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## **SOCIAL MEDIA MILITATES AGAINST DEVELOPMENT OF SELF DISCIPLINE FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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### **Abstract**

*Social media have without doubts added to the on-the-spot interaction among people at close ranges and among those at different ends of the world. The success of modern day business, education and socialization of all sorts give much credit to the use of social media. However, the rate at which young adults love and use social networking is raising a concern. Indications abound that with their cell phones always connected to the Internet, they seem to be on the verge of addiction to the use of social media. So this article evaluates how much the simultaneous use of social media and receiving lectures has helped young adults in Nigerian universities improve their studies, develop their personalities and grow in emotional intelligence and balance. The article would more importantly study the long-term effect of the alleged youths' addiction to social media on the struggle to develop self-discipline. Related literature on the topic under study would be explored to have a feel of scholarly opinions. Sampling interviews would equally be conducted on phone among some Nigerian university students. Theoretical framework on Internet addiction would be applied to find out why young adults could lose their bearing by, in spite of the benefits of, the use of social media. Suggestions would be made based on the process*

*of the development of self-discipline and focused personality and their benefits in facing life challenges that would surely come.*

### **Keywords**

Social Media, Young Adults, Internet Addiction, Self-discipline

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## **1. Introduction**

Professors and lecturers in Nigerian universities have hard times getting the attention of some of their students while at lectures. It appears some students distract themselves from lectures with their smart phones, tablets or computer devices. Lecturers are occasionally deceived into thinking these students use these devices to take notes at lectures. From this research, there are strong indications that these students rather wander away into the world of social media while bodily present at lecture halls. They get lost in their Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and etc. world. The issue here in question is the lack of self-discipline needed to stay on the right course at the right time. Young adults of today do not match their craze for the use of social media with a corresponding self-discipline. This is raising a growing concern on how to guide them to develop this self-discipline required to be mature adults able to face life's challenges.

Against this backdrop, this work engages in evaluating how much simultaneous engagement in social media and receiving lectures have helped the academic performance and self-discipline of Nigerian university students. To do this evaluation, this work begins by establishing a theoretical framework. This is followed by some interviews that were carried out and analyzed. The interview questions were geared towards looking into the effects of the alleged addiction of the Nigerian university students to social media. The work generally examines social media's potential to jeopardize young adults' self-discipline and future carrier in life. Some related literatures are reviewed as part of the evaluation. And weighing the results of the evaluation, the write-up then concludes with some suggestions.

## **2. Aim of the study**

This work therefore sets out to investigate:

- If simultaneous engagement in social media and receiving lectures help Nigerian university young adults improve their studies, develop their personalities and self-discipline.
- The long-term effects of Nigerian university young adults' addiction to social media.
- How to help Nigerian university young adults begin to develop self-discipline.

## **3. Research Questions**

- Does simultaneous engagement in social media and receiving lectures help Nigerian university young adults improve their studies, develop their personalities and self-discipline?
- What are the long-term effects of Nigerian university young adults' addiction to social media?
- How could Nigerian university young adults be helped to develop self-discipline

## **4. Methodology**

A theoretical framework is given. This is followed by closed, fixed-response telephone interviews that were carried out. Responses to the telephone interviews are collated, tabulated, analyzed and discussed. Some possible factors arising from the responses are explained on how they associate with the subject matter. The students interviewed are from three different universities in Nigeria, namely, University of Port-Harcourt, River State; Institute of Management and Technology (IMT) Enugu, Enugu State and Federal Polytechnic Oko, Anambra State. Related scholarly opinions are analyzed.

## **5. Theoretical Framework**

Andreas M. Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content [UGC]” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Web 2.0 served as the platform that facilitated UGC whereby “content and applications

are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Prominent among these internet-based applications for this study are Facebook created in 2004 and Twitter created in 2006. Researchers confirm that these two social network sites have gained great popularity. Lawrence Ekwok, in his work, *Facing Criminality on Facebook*, mentions that there are “1.15 billion mobile daily active users, and another 1.74 billion mobile active users (Mobile Facebook MAU) as at December 2016” (Ekwok, 2017). With the high-speed Internet access of today, the accessibility of social media becomes easier to use anywhere and everywhere lending credence to its popularity.

