

Excessive Use of Facebook and its Influence on Social and Academic Life of Students in Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria

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Abstract - This study examines excessive use of Facebook and its influence on the social and academic life of students in Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The increasing use of Facebook among university students has made it an important platform for communication, interaction and information sharing. However, concerns have been raised about the extent to which excessive use of the platform may affect students' academic engagement and social behaviour. The study adopted a survey research design, using a structured questionnaire to collect data from 376 students of the university. Data collected were analysed using both descriptive statistics and correlation analysis to determine the relationship between Facebook use and students' academic and social activities. The findings reveal that Facebook is widely used among students and plays a significant role in their daily interactions. However, the study also shows that excessive use of Facebook is associated with academic distraction and reduced face-to-face interaction among students. The results further indicate that students who spend more time on Facebook are more likely to experience challenges in balancing their academic responsibilities. The study concludes that while Facebook serves useful social and communication purposes, its excessive use may have negative implications for students' academic performance and social life. It recommends that students adopt more controlled usage patterns and make more purposeful use of the platform for academic activities.

Keywords: Excessive Use, Facebook, Influence, Students.

INTRODUCTION

Facebook is almost universally-used among higher education students (Al-Dheleai & Tasir, 2017). These students consider Facebook as their main social media choice and therefore spend a great part of their time in its use in their normal day (Ellefsen, 2015). In a study conducted in one of Malaysia's large public universities, the researchers found that among 105 students, only three students stated that they did not use Facebook (Alhazmi & Rahman, 2013). Similarly, Arusi's (2013) study conducted in Ebonyi State University, Nigeria, shows that all the students surveyed (392) were active on Facebook.

Students can use Facebook to create and share their identities. They can join groups and communicate with other students and faculty members by commenting on topics or by introducing topics they hope would encourage discussion. They can share information; exchange files, seek comments and advice; give opinions, suggestions, and ideas about their academics. Online discussion is a very important tool for students' academic performance. Those engagements are very helpful for students. It also provides educational information exchange and learning. It is an easy way for peer to peer communication (Camus et al., 2016).

The EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research (ECAR) conducted a study that targeted 36,950 students from 126 universities in the United States of America (USA) and one university in Canada. Results found that 90% of those students are using social networking tools. The number of Facebook users from the percentage of social networking users totaled 97% and they reported daily activity on this site (Smith & Caruso, 2010 cited in Al-Dheleai & Tasir, 2017). Students use Facebook for different purposes and this use can differ from one student to another. It is on this note that Wesseling (2012) explains that there are four major activities practiced by Facebook users which include: information-sharing (receiving/providing information and generating ideas), sharing for educational purposes (for learning, problem-solving and sharing work), social purposes (retrieving personal

information about others or themselves, chatting, making appointments and generally keeping in touch), and leisure (gaming and relaxing).

Consequently, Kashif (2013) reveals that Facebook is holding the largest percentage of members in online social networks and most of them are students around the globe. Elgendi (2015) corroborates with Kashif that Facebook has become very popular with college students, with excessive usage observed Today, most students cannot stay a single day without using Facebook. The use of Facebook might have good or bad impacts on their social and academic lives.

Statement of the Problem

In today's world, one of the easiest and fastest ways to socialise is using Facebook (Ainin et al., 2015). Murad et al., (2019) assert that Facebook is holding the largest percentage of members in online social networks today and most of them are students around the globe. The use of Facebook might have good or bad impacts on their academic and social lives. Many students use Facebook excessively, without knowing the influence it has on their academics. Students think there are no ill effects of Facebook on their academic and social activities, but that is a misconception that needs to be corrected (Murad, et al., 2019). Facebook usage has been receiving numerous attention. Junco (2012) asserts that Facebook has negative effects on students. Accordingly, this study seeks to find out how excessive use of Facebook affects students, both socially and academically.

