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Social Media and the Incidence of Examination Misconduct amongst University Undergraduates

by

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Abstract

The upsurge in the incidence and prevalence of examination misconduct especially with the advent and popular use of the social media has become worrisome to educational managers and the society at large. This paper essentially examined the relationship between examination misconduct and the use of social media. The qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather data and with the aid of simple percentage and content analysis the data were interpreted. The study revealed that the incidence of exam misconduct has soared as a result of the use of whatsapp and other social networking sites. There is therefore the need for government and educational managers to ensure the non use of mobile phones in and around examination venues.

Key words: Examination *misconduct*, social media, Education managers, social Networking sites

1. Introduction

Evidence abound of increasing incidence of examination misconduct by university undergraduates which conflicts with the core purpose of education – the training of the mind and character for the acquisition of practical and theoretical skills, knowledge and functional ideas for development; and the search for truth and knowledge and the creation and communication of ideas (Aaron, 1992, Nanna, 1997).

Examination misconduct is an illegal or unethical behaviour exhibited by students/candidates in the process of being tested on their ability or knowledge of a subject matter(s) (Ikupa, 1997). This is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria as the first incident was reported in 1914 during the senior Cambridge local examinations were the question papers leaked before the due date of the examination. It has however assumed an alarming rate of increase as the students have devised various means of evading the eagle eyes of the invigilators.

The advent and full embrace of social media, particularly whatsapp and facebook by all and sundry but more particularly by the youths who are students have further increased the sophistication and diversification of the means by which examination misconduct are carried out. Social media refers to web and mobile-based technologies which are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among individuals, organization and communities. They are internet-mediated human communication systems that are based on the framework of web. 2.0. Web 2.0 is the software that accounts for all social interactions and exchange between and among individuals, organization and communities via the Web or internet, (Dominick 2009). The concept of social media therefore finds meaning in the ability of users to generate, interpret, restructure and disseminate content. The idea enables users to create and share experiences, information or ideas based on the pervasive technology of the internet and the World Wide Web (www).

Social media combine technologies and features (both past and evolving), to create online global environments for interaction and exchange and they have given rise to a new way of life and to essentially new voices through interpersonal communication channels. These new voices which began as innocuous interpersonal communication channels have, following increased access to the internet and other computer devices that support social networking, grown into global sites for news dissemination. Indeed, social networking sites such as facebook, twitter, you tube, and other handheld mobile applications, such as blackberry, whatsapp etc, are some of the popular web-based social media that are giving vent to previously voiceless individuals and groups who have today become strong new voices. The most popular users of these social networking platforms are the university undergraduates. This of course accounts for the use of the social networking platforms in the perpetuation and carrying out examination misconduct and vices.

2. Statement of the Problem

The prevalence and incidence of examination malpractice in Nigeria has grown astronomically and this has become a problem not just to the sociologists, school counselors, administrators of educational institutions, but also parents and the society at large. More worrisome today is the fact that, undergraduates in Nigerian universities have devised various means to perpetuate this social menace while avoiding being caught.

The wide reception and acceptance of the use of social media by the society are university undergraduates inclusive have further compounded the fight against examination malpractice. Ordinarily, the social media or networking was supposed to aid the study habits and academic performance of students but it would appear that besides this manifest function of social media, it has latent and unintended social consequences.

Students' academic performance takes important place in teaching and learning process. Social media utilization is supposed to enhance the students study habits and help to attain greater height in their academic pursuits. De Escobar (2009) observed that students need to be familiar with the relationship between good study habits and academic achievement to accomplish great success in any level of education.

There has been increased concern on the negative use of media among the students which has affected the study habits and performance. Oji (2007) noted that the growing incidence of students using the internet not necessarily for academic purposes but for anti-social activities is at an astonishing rate. They use websites for pornography, fraud and for other social vices in the society. Schill (2011) asserted that the social media

sites encourage negative behaviour among students such as catching up with unknown friends and so on.

Wang, Chen and Liang (2011) findings on effect of social media on college students, showed that social media use is negatively associated with academic performance. They noted that two thirds of the students are found using social media while in class studying or doing homework. This multitasking increase distraction and becomes detrimental to students' performance and study habits and reading habit. Osarumwense (2015) noted that the increase in examination malpractice is due to the use of whatsapp. He added that students now snap the questions in the examination hall and send the answer back through whatsapp while others simply google the answers. It is therefore worthwhile to investigate the perception of social media as a predictor for the incidence of examination misconduct amongst university undergraduates

3. Objectives of the Study

This study is designed:

- i. to investigate whether social media is used in the commission of examination misconduct amongst university undergraduates
- ii. to examine whether social media is used in enhancing academic performance amongst university undergraduates

4. Research Questions

- i. Does social media aid in the commission and perpetuation of examination misconduct?
- ii. Do social media enhance academic performance?