Easy access to the social media has two opposite imports. It is helpful in supplying on-the-spot useful information. But, when one is set to meet a target and may not necessarily need unwanted interruptions, access to social media can equally be a strong source of distraction. Easy access to social media could lead to too much information otherwise called information overload. One could surf Facebook, for instance, with the view to reaching out for particular information but ends up being distracted by the invasion of too many ads on the page and other pops coming up here and there. Consequently, the availability of smart phones in the hands of Nigerian university young adults make them perpetually connect to social media. With this connection, they sometimes get disoriented in pursuing their immediate set target. Emmanuel Fori posits that young adults’ engagement in the social network sites “directly cause the gradual drop in the grades of students” (Fori, 2016). The question here is: young adults are still at the development stage. This stage has its inherent natural struggles to maintain focus. Considering this, one wonders how much the frequent and unguided use of social media helps them to maintain their balance.

There is need for a corresponding supportive environment for anyone who trains to develop a particular skill. Frequent and unguided access to social media evokes cravings and stimulations to want to engage more. Responding to these stimulations engenders even more stimulations. No one is left out on this. From the research carried out on university young adults by Kathryn Wilson, Stephanie Fornasier and Katherine M. White, they discovered that “personality and self-esteem explained only a small amount of variance in both SNS [Social Networking Site] use and addictive tendencies” (Wilson, Fornasier & White, 2010). However, they opined that “extroversion emerged as a positive predictor and conscientiousness as a

negative predictor, of both time spent using SNSs and SNS addictive tendencies” (Wilson, Fornasier & White, 2010). Thus, young adults have more difficulty to resist responding to the streams of messages that flow on social media. This is owing to their stage in emotional and psychological development.

As one response leads to another, young adults easily get trapped into pursuing shadows and getting addicted. It is good to mention here that arguments are on about the appropriateness of applying the term addiction to Internet use. Kesaraporn Wanajak, not minding these arguments, went on to use the term. He observed that internet addiction could range from neglecting other activities to spending time on the Internet and having relationship problems with family members, friends, or others. For him, Internet addiction could equally manifest in having academic problems, such as school absences, poor grades, or low performance. This addiction could lead to being unable to control, decrease or stop use of the Internet. It could elicit emerging negative behaviours, such as acting aggressively, yelling, swearing and unprovoked bad temper, isolation, sleep deprivation, skipping meals and exercise, lying about or hiding the amount of time spent on the Internet, or other online activities. Exhibiting psychological symptoms, such as restlessness, anxiety, short attention span, depression, or agitation are not far fetch from this addiction. Physical health problems, such as back pain, eyestrain, hand corns, weight gain, weight loss, or dehydration are strongly linked to this addiction. Being a vicious cycle, Internet addiction leads to increasing the time of Internet use and making Internet use a priority in the user’s life (Wanajak, 2011).

## **6. Data Analysis and Discussion**

Since the target of this work is not about the benefits accruing from the use of social media by Nigerian university young adults, it focused on what it sets out to do. Using three agents, this work succeeded in forwarding through WhatsApp media, close, fixed-response interviews to about 100 students in three Nigerian universities. 72 out of 100 students responded to the questions. So the analysis is done using 72 students as 100% of the respondents showing in the tables that follow.

Q1. At what *age* and in what *year* did you begin your higher education?

**Table 1: Age of Admission into the University**

Age of Admission	Frequency	Percent (N=72)
18	18	25%
19	14	20%
20	16	22%
21	8	11%
22	6	8%
23	5	7%
25	2	3%
No Response	3	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data on table 1 shows that the ages of the respondents are spread out from 18 to 25. 25% were 18 on admission. 20% were 19. Another 22% were 20. Yet another 11% were 21. 8% were 22. 7% were 23. 3% were 25. 4% gave no response to the question.

**Table 2: Year of Admission**

Year of Admission	Frequency	Percent (N=72)
2000	2	3%
2013	18	25%
2014	12	17%
2015	22	30%
2016	16	22%
No Response	2	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 shows their year of admission beginning from 2000 with 3% of the respondents. One admitted into the university in 2000 is supposed to have finished before now. However, majority of the respondents are still undergrads admitted from year 2013 to 2016 having 25%, 17%, 30% and 22% respectively. 3% did not respond.

Q2. Which social media do you often use? Answers: Choose one – Facebook or Twitter or Myspace.

**Table 3:** *Social Media Often Used*

<b>Social Media</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (N=72)</b>
Facebook	70	97%
Twitter	-	-
MySpace	-	-
No Response	2	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

This table shows that 97% of the of the respondents use Facebook making it obvious that it remains the main social media used by Nigerian University students. 3% gave no response.

Q3. Approximately how many times do you watch your phone for messages while at lectures? Answers: Choose one of the following: 5-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, etc.