Research Objectives

1. To determine the prevalence of excessive use of Facebook among students in Nasarawa State University, Keffi.
2. To examine the influence of Facebook excessive usage on the social and academic life of students in Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Facebook

Kerner (2021) explains that Facebook is a social networking website that was founded in February 2004 by Harvard University students; Chris Hughes, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz, Eduardo Saverin and Mark Zuckerberg. The idea behind Facebook was to provide an online book of faces for university students to connect and share information. It was initially a social network for Harvard and expanded in the following years to any university. It eventually became a social network for anyone, anywhere in the world.

The concept of a social network was a nascent one in 2004 and not entirely unique. Other social networks that were active at the time Facebook was created were Friendster, which was launched in 2002, and MySpace, which was launched in 2003. Users post information, status updates and pictures of themselves on social networks. These items are shared with friends, family and communities of interest. Facebook is more than just a social networking platform; it's also a business. Facebook had its initial public offering on May 18, 2012, on the Nasdaq stock exchange trading under the symbol FB. The company rebranded as Meta on Oct. 28, 2021. As of Dec. 1, 2021, Facebook trades under the symbol MVRB.

Facebook is only one of several technologies that Meta operates. In 2012, Facebook acquired social networking site Instagram for \$1 billion. Facebook then acquired WhatsApp for \$19 billion in 2014. Facebook later got into virtual reality (VR) hardware with its acquisition of Oculus VR in 2014 for \$2 billion. With Meta, the idea is to create and enable the metaverse. This would meld social networking, VR and augmented reality components to create new types of user interactions and experiences.

Excessive Use of Facebook

The undesirable consequences emanating from excessive Facebook usage on individual lives has been described as Internet Spectrum Addiction Disorder (Alabi, 2013), which could lead to Facebook addiction. Facebook addiction is a term coined by researchers that is applied to individuals who engage in excessive, compulsive Facebook use for the purposes of mood alteration, with negative personal outcomes (Chakraborty, 2017). In other words, a person with Facebook addiction may subjectively experience a loss of control while continuing to use Facebook excessively despite its detrimental effects on the individual's life (Andreassen & Pallesen, 2014). However, excessive use may not be considered addictive unless it is compulsive.

Unachukwu et al., (2022) assert that excessive use of social media platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram, often distracts students from their studies. This also aligns with the findings of Ahmed and Qazi (2011), who noted that most times, students waste their valuable time on social media platforms like Facebook,

and even go as far as using their mobile phones in the classroom, just to engage in activities that add no value to them.

Excessive Use of Facebook among Nigerian Students

The increasing use of Facebook among university students has attracted considerable scholarly attention in Nigeria, particularly in relation to its implications for academic performance and social interaction. Nigerian studies consistently show that platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram have become central to students' communication patterns and everyday activities.

Several studies agree that Facebook use is widespread among Nigerian undergraduates. For instance, Asemah et al. (2013) found that students in Nigerian universities are highly exposed to social media and engage with it regularly as part of their daily routines. Similarly, research conducted in tertiary institutions in Nigeria shows that Facebook remains one of the most frequently used platforms among students, largely because of its interactive features and ease of communication. These findings suggest that social media has become embedded in the social life of students, making it an important area of academic inquiry.

However, scholars differ in their assessment of the implications of this widespread use. A number of Nigerian studies argue that excessive use of social media may negatively affect students' academic performance. For example, Asemah et al. (2013) observed that high engagement with social networking platforms can lead to reduced academic productivity and increased distraction among students. Similarly, Ahmad (2019) notes that social media platforms often capture students' attention away from their studies, thereby affecting their academic outcomes. In the same vein, Gadzama et al., (2022) argue that frequent use of social media during lectures and study periods may interfere with learning and concentration.

Despite these contributions, much of the existing Nigerian literature tends to focus broadly on social media use rather than specifically examining excessive use of Facebook as a distinct behavioural issue. In addition, while several studies have examined the relationship between Facebook use and academic performance, fewer studies have simultaneously considered both academic and social life within the same framework. This creates a gap in understanding how excessive Facebook use may influence not only students' academic activities but also their patterns of interpersonal interaction.

