	3.48	Used
2.	PCs (laptops, computers, desktops)	3.09	Used
3.	Ipad	2.50	Used
4.	Ipod	2.34	Less Used
5.	Iphones	2.17	Less Used

From the results in Table, secondary school students scored 2.50 and above in items 1, 2 and 3. This shows that they use Information Communication Technologies such as GSM/Cell phones, Personal Computers (laptops, computers, desktops) and Ipad to access social networking sites. The table also shows that secondary school students have less preference for items 4 and 5 which include Ipod and Iphones respectively.

Table 7
Mean (x) scores of the responses of secondary school students' on the positive influence of social networking

S/NO	Items	Mean $(\overline{X})$	Remark
1.	Social networking sites have broadened my knowledge on different subject matters.	2.94	Agreed
2.	Social networking has boosted my love for reading.	2.15	Disagreed
3.	Social networking has provided good learning experiences by consistently sharing ideas with peers.	2.09	Disagreed
4.	Social networking has enhanced learning by means of getting my assignments done.	2.07	Disagreed
5.	Social networking sites help me get involved in some competitions for instance essay competitions.	2.07	Disagreed
6.	Social networking has exposed healthy interaction with experienced professionals and librarians.	2.04	Disagreed
7.	I feel academically and socially integrated since I started the use of social networking sites.	2.00	Disagreed

From the results in table 7, secondary school students scored 2.50 and above in item number 1. This shows that students agreed that social networking sites broadened their knowledge on different subject matters. The results of the table also shows that secondary school students scored below 2.50 in items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. These indicate that they disagreed with the positive statements on the influence of social networking on them

Table 8
Mean (x) scores of the responses of students' negative influences of social networking on secondary school students.

S/NO	Items	Mean $\left(\overline{X}\right)$	Remark
1.	Social networking is addictive.	3.33	Agreed
2.	Social networking is a form of distraction.	3.19	Agreed
3.	Constant use of social networking sites, take away the time for reading.	3.13	Agreed
4.	I read fewer books because I am occupied with social networking.	3.10	Agreed
5.	Social networking sites are the easiest point of pornographic access, drifting my mind away from reading.	3.03	Agreed
6.	Social networking caused constant procrastination of my studies rather than learning.	3.01	Agreed
7.	I usually experience some health symptoms like blurring visions and headaches after long use of these sites	2.98	Agreed
8.	The act of social networking interferes with my school studies and homework.	2.97	Agreed
9.	There are instances when I am social networking while classes are on.	2.92	Agreed
10.	Most of the time I cram my books rather than read them as a result of social networking distraction.	2.88	Agreed
11.	My poor writing skills is as a result of code-switching (using of slangs) while social networking (examples tru – "through", tym - "time", etc).	2.72	Agreed
12.	Social networking is the cause of poor grammar and vocabulary usage.	2.72	Agreed

From the results in table 8, secondary school students scored 2.50 and above in all the items. This shows that the students agreed that social networking has negative influence on them.

Generally, this result indicates that social networking is negatively affecting the students, their reading habits, academics and overall performance.

Test of Hypothesis

One research hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using z-test statistical tool because of the large number of the sample size.

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the extent to which male and female students make use of social networking.

Table 9: *Summary of z-test analysis on difference in the mean rating of the extent to which male and female students make use of social networking*

Secondary school students	N	X	SD	A	Standard Error	Z-cal	Z-Crit	Decision
Male	308	17.89	5.65					
				0.05	0.047	1.19	0.89	Reject
Female	340	17.33	6.40					

As presented in table 9, the z-calculated is 1.19, while z-critical is 0.89. At 0.05 level of significance and a standard error of 0.47, the z-calculated value is greater than z-critical value. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is significance difference in the extent to which male and female students make use of social networking.

Discussion

The findings from this study are quite revealing. The result reveals that there is significant difference in the extent to which male and female students make use of social networking. Therefore, the gender differences in the use of social networking sites for various purposes are stated as follows:

Majority of female students use social networking sites for their assignments. A greater number of male students use social networking sites for communication purposes as well as for entertainment purposes (pleasure). Majority of female students use social networking sites as an information link and a majority of male students use social networking sites to keep vigilance about happenings in the world (News). The male students also use social networking sites to relate with their peers and classmates more than their female counterparts.

These findings agree with that of Khan (2010). Khan's study reveals that majority of male students use social networking sites for communication and entertainment purposes more than the female students. On the contrary, his finding may also differ from the present study; in that his study revealed that a majority of male students' use social networking sites for their assignments more than the female students, but this present study found that majority of female students use social networking for their assignments when compared to the male students.

The results also revealed that secondary school students use some social networking sites to a high extent. Some of these social networking sites they visit the most are; 2go, Facebook, Whatsapp, Blackberry Messenger, Yahoo messenger and MySpace.

However, the results of this present study relates with the findings of Pierce and Vaca(2007), Flad (2010) and Poukhan (2010). Pierce and Vaca study on teen users and non-users of various communication technologies found that teen users always had their blackberry messenger (instant messaging) active, which they visit regularly. Flad's study found that facebook is the most utilized social networking site by secondary school students. Finally, Poukhan study found that a very high percentage of secondary school students prefer facebook to other social networking sites.

The findings of this study showed that to a high extent students' visit some social networking sites for various purposes, which include; relating with their peers and classmates, for communication and for entertainment (pleasure). This study is in line with that of Poukhan (2010), whose study found that majority of secondary school students visit social networking sites for entertainment reasons other than educational reasons (which include research and learning new things).

Hence, the present findings of this study differ from that of Khan (2010) findings. Khan study revealed that secondary school students visit social networking sites to get their assignments done and get information.

