SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN ENUGU NORTH SENATORIAL ZONE, NIGERIA: LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

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Keywords

Internet sources, learned helplessness, social networking, academic engagement, and undergraduates

Abstract

Research Problem: *Academic underperformance continues to be a significant issue that concerns not only students but also the government and different school administrations. While some researchers construe parental styles, others perceive a poor educational environment as a factor. Hence, this study assessed the effects of internet usage on school engagement, academic motivation, and psychosocial well-being of undergraduates in Enugu through an examination of learned helplessness.*

Methods/Theory*: The study adopts a quantitative method using a structured questionnaire to elicit information from 200 undergraduates. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Digital Native Theory was adopted to examine the profound control of social networks on cognitive and learning processes among the study population.*
Results: *There are mixed opinions among undergraduates on internet engagement, suggesting students leveraged digital platforms as formidable sources for communication, entertainment, and academic purposes. There is a relatively low percentage of students who actively use the internet and social media for collaborative research and knowledge sharing.*
Conclusion*: Students' apparent lack of control over the use of social media, which can be broadly characterized as helpless behavior, results in their incapacity to handle the majority of their academic assignments and other school engagements. Thus, an addiction to social media causes them to lose focus in class, and their academic performance suffers as a result.*

***Key Contribution to Knowledge**: The study provides insights into the detrimental impacts of internet dependency on the academic performance of undergraduates.*
***Recommendation:** Integration of digital literacy programs into the course curriculum of students.*

Introduction

The use of the internet by students has greatly influenced their academic involvement, as well as other aspects of their lives, such as their overall health, interpersonal relationships, and academic success (Wolf, Sims, & Yang, 2017). Social media can improve learning by providing access to educational resources and collaboration opportunities, but it can also operate as a distraction that lowers academic performance (Andreassen and Pallesen, 2014). A study by Junco (2012) posits that university students who used social media for learning had better academic results and higher levels of school engagement. Whilst students who relied heavily on social media for non-academic purposes tended to have lower scores, as it hindered their sleep and took away valuable study time.

A greater percentage of internet users depend on shared network sites, demonstrating how network technologies have developed into a major communication tool, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc. On this, Ugwulebo and Okoro (2016) opined that social network sites are essential resource platforms for interpersonal relationships among undergraduates for easy connection and communication. Therefore, Wolf, Sim, and Yang (2017) described social networking sites (SNS) as online communities where users interact with people who have similar interests, whether they be academic, professional, or personal. But according to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social networking sites help students form and preserve social bonds, which can enhance their emotional and academic well-being. However, there are drawbacks to these platforms that can make people feel more stressed and anxious. If undergraduate students' everyday lives revolve around social network sites/websites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. There is contention that such undergraduate students may develop low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy due to pressure to maintain a flawless online identity and continuous exposure to idealized depictions of other people's lives (Chou & Edge, 2012).

Advances in digital technologies have sparked innovative, believable changes in how people interact with one another. Students' addiction to social media usage may be explained by their familiarity with the newest technological advancements and easy access to these social networking resources (Vorderer, 2016). For example, they easily get access to the internet through their mobile devices at any time and from any location. This is displayed in their frivolous chatting in delicate and well-organized settings, such as seminars, workshops, and lecture halls. Some students are so enamored that they continue chatting while crossing and walking roadways or streets. In other words, there are constant conflicts between social media interference, time management roles, and overall involvement among students in their daily activities. Due to this web of time-management-role conflict, most undergraduate students procrastinate daily academic involvement from day to day, which surely causes role conflicts in their academic performance.

Scholars have examined factors influencing academic achievement in higher education

(Ismail & Mahmood, 2018; Al Husaini & Shukor, 2022). Their results show that study habits, motivation, IQ, and class engagement all have a big influence on academic achievement. According to a different study by Leeson, Ciarrochi, and Heaven (2008), academic achievement is highly predicted by mental skills, characteristics, dispositions, conscientiousness, and emotional stability. Furthermore, students' total academic success is greatly influenced by their ability to self-regulate and manage their time; those who can do so and set reasonable goals typically get superior academic results (Zimmerman, 1990). However, scholars have studied the influence of social media on students' academic engagement among undergraduates (Al Husaini & Shukor, 2022; Osharive, 2015; and Okoro, 2015). There is a lacuna in examining the learned helplessness of social media on school engagement among Nigerian students. Therefore, this work is set to fill this gap by investigating the learned helplessness of internet dependency on school engagement among undergraduate students in Enugu North, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Students' excessive reliance on internet sources for academic purposes is mistrustful and misleading, and it frequently comes from unreliable sources. Most students find it difficult to truly define the responsibilities of social media in supporting academic pursuits because of their unguarded obsessions with these platforms, which frequently result in academic bewilderment and intellectual castration. Therefore, it might be considered a "mental-taxing struggle" to gamble with unreliable information and facts that could quickly tarnish their academic achievement. Additionally, their inability to navigate among unreliable sources to clarify points of order might result in sentiments of "learned helplessness," which is the idea that a student has no real means of completing academic assignments despite the availability of online resources. This problem is frequently seen in quizzes and exams, where students are denied internet access, making them susceptible to learned helplessness as a result of their avoidance of in-class participation, which is essential for imparting current knowledge and useful examples that support undergraduate programs.