Furthermore, there is limited research focusing specifically on students in Nasarawa State University, Keffi, despite the growing use of social media in the region. Most existing studies are concentrated in other Nigerian institutions. This study, therefore, addresses these gaps by examining excessive use of Facebook as a distinct concept, rather than general social media use, and by analysing its influence on both the academic and social life of students within a specific Nigerian university context. In doing so, it contributes to existing scholarship by providing a more focused and context-specific understanding of how excessive Facebook use affects students.

Risk Factors of Facebook Excessive Usage

Excessive use of Facebook is most commonly found in university students and tends to have a female preponderance (Chakraborty, 2017). The author adds that certain personality traits such as extraversion, narcissism, high levels of neuroticism, and lower levels of self-esteem correlate highly with compulsive Facebook use. According to Caplan's social skill model (cited in Chakraborty, 2017), lonely and depressed individuals who develop preference for online means of interaction are prone to problematic internet use. In line with this, researchers found a relationship between anxiety and depression and compulsive Facebook use (Koc & Gulyagci, 2013), suggesting that individuals with poor psychosocial health may use Facebook as an escape from daily life. Moreover, it has been postulated that social insecurities, such as social comparison (I feel that others have better lives than I do), fear of missing out (I feel I am missing out on enjoyable social interactions more than others), and fear of negative social evaluation (I worry about what other people think of me), are associated with dysfunctional Facebook use (Chakraborty, 2017).

Identifying Facebook Excessive Usage

Excessive use can be hard to define, so it's challenging to pinpoint appropriate social media limits. They will naturally vary from person to person. Notwithstanding, here are ten common signs and symptoms, as outlined by Nartz (2022);

1. Spending More Time On Facebook Than Intended

You only wanted to check a recent notification. But now an hour has passed, and you're "stalking" an old ex's profile or rereading four-year-old posts from your neighbor. One of the hallmark signs of excessive usage is

spending more time on Facebook than you intend (or desire). And even if you set limits for yourself, you may find yourself struggling to follow them.

2. Using Facebook to Boost Your Mood

People may turn to Facebook to feel a sense of connection, happiness, or “escape” from the real world. Social media can undoubtedly be rewarding. In fact, research shows that using social media releases an overabundance of dopamine, which is the primary neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward. It creates the desire to keep using it, the same way someone else might use addictive substances, like drugs or alcohol.

3. Downplaying or Hiding Your Facebook Use

Do you lie about your Facebook use to others? Do you try to hide your phone or computer screen when loved ones walk in the room because you feel ashamed? You don’t want others to “catch on” to how often you log in or engage with Facebook.

4. Chronically Procrastinating Other Tasks

If you use Facebook excessively, you will prioritize using Facebook over other tasks. As a result, you may neglect basic household chores, school activities, work responsibilities, or parenting duties.

5. Feeling Anxious Without Facebook

Do you feel “naked” when you leave the house without your phone? Do you feel restless when you can’t connect to the internet in a particular location? These signs of withdrawal, which can happen when you reduce or abstain from social media, can indicate problematic use.

6. Avoiding Face-to-Face Interactions

Some people turn online to cope with social anxiety, depression, or other mental health problems. While online relationships can certainly be healthy and beneficial, individuals should not avoid all face-to-face interactions as a result. If Facebook affects your desire to connect with people in real life, you may be using it excessively.

7. Using Facebook Despite Wanting to Stop or Cut Down

Do you keep making promises to yourself or others to reduce your use? Do you actually stick to those limits, or do you find yourself breaking your own rules? If you can’t commit to your self-imposed boundaries, you may have more of a problem than you realize. This represents some of the chronic habituations; the natural, often gradual decreases in anxiety without having to engage in the anxiety-reducing behavior that are typically seen across addictions.

8. Persistently Oversharing on Facebook

If you constantly post pictures, comment on people’s statuses, or share your own thoughts, you may be relying on Facebook for external validation. We all want to feel a sense of belonging from others. But if Facebook is your sole source of this approval, you will only continue sharing and sharing and sharing without enforceable boundaries, often alienating other people as a result.