Students' visit social networking sites on daily basis, they spend a significant amount of time (three hours daily each time they visit the sites). The result also indicated that some of these social networking accounts are active all through the day, therefore making students spend every time including their leisure hours on the sites.

These results are in line with Pierce and Vaca (2007), Flad (2010) and Poukhan (2010). Pierce and Vaca study showed that students who use social networking sites have their accounts active all through the day even while doing home work and while at class. Flad study indicated that a greater percentage of secondary school students' visit social networking sites on daily basis. This shows that students are investing a lot of time into social networking. Poukhan study revealed that students frequent social networking sites more than five times a day.

The results revealed the different Information Communication Technologies mostly used by secondary school students in accessing social networking sites. These information communication technologies include Personal Computers (laptops, computers, and desktops), Ipad, Ipod, GSM/Cell phones, Iphones. The result of the study indicated that these students prefer to use GSM/Cell phones, Personal Computers and Ipad. This is as posited by Pierce and Vaca (2007), that teens use their cell phones for their social networking activities.

The results revealed that students disagreed with the positive statements on the influence of social networking on them. This implies that students do not believe in the positive influence of social networking on their reading habits, social welfare and overall attitude except for the fact that they agreed that social networking broadens their knowledge on different subject matters.

The students also agreed to the negative statement, that as a result of constant social networking they resort to book cramming rather than reading their books. Students disagreed that social networking has provided good learning experiences; this agrees with Flad (2010) findings. Flad study found that students' learning on social networking sites is not more important than what is learnt at school. The results revealed that secondary school students agreed to the negative statements on the influence of social networking on them. This shows that excessive use of social networking is negatively influencing students especially their studies and overall attitude. The students dedicate less time to their studies as a result of this excessive use of social networking, which also interferes with their school assignments and distracts them equally from learning. In addition, the students develop the habit of using short hand style of writing and their vocabulary and grammar usage becomes very poor due to the abbreviations they use in the process of chatting (social networking). The result also showed that the act of social networking by students expose them to some immoral acts available on some of these sites.

This study disagrees with Flad (2010). Flad study revealed that social networking does not interfere with students' ability to hand in a homework assignment on time or study. His study also found that students spend more time studying than social networking. On the contrary, the finding of this study is in line with

Poukhan (2010). Poukhan study found that social networking is more likely to affect the students' grammar usage, make the students take short cuts in school work and most likely distract them from learning.

Conclusion

This study has shown that secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria, appear to be different in the use of social networking as a result of gender. Secondary school students visit 2go, Facebook, Whatsapp, Blackberry Messenger, Yahoo messenger and Myspace when compared to other social networking sites.

Secondary school students of the schools studied to a high extent visit these social networking sites to relate with their peers and classmates and for entertainment purposes as well as use them as media for communication.

Secondary school students of the studied schools frequent these sites on a daily basis and spend three hours on them. Some of the social networking accounts are even left active all through the day.

Secondary school students of the studied schools prefer the use of GSM/Cell phones, Personal Computers (laptops, computers and desktops) and Ipad in accessing social networking sites.

Social networking do not have positive influence on students but it influences the students negatively in their overall attitude, socially, academically, emotionally and health wise.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have some educational implications. The findings of this study has provided a basis for parents/guardians to understand the exposure their children and wards face while social networking.

The result of the study revealed that there are gender differences in social networking use, this implies that male students tend to participate more in social networking activities than their female counterparts. This calls for the regular monitoring of male students by the school management and teachers to ensure that the male students do not drift away by the negativism on these sites.

As the study revealed that social networking sites such as, 2go, Facebook, Whatsapp, Blackberry Messenger, Yahoo messenger and Myspace are visited the most by secondary

school students, these sites have become an imminent medium of these students expression and also strengthen previously established relationships, such as family and friends. This implies that, this means of communicating lessens the importance and relevance of face-to-face exposure to people.

As the study revealed the students various purposes for visiting social networking sites, more especially as they use these networking sites to relate with their peers and classmates, this implies that efforts can be made by the school authority to develop group forums on these networking sites for discussing topics of interests to ensure students' active participation.

As the study revealed that students are spending significant amount of time on social networking including leisure hours, this implies that there is a big decline on the studying hours of the students and also implies that there is need for louder calls for Parents and teachers monitoring of students so as to make certain that they do not waste away useful time on meaningless online activities.

As the study revealed that Information Communication Technologies such as GSM/Cell phones and Personal Computers (computers, laptops) are mostly used by students to access social networking sites; this implies that regulating students' use of such devices at home and in schools may keep their attention to learning.

As the findings of the study revealed that social networking is not positively influencing the students but has a negative influence on them. This implies that efforts can be made by school authorities; teachers and Parents to tackle the menace of excessive use of social networking by students to minimize the negative influence of these sites on them. Students should be engaged with school work and extracurricular activities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations.

The school authorities, teachers, parents and guardians should pay more attention to the male folks. They need to be guided properly and informed on the vulnerability they may face on these sites if not utilized in moderation.

School teachers can introduce a group discussion forum on these networking sites for the students

to contribute positively on different topics of interest; this will keep them active in a productive way.

Teachers, parents, guardians and school management should teach students the importance of prioritizing their needs and visit social networking sites with good intents rather than entertainment. They should be encouraged to explore the potential benefits of social networking sites.

Parents, teachers and the school management need also to teach the students' about time management. They should put a limitation to students activities while at school and at home so that they do not fritter away useful time on irrelevant activities like chatting.

School management and teachers should checkmate students' use of computers and cell phones especially during school hours to ensure that students are not carried away by the use of these technological devices.

The school management, teachers and parents should get the students informed and warned of the dangers of wrong use of these social networking sites. School teachers should also make sure that when students are in class that they pay attention to the teaching and not distracted by some social networking.

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