5. Review of Related Literature

The popularity of social networks grows rapidly by the second. These social sites have become effective (to an extent) as a means of communicating ideas and feelings among their users. Thus, they are beginning to get more attention from educational institutions as they are taking drastic steps to educate students on the use of the sites, especially in the areas of the privacy, legal issue, potential socio-economic and psychological dangers. In addition, social networking enhances a student's sense of community, sharing and collaboration brings an additional responsibility and workload, which some students find inflexible and rather "forced" (Minocha, 2009). This technology uses web cams or voice-only soft ware to hold virtual seminars online. This is extremely useful for collaborations where, the partners live in different parts of the globe. Through the use of social networking sites, undergraduates are able to express themselves, communicate and collect profiles that highlight their talent and experience.

Konetes and McKeague (2011) reported that, 'students are using facebook and other channels to develop their identities, beliefs and stances on various issues such as politics, religion, economy and work, as well as to pioneer and develop intimate relationships." Gross (2004) on his part note that "students use social networking sites not only for leisure and personal socialization but also as a platform for more meaningful and serious deliberations, and students are using social networking for making friends, sharing links, online learning, finding jobs to accomplish their economic, educational, political and social being." This has been incorporated into the educational faculties, as a resource to support the educational communications between student and faculties, even

though institutions of higher learning have tried preventing students from accessing technologies which is of less importance to their academic benefit.

According to Brennan (2001) and Notley (2010) social networking helps in the school and universities to leverage and complement formal education activities and enhance learning outcomes. In other words, Social networking can provide opportunities for new relationships aswell as strengthening existing relationships.

Barker (2013) notes that social media offers plenty of opportunities for learning and interactivity and that it is not too hard to see how students and its users benefits from using social media. He added that students are learning and adapting to the world using a relatively new form of communication. Social networking services can facilitate learning and skill development outside formal learning environments by supporting peer-to-peer learning of knowledge and skills, collaboration, diverse cultural expression; the development of skills valued in the modern workplace, and a more empowered conception of citizenship (Jenkins, 2007).

The knowledge and skill young people are learning through social networking sites (SNSs) are directly relevant to the 'participatory web' in which 'user generated content is now integral in a rapidly developing online business model that capitalizes on the social networks, creativity and knowledge of its users; and this means that new business models are expected to emerge. Notley and Tacchi, (2005) noted that this has led some to claim that the learning enabled via social media will have a direct bearing on their economic futures. Although it cannot be pressured that daily use of technology outside of formal education contexts translates into meaningful use for learning, social networking sites (SNSs) will provide the most benefit in terms of learning when there is integration of social networking users in educational settings and their everyday lives (Kennedy, et.al, 2008).

Having positive interpersonal relationships is an important predictor of well being and can buffer individuals from many of the key stressors that characterize the transition from childhood to adulthood. Social networking generally, has been found to strengthen individual interpersonal relationships (Besley, 2008 and Gross, 2004). Email, instant messaging and social networking can address new barriers people may face to forming and maintaining public places together, limited transport to get there, and time free of structured activities such as school and sport.

In sum, the social networking is becoming a vital part of everyday business, providing endless potential which can be of benefit to students in their academic performance and daily life activities in a variety of ways as discussed above. If anyone does not currently have an account with any social networking site, that person is missing out on the increased communication on offer.

Dangers associated in using social networking sites

Social networking sites have caused some problems for their users, individuals, families, groups and students. Most of their users, these days, prefer to communicate via the sites rather than or instead of face-to-face contact or oral communication, thus, making social network their preferred socializing forces. This Benniger (1987) opined "has gradually replaced interpersonal communication ..." "According to Sherry Turkle, the founder and director of MIT initiative on Technology and self, via Wikipedia (2011), stated:

Networked, we are together, but so lessened are our expectations of each other that we feel utterly alone. And there is

the risk thatwe come to see each other as objects to be accessed and only forthe parts that we find useful, comforting or amusing.