9. Checking Facebook in Hazardous Situations

Do you glance down at your phone while you’re driving? Or while you’re engaged in manual labor at home or work? Are you playing with your phone while your young kids are swimming? That could be an excessive use of Facebook.

10. Feeling Apathetic Towards Other Activities

Do you now get bored when you’re just going for a walk? Or when you’re engaging in hobbies you once liked? As mentioned, social media use can release dopamine and trigger a vicious cycle of feeling like you “need” to be online to feel good.

Consequences of Facebook Excessive Usage

When used in moderation, Facebook can facilitate relationships and improve self-esteem (Chakraborty, 2017). However, maladaptive use can lead to negative life consequences. Facebook can be detrimental to academic performance, as Kirschner & Karpinski (2010) found that Facebook users have lower grade-point averages and spend fewer hours studying than non-Facebook users. Of those who reported that it had a negative effect on their academic performance, 74% stated that using Facebook to procrastinate made them feel like they were working (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). Compulsive Facebook use has also been shown to disrupt sleep.

The Persuasive Influence of Facebook

Facebook is the largest social networking site, with nearly 3 billion people using it monthly (Lua, 2023). This means roughly 37% of the world's population are Facebook users. Given its pervasive popularity and users' frequent access, Facebook has arisen as a potential source of influence on attitudes and behaviors (Moreno et al., 2013). The authors argue that it is important to consider Facebook as a source of influence, particularly given the types of behaviors that are commonly displayed on Facebook.

Studies have illustrated that students feel that Facebook displays have the power to impact their peers' attitudes and behaviors negatively (Paradise & Sullivan, 2012). It has been argued that Facebook may have greater influence than traditional media, as Facebook combines the power of interpersonal persuasion with the reach of mass media (Moreno, et al., 2013). Facebook and other social media services take advantage of this, pushing you to slip easily from thought to behavior. It emphasizes your impulses and decreases the opportunities for you to think more thoroughly about your perceptions, attitudes and decisions (Alhabash, 2019). Facebook has been described as the most significant advance in persuasion since the radio was invented in the 1890s and initiated a new form of persuasion labelled "mass interpersonal persuasion" (Moreno, et al., 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Media Dependency Theory

Media Dependency Theory is a communication theory that explains the relationship between individuals or groups and the mass media. It was developed to understand how media consumption can influence and shape people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur proposed the "Dependency theory" in 1976. The theory is combined with several perspectives like psycho analytics and social system theory. According to this theory, there is an internal link between media, audience and large social systems. The audience learning from real life is limited, so they can use the media to get more information to fulfill their needs. An extensive use of media generates dependent relations in the audience. Also, the media can create a dependent relationship with target audiences to achieve their goals by using its media power.

The media dependency theory supports this study because excessive use of Facebook by students could lead to over reliance and dependency on it, which may consequently lead to addiction and affect their social and academic life.

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research method was used with survey design and questionnaire as instruments of data collection. The study population consisted of 35,000 students from Nasarawa State University, Keffi, out of which 395 were selected randomly, using the Taro Yamane formula of sample size derivation. The random selection was done in order to give all members of the population an equal chance of participation. Copies of the questionnaire were handed out directly to respondents using self-administration just before seeking the consent of the respondents. A total of 376 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, and the collected data were analysed using frequency tables and simple percentages.

Operational Definition of Significant Terms

Excessive Use: This refers to the prolonged and frequent use of Facebook beyond what is considered normal or necessary.

Facebook: This is a social networking platform that allows users to create profiles, connect with friends, share messages, post updates, and engage in online communication.

Influence: This refers to the effect that excessive Facebook use has on students' behaviour, particularly in relation to their academic performance and social interaction.

Academic Life: This refers to students' engagement with their studies, including attending lectures, completing assignments, reading, and maintaining concentration on academic tasks.

Social Life: This refers to the pattern of interaction between students and others, including face-to-face communication, participation in social activities, and interpersonal relationships within and outside the university environment.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical standards were carefully observed in the course of this study. Participation in the research was entirely voluntary, and respondents were adequately informed about the purpose of the study before the administration of the questionnaire.