Research Problem

Whether purposeful, inadvertent, or habitual, students' mismanagement of time for social media flamboyance can be characterized as academic procrastination, which has an impact on learning and academic performance (Hussain & Sultan, 2010). Deliberate and unnecessary engagement on websites, favoritisms to the point of inconvenience, may cause undergraduates to put off their academic work, which can worsen mental suffering (mental-taxing struggle) by causing them to put off finishing assignments until the last minute or fail to meet project and assignment deadlines. As a result of learned helplessness brought on by social network addiction, students who are overly dependent on social networking sites frequently exhibit inept behavioral effects like low self-esteem, self-inefficacy, and a lack of initiative in their study programs. Students' learning habits are also negatively impacted by the over-reliance on artificial intelligence and other robotic devices that are supposed to support educational programs. This is because the majority of young people believe that traditional learning methods are burdensome for modern humans, so they rely on the "garbage-in and garbage-out" syndrome of digital technologies, which were not tailored to truly demonstrate the in-depth knowledge and expertise required for real-time academic programs. Therefore, when such undergraduates are faced with an academic task without access to digital

platforms, they become incapacitated, which is a manifestation of learned helplessness.

Objectives

The study's prime purpose is to investigate the influence of social media addiction on school engagement among undergraduate students. These were specified as:

i. By examining the impacts of internet sources on learning activities among undergraduate students.

ii. To ascertain how internet-shared resources impede academic engagement amongst undergraduate students.

iii. To examine if social media usage contributes to students' learned helplessness among undergraduate students

Research Questions

The following questions were stated:

i. What are the impacts of internet sources on schoolwork engagement among students?

ii. What effects does internet addiction have on educational progression among students?

iii. What is the learned helplessness of media addiction on school engagement among undergraduates?

Conceptual Clarification

Students perceived a lack of control over social media dependency that leads to loss of study drive, negative emotions, feelings of despair, and futility over schoolwork, which has infused anxiety, depression, and frustrating experiences among undergraduate students. As a result of this scenario, students typically accept defeat because they feel decreased self-esteem or low self-worth on academically challenging tasks. This occurs when students' overall performance in a given subject (course) is hampered by their previous failures in a particular subject; therefore, they steer clear of such related subjects (courses) because of their prior experiences, which have served as their primary metric for evaluating success in such an academic cycle. They may quit attempting similar challenges even when success is achievable as a result of this, which frequently arises after repeated failures or unfavorable comments. Researchers have consistently demonstrated the impact of this phenomenon in the fields of relationships, the workplace, and academia (Dweck & Licht, 1980). In the context of social networking, learned helplessness occurs when students feel unable to advance despite having the resources and assistance necessary to do so because they rely too heavily on network sources to advance academically. In order to overcome their academic shortcomings, students completely relied on pre-made notes, materials, and resources from social networking sites. Thus, they decide not to pay attention to their academic cycles and instead spend the majority of their time sniffing the internet for academic shortcuts.

Theoretical Orientation

This study is anchored on Digital Native Theory

Digital Natives Theory

This theory was developed by Mark Prensky in 2001 to examine the cognitive processes and behavioral learning patterns of younger generations that were raised in an environment heavily reliant on technology. According to this theory's application to the study, people who were born after digital technology became widely used are known as "digital natives," a generation that differs significantly from earlier generations known as "digital immigrants" in

the way they think, learn, and process information (Prensky, 2001). By implication, technological advancement has changed educational learning patterns against the traditional teaching approaches that do not suit the learning styles of digital natives, who might find traditional teaching techniques uninteresting or slow. Furthermore, social media's widespread use and the development of new information technologies present special opportunities to transform communication and provide easy access to shared data. Therefore, students are looking for a social media platform that is educationally oriented and will support their academic goals (Chin, Evans & Choo, 2015).