**Table 4:** *Approximate Number of Times the Phone is Watched While at Lectures*

<b>Approximate No. of Times</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (N=72)</b>
5-10 times	50	69%
11-15 times	20	28%
16-20 times	-	-
21-25 times	-	-
26-30 times	-	-
No Response	2	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data on table 4 gives a clear evidence of how students lack the resistance to watch their phones while at lectures. 69% watch their phones 5-10times while 28% watch their phones 11-15times during lectures. No response came in for other approximate time ranges. 3% of the respondent gave no answer. From the given responses, one would wonder how many minutes they really devote to lectures.

Q. 4 Are you able to concentrate at lecture while using Facebook or any other social media?  
Answers: Choose one of the following – Yes, no, partially, distracted.

**Table 5:** Concentration While Simultaneously Engaged in Social Media & Lectures

Responses	Frequency	Percent (N=72%)
Yes	-	-
No	70	97%
Partially	-	-
No Response	2	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

There is a chorus **No** from 97% that responded on Table 5, saying obviously that they do not concentrate at lectures when engaged in social media. 3% did not respond.

Q. 5 Does simultaneous engagement in social media and lectures affect students' ability to grasp the substance of the lecture? Answers: Not at all, Yes, partially, No.

**Table 6:** Ability to Grasp Lecture Substance while Engaged in Social Media

Responses	Frequency	Percent (N=72)
Not at all	6	8%
Yes	2	3%
Partially	-	-
No	64	89%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

Results on Table 6 show that 89% of the respondent cannot figure out the head and tail of any lecture while they simultaneously engage in social media and lectures. 8% gave the emphatic **Not at all** response, 3% surprisingly said **Yes**, while nobody responded to **Partially**.

Q. 6 Do you recommend that students should use the social media during lectures?

**Table 7:** Recommendation of Social Media During Lectures

Responses	Frequency	Percent (N=72)
Yes	-	-
No	72	100%

On Table 7, we could see that all the respondents said no 'Facebooking' while at lectures.

Q. 7 - About what percentage of students check their phones while at lectures? Answer: 10-20%, 30-40%, 50-60%,70-80%, 90%.

**Table 8:** Percentage of Students Who Check Their Phones While at Lectures

Responses	Frequency	Percent (N=72)
10-20% of Students	2	3%
50-60% of Students	6	8%
60-70% of Students	8	11%
70-80% of Students	48	67%
80-90% of Students	8	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data on Table 8 is a double-confirmation that students are unable to resist their phones during lectures. Almost three-quarter, that is, 67% of the respondents affirmed that 70-80% of students check their phones while at lectures. 11% said 80-90%; another 11% said 60-70%; 8% said 50-60%; while only 3% said 10-20% of the students check their phones while at lectures.

Q. 8 - About what percentage of the lecture time do they frequent their phone? Answer: 10-20%, 30-40%, 50-60%, 70-80%, 90%.

**Table 9:** Percentage of Lecture Time Spent on Phone

Responses	Frequency	Percent (N=72)
10-20% of Lecture Time	19	26%

30-40% of Lecture Time	2	3%
40-50% of Lecture Time	4	6%
50-60% of Lecture Time	35	48%
60-70% of Lecture Time	8	11%
70-80% of Lecture Time	4	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 9 shows 26% of the respondents saying that 10-20% of lecture time is spent on phone. 3% said it is 30-40%. 6% said it is 40-50%. The majority which is 48% of the respondents said it is 50-60% of the lecture time that student spend on phone. 11% said it is 60-70% of lecture time; while 6% of the respondents are of the view that students spend 70-80% of lecture time on phone.

This work used questions that linked lectures and watching phone or checking the social media because it has a strong link with self-discipline; the subject matter. The writer agrees with the definitions of self-discipline adopted from various sources by Aleksandrs Gorbunovs, Atis Kapenieks and Sarma Cakula. They define self-discipline as the ability to make yourself do things you know you should do even when you do not want to. It is the ability to control one's feelings and overcome one's weaknesses. It is emphasized that self-discipline appears in various forms, such as perseverance, restraint, endurance, thinking before acting, finishing what you start doing, and as the ability to carry out one's decisions and plans despite inconveniences, hardships or obstacles. Self-discipline also means self-control, the ability to avoid unhealthy excess of anything that could lead to negative consequences (Gorbunovs, Kapenieks & Cakula, 2016).

In consideration of the theoretical framework, responses from the interview questions and the above definition of self-discipline, one can infer that an average Nigerian university young adult would have hard time developing self-discipline if unguided in the use of social media.