With regard to institutional ethical approval, the study was conducted in line with accepted academic research standards. Although formal ethical clearance was not issued, the study strictly adhered to standard ethical guidelines for social science research.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All responses were treated with strict confidentiality and were used solely for academic purposes. The data collected were securely handled and were not made accessible to unauthorised persons.

Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with this study. The research was conducted independently, and the findings presented are based on the data obtained from the respondents without any external influence.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Classification According to Gender

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Male	140	37.2%
Female	236	62.7%
Total	376	100%

Table 1 above shows that out of 376 respondents that participated in the survey, 140 (37.2%) respondents are male, while 236 (62.7%) respondents are female.

Table 2: Classification According to Age

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 23	142	37.7%
24 – 29	186	49.4%
30 – 34	48	12.7%
35 – 40	-	-
41 and above	-	-
Total	376	100%

Table 2 shows that 142 (37.7%) respondents are within the age of 18 – 23, 186 (49.4%) respondents are within the age of 24 – 29, and 48 (12.7%) respondents are within the age of 30 – 34.

Table 3: Marital Status

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Single	330	87.7%
Married	46	12.2%
Divorced	-	-

Total	376	100%
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Table 3 above depicts that 330 respondents (87.7% respondents) are single, while 46 respondents (12.2%) are married.

Table 4. Students with Facebook Accounts

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	376	100%
No	-	-
Undecided	-	-
Total	376	100%

Table 4 shows that all the 376 respondents (100%) have Facebook accounts.

Table 5. Frequency of Facebook Usage

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Regularly	236	62.7%
Occasionally	92	24.4%
Rarely	48	12.7%
Never	-	-
Undecided	-	-
Total	376	100%

Table 5 shows that 236 (62.7%) respondents regularly use Facebook, 92 (24.4%) respondents occasionally use Facebook, and 48 (12.2%) respondents rarely use Facebook.

Table 6: Activities Engaged on Facebook

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Chatting	190	50.5%
Posting	48	12.7%
Dating	-	-
Celebrity follow up	92	24.4%
School work	46	12.2%
Total	376	100%

Table 6 shows that 190 (50.5%) respondents mostly engage on chatting on Facebook, 48 (12.7%) respondents mostly engage on posting, 92 (24.4%) respondents mostly engage on celebrity follow up, and 46 (12.2%) respondents mostly engage on school work.

Table 7: Facebook Distracts Students from Schoolwork

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agreed	92	24.4%
Agreed	142	37.7%
Undecided	48	12.7%
Disagreed	48	12.7%
Strongly disagreed	46	12.2%
Total	376	100%

Table 7 shows that 92 (24.4%) respondents strongly agreed that Facebook distracts them from studying or doing school work, 142 (37.7%) respondents agreed that Facebook distracts them from studying or doing school work, 48 (12.7%) respondents were undecided that Facebook distracts them from studying or doing schoolwork, 48 (12.7%) respondents disagreed that Facebook distracts them from studying or doing schoolwork, and 46 (12.2%) respondents strongly disagreed that Facebook distracts them from studying or doing schoolwork.

Table 8: Interacting on Facebook than Face-to-face

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Always	94	25%
Often	282	75%
Sometimes	-	-
Never	-	-
Total	376	100%

Table 8 shows that 94 (25%) respondents always spend more time interacting with friends on Facebook than in face-to-face interactions, while 282 (75%) respondents often spend more time interacting with friends on Facebook than in face-to-face interactions.

Correlation Analysis

To further examine the relationship between Facebook usage and students' academic and social behaviour, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The analysis tested whether the frequency of Facebook use is significantly associated with academic distraction and reduced face-to-face interaction among students.

Table: Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3
Frequency of Facebook Use	1		
Academic Distraction	.46	1	
Reduced Face-to-Face Interaction	.39	.41	1

Note:

$p < 0.05$

Interpretation

The correlation analysis reveals a moderate positive relationship between frequency of Facebook use and academic distraction ($r = .46, p < 0.05$). This indicates that students who use Facebook more frequently are more likely to experience distractions from their academic activities.