In summary, the aforementioned argument emphasizes how digital technology has a significant impact on younger generations' cognitive and learning processes. Understanding social media's distinct features and preferences for educational interactions, communications, and learning adaptations makes it crucial to investigate how much time social media obsession takes away from academic pursuits and how this displacement relates to academic achievement. In doing so, the theory provides solid insight into investigating the relationship between undergraduates' dependency on internet sources and academic success. By observing how media addiction takes up time that could be spent on academic activities.

Method

A cross-sectional survey design was used in the study. This approach remains helpful for finding trends among diverse demographic groups, such as varying age ranges, educational attainment, etc., and is especially appropriate for research that needs to collect data from a diverse population. By offering a snapshot of behaviors, attitudes, and results, the chosen sample reflects key aspects of the entire population, allowing researchers to extrapolate findings to the larger population. A cross-sectional survey provides insightful information without requiring long-term follow-up (Schmidt, 2009). The population of the studied universities, according to the National University Commission 2024, is about 36,486 students. Therefore, to determine sample size, Taro Tanabe's (Yamene, 1967) formula derivation was applied, with the 95% level of significance. It states thus;

$n=N/1+(e)^2$

Where n= sample size

N= Population of study

e= error margin (0.07)

1= the constant

Substituting the formula, we have;

$36,486 \times (0.005) = 182.43$

Therefore, $36,486 \div 182.43 = 200$, showing a sample size of 200 participants.

Design/Statistics

This study is a quantifiable study with a sample size of 200 undergraduate students from three universities in Enugu North senatorial district. Students from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka's Faculty of the Social Sciences, Maduka University College's Faculty of Health Sciences, and SUMAS's Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment make up the sample population. A survey created by Osharive (2015) with the title Social Media and Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire (SMAAPOS) was used as the data gathering tool. The questionnaire has three sections: A, B, and C. Section "A" investigates the overwhelming attachment of internet dependency among the study population, while section "B" is specifically looking at the effects

of social media on academic engagement and section "C" examines the effects of students' dependency on internet networks and its learned helplessness on school engagements among undergraduates. This instrument was modified by the researcher for the study's purpose with a reliability coefficient of 0.83. The instrument was distributed among this population during school hours in their various faculties. A total of 285 of the questionnaires were returned and properly filled. Mean score and standard deviation were used to analyze the data obtained.

Results

The results were presented in tables showing demographic characteristics of respondents, analysis of findings, and discussion of data collected for this study.

Table 1: Group by gender

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	90	45.0%
Male	110	55.0%
Total	200	100.0

Data showed that 45 % (90) of the respondents are females, while 55% (110) of the respondents are males. Therefore, the majority of respondents are males (5%).

Table 2: Classification of participants by year of study

Year of study	Frequency	Percentage (%)
100 level	33	16.5
200 level	71	35.5
300 level	45	22.5
400 level	40	20.0
400 and Above	11	5.5
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Data showed that 5.5% respondents are in their fourth year and above, 16.5% respondents are in their first year, 20.0% respondents are in their fourth year, 35.5% respondents are in their second year, and 22.5% respondents are in their third year. Therefore, the majority of respondents are in their second year (35.5%)

Table 3: Category of participants by department

Department	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Psychology	22	11.0
Political Science	23.2	11.6
Economics	22.8	11.4
Nursing	22.8	11.4
Medical Laboratory	20	10.0
Human Physiology	21.2	10.6

Mechanical Engineering	22	11.0
Architecture	23.2	11.6
Construction Engineering	22.8	11.4
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Data shown that 11.0 % of the respondents are in the department of Psychology, 11.6% of the respondents are in the department of Political of the science, 11.4% of the respondents are in the department of Economics, 11.4 % of the respondents are in the department of Nursing, 10.0% of the respondents are in the department of Medical Laboratory, 10.6 % of the respondents are in department of Human Physiology, 11.0% of the respondent are in the department of Mechanical Engineering, 11.6% of the respondents are in department of Architecture and 11.4% of the respondents are in department of Construction Engineering.

Research Question 1: What are the impacts of internet sources on schoolwork engagement among students?