Ahmad (2011) reported that one of the dangers of social networks is cyber or e-crime which encourages copyright infringement which has always remained a serious case in dealing with social networking sites especially about the video clips for instance in the YouTube. Users without considering the terms can easily upload download or watch any kind of video clip. YouTube for Instance, has been sued several times on these issues. For example Viacom sued YouTube claiming one billion dollar for uploading 160 thousand videos belonging to Viacom without their permission as did the French independent labels collecting society (Benniger, 1987)

Another drawback to social networking is that some users simply share too much information; people can lose their jobs or a friendship over leaking information on social networking. Even if a user of a social site has her privacy settings of highest level, their information can still be passed on by someone on their friends list. It doesn't take much for an angry follower to copy and paste a status or download a picture if they are looking for revenge. On the following note there are a number of scammers on social networks who may try to steal or use your personal information; information that can be used for potential crime such as identity theft or fraud. Additionally, social media enables attackers to send phishing messages that appear to come from someone that the victim knows. Having obtained long information for a few accounts, scammers will then send out messages to everyone connected to the compromised accounts, often with an enticing subject line that suggests familiarity with the victim (Baker, 2013).

Additionally, social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter create the illusion of familiarity and intimacy on the internet. The result is that people may be inclined to share information on which they would have preferred to keep private. Furthermore, social networkings have become perilous as a result of the activities of criminals. Recently Nigeria was faced with one of the worst dangers that the social network sites can generate. The death of Cynthia Onwkogu who fell victim of one of the social network hazards through "facebook". This habit of adding friends or sending message without having a second thought about the consequences has led so many people to fall victim of fraud and armed robbery.

Another danger found with use of social networking sites are predators and stalkers. When teens complete their online profile, they have typically given away much of their personal information. Any of their "friends" can have access to their full name, birth date, school and even their exact location. Not only is it possible for someone to hack your profile, they could also steal your identity.

In addition, as social networks have risen in popularity over the past years, people have been spending excessive amount of time on the Internet in general and social networks in specific. This has led researchers to debate the establishment of Internet addiction as an actual clinical disorder (wikipedia, 2011). Social networking can affect the extent to which a person feels lonely.

Osarumwense (2015) noted that with the aid of social media, students have advanced in their cheating and endeavours. He describes how an undergraduate goes into the examination hall, takes the picture of the questions in the examination questions and through whatsapp, sends it to a friend who is comfortably sitting in his house with textbooks. The friend answers the questions and sends the same whatsapp medium which is then copied out into the answer booklet.

While on his part, Ayodele (2014) reported that some students in Nigerian universities these days quietly go to the examination with mobile phones and browse the answers to the questions without the knowledge and sometimes to the knowledge of some unscrupulous invigilators. He further added that right inside the examination hall, students through whatsapp share answers to questions, sometimes without the knowledge of the invigilators. It is obvious that with this level of technology, examination malpractices will continue unabatedly while the standard of education will conversely keep nose diving.

6. Theoretical Framework

This study can be explained, using the media systems dependency (MSD) theory. The media systems dependency theory was first proposed by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melivin Defleur in 1976, and consists of a complex system in which the media, individuals, their personal environment, and the social environment have dependency relationships with each other. Each component depends on the others components in a system by drawing on resource in order to satisfy goals. Particular attention is given to the resources of media systems in modern society and the consideration conditions which will increase or decrease individuals reliance on media system. In another way, media systems dependency theory is a relationship in which the capacity of individuals to attain their goals is contingent upon the information resources of the media systems (wikipedia, 2011).

According to Baran and Davies (2012), media systems dependency theory assumes that the more a person depends on having his or her needs met by media use, the more important will be the role that the media play in the person's life, and therefore, the more influence the media will have on the person. People turn to the media to communicate or make sense of what is happening, as the world becomes complex. People will become more dependent on the media that meet a number of their needs than on the media that touch only a few needs. The more an individual relies on the media for the expression of thought and sharing of ideas, the more that individual is influenced by the media.

Again, the more we depend on social media, the more our attitudes, cognition, emotional states or behavior will change. As individuals develop expectations that the media system can provide assistance toward goal attainment, individuals generally develop dependency relations with the media or medium perceived to be the most helpful in the goal pursuit. Media systems dependency theory also rests on the fact that industrialization have decreased the influence of inter personal communication and, therefore, increased the role of media system (wikipedia, 2011).