## 7. Developing Self-Discipline in an Age of Social Media

Obviously, from the foregoing, there is no solid support to the notion that simultaneous use of social media and receiving lectures has positive impact on Nigerian university students. Though this study focuses specifically on social media vis-à-vis self-discipline, the subject matter has interrelationship with other factors like general wellbeing and academic performance.

A little glance at what researchers have discovered on the relationship between social media and wellbeing as well as its effects on academic performance becomes relevant. Thus, Sara Thomee, Annika Harenstam and Mats Hagberg came up with the conclusion that “there were cross-sectional and prospective associations between mobile phone variables and mental health outcomes among the young adults” (Thomee, Harenstam & Hagberg, 2011). They discovered that young adults’ high quantitative mobile phone exposure resulted in their mental overload, disturbed sleep, the feeling of never being free, role conflicts, and feelings of guilt due to inability to return all calls and messages (Thomee et al, 2011).

Without self-discipline, performing well in academics would require a miracle. Quoting Banquil & chua of 2009, Emmanuel Fori insists that “social networking do affect ones academic performance adversely... if such a student invests his time in social networking sites instead of in his studies” (Fori, 2016). The effects of Nigerian university students’ alleged addiction to social media cannot be underestimated. Overuse of social media affects their academic performance, their level of reasoning and their self-discipline, among others. Fori decried that Nigerian university students now use social networking sites at the detriment of their studies. He says that it is not doubtful that due to over-engagement in social networking sites, some students in tertiary institutions repeat a class or proceed to the next level of their studies with course(s) carried over (Fori, 2016).

Rose A. Arceño in her article *Social and Psychological Dimensions of Internet Use Experienced by Maritime Students*, shows the maritime students’ strong tendencies to being engrossed in the virtual world at the detriment of their studies. Though she concludes that “the maritime students were not immersed in the Internet world”, but she “strongly recommended that constant monitoring of the students’ activities be done by both parents and instructors so that academic success will be experienced by the maritime students” (Arceño, 2017). Nigerian students of today who are losing focus and having hard times in catching up with academic demands seem not to be alone on this struggle. Moreover, there is evident poor quality of Education and many other appalling factors working against studies in Nigeria. However, Anna Onoyase, a lecturer at Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, insists that students themselves worsen the situation by “engaging excessively in uneducative activities at the detriment of their studies” (Onoyase, 2014). Many students have lost interest in their studies and while away most of their time in social media.

Just as developing self-discipline grows as one makes further effort, so also one tends towards addiction as one continues in subsequent loss of resistance to cravings to particular stimulus. This situation has little or nothing to do with those with high or low Intelligence Quotient (IQ). Each of these groups can fall victim to lack of self-discipline. That is why there could be students with high intelligence and high grades and yet without corresponding level of success in managing life's challenges. Daniel Goleman reacts: "What factors are at play, for example, when people of high IQ flounder and those of modest IQ do surprisingly well? I would argue that the difference quite often lies in the abilities called here *emotional intelligence*, which include self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself" (Goleman, Loc 101-105 of 6819). Granted that self-discipline does not guarantee solution to every problem but it certainly shreds them. Goleman goes on to register the importance of developing self-discipline when he says: "Academic intelligence has little to do with emotional life. The brightest among us can founder on the shoals of unbridled passions and unruly impulses; people with high IQs can be stunningly poor pilots of their private lives", (Goleman, 34 of 310).

Nigerian university young adults are more at risk on the issue here in question. They face a general deteriorating quality of education (Fori, 2016), coupled with their stage that is necessarily in a multi-transitional process. Young adulthood has many markers. Richard A. Settersten, Timothy M. Ottusch, and Barbara Schneider opine, "the process of becoming adult that emerged in the middle of the twentieth century came to be associated with the acquisition of social roles and responsibility" (Settersten et al, 2015). However, more recently, they maintain that the social markers of adulthood were more gendered, that there is not a generic young person, rather, there are young men and young women (Settersten et al, 2015). In the psychological sphere, the abstract concepts of maturity, independence, responsibility and personal control are reflections of emerging adulthood (Settersten et al, 2015). According to Settersten, et al, "young people use more indeterminate and individualistic criteria to frame their sense of adulthood rather than traditional social roles" (Settersten et al, 2015). They more importantly acknowledge that: "building an adult identity is a process, not a discrete event. No single experience renders one an adult. Instead, it is a larger cluster of events and the gradual accumulation of experiences that eventually render one an adult in the eyes of self and other" (Settersten et al, 2015).