Table 4: Mean rating and standard deviation for the impacts of internet sources on schoolwork engagement among undergraduate students

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Students' attachment to the internet serves as succor to their early life and academic role conflict	3.32	0.93	SA
2.	Students are mostly involved in internet vices	3.32	0.93	SA
3.	Students use internet sources to provide assistance and support to each other	2.64	0.87	A
4.	Internet networks are multifaceted and a web of knowledge integration	2.94	0.89	A
5.	There are features on internet platforms that are more relatable to research than human efforts	2.02	0.79	SD
6.	I used the internet sources as the only research tool	2.18	0.81	SD
7.	Internet source is self-educating and it aids my learning than the school curriculum	2.54	0.82	D
8.	I use internet sources as the only aid to my learning stress	2.32	0.82	D
9.	Whatever is taught in the class could be found on the internet; therefore, attending classes is useless	2.94	0.88	A
10.	Internet sources are tailored to others' ideology, which do not represent real situations	2.47	0.82	D
11.	Internet sources take up much of the time and energy that would have been used for the academic curriculum	3.01	O.89	A
12.	Reliance on internet sources aids students' academic procrastination	2.10	0.81	SD

Table 4 above presents the respondents' views on social media impacts among undergraduate students in the studied population. The 12 items in this cluster have a mean range from 2.64 to 3.32 and a standard deviation range from 0.87 to 0.93 for positive impacts of social media usage and adverse impacts, with the mean range from 2.02 to 2.54 and a standard deviation range from 0.79 to 0.82, respectively. The findings revealed both

positive and negative effects of internet sources on school engagement.

Research Question 2: What effects does internet addiction have on educational progression among students?

Table 5: Mean rating and standard deviation for effects of internet addiction on educational progression among undergraduate students

S/N	Statements	Mean	SD	Remarks
13.	Addicted to internet use mostly aids excellent performance in educational work.	2.32	0.82	D
14.	Students' addiction to internet use may likely distract them from academic engagement.	3.12	0.90	SA
15.	Dependency on social media reduces the intelligence quotient among students.	2.08	0.81	SD
16.	Social media hinders students from active participation in the class curriculum.	2.97	0.89	A
17.	Spending more time on frivolous networks has decreased students' academic performance	2.67	0.87	A
18.	Spending more time on social media reduces academic ambiance among students	3.24	0.91	SA

Table 5 above revealed that four items from the cluster agreed that social media addiction influences school engagement, with a mean range of 2.67 to 3.24 and standard deviation range of 0.87 to 0.91, while two items had a mean range of 2.08 to 2.32 and standard deviation range of 0.81 to 0.82, respectively, among undergraduates. This suggests that addiction to media platforms hampers academic engagement and therefore hinders academic success.

Research Question 3: What is the learned helplessness of media addiction on school engagement among undergraduates?

Table 6: Mean rating and standard deviation for learned helplessness.

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
19.	Without internet sources, academic life is meaningless to me	2.54	0.82	D
20.	Academic resources generated by internet sources often do not reflect my course curriculum	2.96	0.90	A
21.	Oftentimes, I get stuck in the use of internet sources in my academic activities	3.28	0.92	SA
22.	The use of artificial intelligence has eased my academic stress	2.82	0.88	A
23.	Modes of discourse in internet sources do not reflect the language operandi of academic activities	2.96	0.90	A
24.	Internet sources support easy replication and sharing of scholarly knowledge	3.21	0.92	SA
25.	I prefer learning through internet sources to conventional learning	2.81	0.87	A

Table 6 above revealed that all the items on learned helplessness positively and actively predict a cause-and-effect relationship, except one item that explores life attachment to social

media. The scores ranged from 2.81 to 3.28, while the standard deviation ranged from 0.87 to 0.92. This suggests that students' choice of social network learning over the conventional learning pattern most of the time is in tandem with their academic engagement.

Discussion of Findings

The findings provide a detailed insight into the impacts of social media on undergraduates' school engagements. Therefore, Tables 1, 2, and 3 are control variables that accelerated our understanding of the study design. In table 4; Results revealed positive and adverse impacts of internet sources, as essential part of students' daily lives, this aligns with previous studies conducted by {Junco, (2012); Okoro, (2015), Oni & Jolaoso, (2018)}, which highlights the ubiquity of social media usage among college students; serving as a significant platform for communication, entertainment, information sharing, expression of interest, political participation and social activism amongst others. But the preference for social media attachment observed in Nigerian universities, where students increasingly over-depend on digital learning tools, harms the conventional learning technique of teacher-student interactions, which is vital in the educational context and transmission of knowledge. Additionally, these results suggest that total reliance on internet sources hinders classroom interaction, reflecting mixed views on how social media affects face-to-face academic engagement. This illustrates a multifaceted association between social media usage and educational activities, where it can be a distraction or a valuable tool for learning, based on its usage.