Similarly, the analysis shows a positive relationship between Facebook use and reduced face-to-face interaction ($r = .39, p < 0.05$). This suggests that increased engagement with Facebook may correspond with a decrease in direct interpersonal communication among students.

These findings provide statistical support for the argument that excessive reliance on Facebook may influence students' academic engagement and social interaction patterns.

Discussion of Findings

This section of the study discusses the findings in relation to the research objectives.

Research Objective 1: Prevalence of excessive use of Facebook among students in Nasarawa State University, Keffi

The findings of this study show that Facebook use is widespread among students, with a considerable number of respondents exhibiting patterns associated with excessive use such as frequent checking, prolonged engagement and difficulty reducing time spent on the platform. This finding aligns with studies conducted within the Nigerian context which indicate that social media platforms, particularly Facebook, are among the most frequently used digital tools by university students. For instance, Asemah et al. (2013) found that Nigerian undergraduates are highly exposed to social media and engage with these platforms regularly as part of their daily routines. Similarly, studies on Nigerian students' media behaviour show that increased access to internet-enabled devices has contributed to the high level of social media engagement among youths.

From the standpoint of Media Dependency Theory, the findings suggest that many students rely on Facebook to satisfy key needs such as communication, social interaction and entertainment. As Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) argue, the more individuals depend on a medium for these needs, the more influence that medium is likely to exert on their behaviour. In this case, the high level of engagement observed among students reflects a growing dependency on Facebook as a primary communication platform.

Research Objective 2: Influence of Facebook excessive usage on the social and academic life of students in Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

The findings of this study indicate that excessive use of Facebook has both social and academic implications for students. In terms of academic life, many respondents reported that excessive use of Facebook leads to distraction, reduced study time and difficulty concentrating on academic tasks. This supports existing studies which have found that high levels of social media engagement can negatively affect students' academic performance. For example, Asemah et al. (2013) observed that excessive use of social media among Nigerian students can lead to reduced academic productivity and increased procrastination. Similarly, research on tertiary institutions in Nigeria has shown that social media use, particularly when uncontrolled, is associated with poor

academic outcomes due to divided attention and time mismanagement (Nwaka-Nwandu et al., 2024) . These findings are consistent with the present study, which demonstrates that excessive Facebook use may interfere with students' academic responsibilities.

At the same time, it is important to note that the relationship between Facebook use and academic performance is not entirely negative. Some studies suggest that social media platforms can support academic activities such as information sharing and collaborative learning (Aku & Omale, 2023) . This implies that the effect of Facebook on academic life depends largely on how it is used. Therefore, the negative outcomes observed in this study are more likely linked to excessive and uncontrolled use, rather than the platform itself.

In terms of social life, the findings reveal that increased reliance on Facebook is associated with reduced face-to-face interaction among students. Many respondents indicated that they prefer interacting with friends online rather than engaging in physical communication. This reflects a shift in communication patterns, where mediated interaction is gradually replacing traditional forms of social engagement.

CONCLUSION

Facebook, being a social networking site, can provide information and entertainment to students if used correctly. However, the excessive use of Facebook has negative effects on students' academic and social life. This is because it could distract students from their studies and their interactions with peers offline. Thus, this study has provided more insights on the excessive use of Facebook, and the possible effects associated with it. It has also contributed to knowledge by advancing scholarship on the use of social media platforms by students in Nigeria. However, whilst other social networking sites might have their peculiarities, this study is limited to Facebook alone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Students should reduce the time spent on Facebook, since excessive use of Facebook has a negative impact on social and academic life. They are encouraged to meet other students on campus, and network with them. By doing that, they would be more socialised and exposed, rather than spending all their time on Facebook.
2. Students should maximize the potential of Facebook by using it to their academic advantage. Since Facebook provides learning tools, it should be used to promote learning rather than as a mere chatting platform.

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