The crux of this work lies on the tension arising from the transitional process of the Nigerian university young adult. This process involves the experiencing and managing of a cluster of events happening simultaneously in one's life. In the midst of the biological, traditional, social and psychological transitions, social media with their information overload and inherent distractions now emerge. The Nigerian university young adult is to simultaneously manage all these bunch of events. He or she is expected to emerge a mature adult and self-disciplined graduate. The young adult is yet expected to be able to manage very high and sensitive positions so that the laudable Nigerian Policy on Education can be realized (Fori, 2016). The situation is overwhelming. They need to be helped lest they are marred for life.

From the foregoing, one could guess the long-term effect of Nigerian university students' overuse of social media. Having low self-concept, lack of self-discipline and the nations' loss of hope of having reasonable future leaders of the country and future opinion leaders feature strongly. Owing to the above flow of reasoning, this work now comes with the following suggestions.

## **8. Suggestions**

- This work suggests immediate fixing of the academic system in Nigeria, from the lowest grade to its tertiary institutions.
- There is need to introduce, into the Nigerian university curriculum, a newly designed Media Literacy Course as one of the General Studies every student should take on admission into the university. The Course could be titled **Self-Discipline and Social Media Stimulations**. Reviewing Hobbs R. (Ed.)'s *Exploring the Roots of Digital and Media Literacy through Personal Narrative*, Alessandro Soriani not only agrees that "Media Literacy involves specific competences that are not only about access and critically choosing information, analyzing the content and the context of media environments and being able to produce and write creatively for media with the help of digital tools" (Soriani, 2016), but also sustains that media literacy "means having competences that relate to one's own conduct and behavior in a responsible and ethical way and to take action to solve social problems in collaboration with a community" (Soriani, 2016). This is supported by W. James Potter in his book *Media Literacy* when he states that "Media Literacy increases your ability to exercise control over the vast

array of messages you encounter through daily media exposure” (Potter, 2016). So in this Course, students would be made to know that it is for their own good so that they would comply willingly. They should be led to critically evaluate the pros and cons of why they do what they do with all the myriads of information that stream into their phone. The lecturer could apply various creative measures in achieving this target.

- Training of specialists on **Self-Discipline and Social Media Stimulations**. This may require some knowledge on media psychology.
- One who is already self-disciplined can go on and offline to catch up with friends without being much distracted. But the case here is about young adults who are still struggling to build their self-discipline. To help them, there is need for them to realize that most of those social media friends make no serious positive impact on their lives. They could unfollow these friends and keep to only friends that help them grow. This is another aspect of being media literate so that on graduating from the university, students should be media literate as well. This study is of the opinion that introducing this course into Nigerian universities curriculum would go a long way in helping students develop self-discipline.

Nigerian Universities need to rise to the occasion. Leaving it to be managed by individual lecturers and professors on their own may not help much. At 18 one is considered to be ‘free’ from parents and guardians’ direction on what to do. Well, this concept is widely and highly obtainable in the Western world. In Nigeria, it is a different ball game all together. And, with the complexity of this stage in life in Nigeria and the upsurge of the distractions accruing from the use of social media, there is need to stipulate rules and get them etched in the universities’ guiding principles on how students should use their mobile devices especially while at lectures or on public assemblies.

## **9. Clarifications and Limitations**

- Nigerian university young adults as stated in the title means for this work all the young adults studying in any University or Polytechnic in Nigeria. However, three universities from the southeast and south-south are used to represent the rest.
- Gender of the respondents was not ascertained through the interview questions since it is not a core issue for the subject matter.

- The writer did not find much related literature written by Nigerian authors and researchers.
- Owing to these limitations, the results of this work may or may not accurately apply to all other young adults of other Nigerian universities.

## 10. Conclusion

There are indications that some young adults of some Nigerian universities have hard time developing self-discipline. Distractions from the overuse of social media contribute a lot to this deficiency. Social media captures their attention and keeps their connections in disorder. In his book *Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence*, Daniel Goleman says that “today’s children are growing up in a new reality, one where they are attuning more to machines and less to people than has ever been true in human history” (Goleman, 3%.Loc 143). The wealth of information we have today from the social media is creating poverty of focus and attention. Focus and attention are qualities needed to develop self-discipline. Social media militate against these important qualities. The reality remains that social media have come to stay. Its access is made easier and simpler by daily improving technology. If students were not helped to develop self-discipline needed to manage social media, they would keep losing concentration and live lives that have no bearing. And they may even have a much harder time succeeding in almost every sphere of life.

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