In Table 5, the respondents' opinions on the use of internet sources and school engagement within the study population expose social media addiction as a distraction to the ambience of learning, thereby negatively affecting school engagement among students. This reinforces the idea that younger adults are mostly primary adopters of social media, a trend observed in Nigerian studies where platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat attract large youth followers (Adelakun, 2018). This agrees with Nannim et al (2023) study, which expressed the growing reliance on social media for academic purposes among younger students; reverberating trends in Nigerian universities, where students increasingly turn to social media for educational content and peer collaborations, thereby jettisoning the rudimentary pattern of human-interactive learning. The findings also revealed a significant concern regarding the dependency of internet sources on students' academic engagement, especially when it becomes an addictive obsession. Thus, many students indicate that social media addiction will likely distract them from academic involvement. This finding suggests that social media, although an integral part of students' lives, is widely perceived as a distraction that hampers focus and negatively impacts academic performance, showing an increased likelihood of low academic achievement among students as reported by Adegoke et al, 2020.

The findings in Table 6 reveal respondents' opinions on learned helplessness by providing thorough insight into the use of technology among undergraduates and how it impacts learning activities. The result revealed positive and adverse influence of internet sources as an integral part of daily life for many students, this aligns with previous studies conducted by {Junco, (2012); Okoro, (2015), Oni & Jolaoso, (2018)}, which highlights the ubiquity of internet addiction among college students; serving as a significant platform for communication, entertainment, information sharing, expression of interest, political participation and social activism amongst others. But the preference for social media attachment observed in Nigerian universities, where students increasingly over-depend on

digital learning tools, harms the conventional learning mechanics of teacher-student interactions, which is vital in the educational context and transmission of knowledge. Furthermore, it suggests that total reliance on internet sources hinders classroom interaction, reflecting mixed views on how internet source dependency affects face-to-face academic engagement. This result illustrates the complex relationship between internet resource usage and academic activities, where the internet can serve both as a distraction and a valuable academic tool, depending on the context of its usage.

Therefore, life attachment to internet use among undergraduates propels addicts, which can trigger over-dependency on media usage if it is not guarded. This finding is consistent with a study conducted by Lucas, Lamai, Shalgan, Lguma, and Dem (2024) that suggests an upward trend of users' learning behaviors that negatively impact mental health. Thereby, promoting a sort of inherent attachments such as feeling inadequate, depressed, and unmotivated among the addicted users. This, according to Bandura (1986), referred to as "people learn new behaviors through observing and associating with a role model." A role model is an entity that enshrined the utmost control in affecting developmental shift among the followers. To relate the issue of social media addictiveness to the concept of "role modeling" in this study implies that there has been a paradigm shift in the mechanism to learning amongst undergraduate students, thereby leveraging on already made materials found in internet and social network sites as aid to their academic expositions and frivolously cruising on the fun-fair of social networks which may circled to learned helplessness in most cases. This has been displayed among students who would have done excellently in their academic engagements but have drifted into many internet vices such as yahoo-yahoo, internet hackers, online dating, get-rich-syndrome, and other ill-internet involvement that stirs negative energy and unruly moral behaviors that are detrimental to their academic engagement and success in life.

These present a nuanced view of how internet sources affect classroom interaction by hindering in-person class engagement. Interestingly, it was found that older students leveraged these sources as tools that aid academic-related purposes (networking, research, and communication) with peers and instructors. This contrasts with the experiences of younger students, who may use it more for entertainment and frivolous engagements. However, the findings highlight the overall complex and evolving associations in usage between academic engagement and its learned helplessness, serving both as a resource and a potential source of distraction that precipitates passive behavioral acumen toward learning.

Conclusion

Undergraduate students' apparent lack of control, which can be broadly characterized as helpless behavior, mostly results in their incapacity to handle failed academic assignments and other school engagements. Many students concurred that an addiction to social media causes them to lose focus in class, and some even claimed that their academic programs have suffered as a result of spending more time online. This frequently shows up as a lack of drive and effort, as well as a disinterest in academic work and studies, with a reliance on social media as the sole solution to academic difficulties. Nonetheless, a sizable portion of students voiced worries about the diversions brought on by the overuse of social media. These results are in conformity with a larger body of research on the harmful impacts of social media dependency on students' academic engagement, indicating that internet sources can improve learning, but excessive dependency on it might cause students to become disengaged from their academic

obligations. Therefore, for undergraduate students to succeed academically, it is crucial to escape the cycle of internet-induced helplessness. By refocusing and strengthening the value of conventional learning, which emphasizes in-person mechanics with the use of examples and illustrations to help students assimilate and comprehend the fundamental meaning, concept, and application of learning to a real-life situation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

i. Time management awareness workshops should be organized within faculties and departments, highlighting the helpful and adverse effects of excessive time wasted on internet surfing.

ii. Therapeutic workshops should be instituted to rejuvenate students that has been encircled by internet addiction.

iii. Seminars that will emphasize learned helplessness as inconsistent behavior that was learned, which can also be unlearned through efforts and motivation, even in the face of failures.

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