Gratifications theory stresses how and why the audience uses the media. Expatiating on the theory, McQuail (2010) has it that "the central question posed is: why do people use media, and what do they use them for? He further posits that the media as serving the various needs of the society-e.g. for cohesion, cultural continuity, social control and a large circulation of public information of all kinds. This, in turn, presupposes that individuals also use media for related purposes such as person guidance, relaxation, adjustment, information and identity formation.

The theory recognizes and maintains that the audience has various needs that prompt themselves to any media or media content. Therefore, the focal point is that the theory is of the notion that there are distinct benefits the media message consumers envisage to get from any medium they would expose themselves to. Once the medium does not deliver to the people those purposes, needs and or benefits they anticipate from

the organ, the tendency is that they (audience) may desert the very channel or content that does not satisfy them. The import is that the media audience is not an 'idle' soccer spectator that accepts what his football team plays; failure of a medium to satisfy the audience's basic desire regularly will give them room for searching for another medium. McQuail (2010) has it that the first research conducted on the uses and gratifications theory ''dates from the early 1940s, and focused on the reasons for the popular appeal of different radio programmes, especially ''soap operas' and quizzes, and also looked at daily newspaper reading.''

7. Materials and Method

Data for this study was collected through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Fieldwork began with the qualitative aspect of the research which provided important insights for the investigation of the study area. As it is common practice in most studies using triangulation, qualitative data are immensely important and must precede the survey method in order to facilitate the design of the questionnaire.

Qualitative data for the present analysis was elicited through in-depth interview while the questionnaire was used for the quantitative method. A hundred and ten (310) questionnaires were administered on selected undergraduates of the university of Benin, Benin City out of which three hundred and five (305) were returned for analysis. Only a hundred (300) were useful however representing a return rate of 90.9%.

Quantitative data was edited and cleaned to eliminate inconsistencies which could undermine the validity of the data. A descriptive analysis of data was undertaken using frequency while the qualitative data was analyzed using a manual content analysis. The procedure began with a transcription and translation of a tape recorder of the IDIs then the examination and later isolation of various responses that were relevant to the study objectives.

8. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by selected and socio-demographic characteristics

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	225	75%
Female	75	25%
16-17	15	5%
18-19	36	12%
20-21	102	34%
22-23	84	28%
23 and above	33	11%
Total	300	100%
Marital Status		
Single	294	98%
Married	84	2%

Divorced	-	0%
Widowed	-	0%
Total	300	100%
Religion		
Christianity	264	88%
Islam	Nil	
African Traditional Religion	36	12%
Total	300	100%
Level		
100	42	14%
200	78	26%
300	36	48%
400	144	12%
500	Nil	-
600	Nil	-
Total	300	100%
Faculty		
Arts	42	14%
Social sciences	123	41%
Sciences	30	10%
Law	90	30%
Engineering	15	5%
Total	300	100%

Source: Field work, January, 2016 - April, 2016

Table 1 displays information on selected demographic variables of the respondents. About 75% of the respondents were males while 25% were females. About 5% of the respondents were in the age bracket of 16-17 years, 12% were in the age bracket of 18-19 years, 34% were in the age bracket of 20-21 years while 28% and 11% fell into the age bracket of 22-23 and 23 years and above respectively. Similarly, about 98% of the respondents were single 2% were married while 0% and 0% were divorced and widowed respectively. This shows that because of the age of students, they were yet to marry.

As expected, a large majority of the respondents were Christians representing 88%. Tthis was to be expected considering the fact that Benin had an early contact with the Christian Missionaries and the superb evangelical work of the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa of the Church of God Mission Int'l Inc. 12% and - % were Traditionalists and none were Muslims.

Furthermore, 14% of the respondents were in the 100 level classwhile 26% percent of the respondents were in the 200 level. 48% and 12% respondents were in 300 and 400 levels respectively. As can be gleaned from the above, 400 level students were more. This is possibly due to the fact that they were not only aware of what research is but were also possibly engaged in their project work. This explains their accessibility to the researchers. Only 14% of the respondents in the Faculty of Arts engaged in the public

service. 41% of the respondent were in the Social Sciences while 10% were in the Sciences, 30% and 5% of the respondents were in Law and Engineering respectively.

Table 2: Social Media and perpetuation of Examination Malpractice

QUESTION 1.	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Social media aids the commission and perpetuation of examination malpractice in universities.	Yes	228	76%
in universities.	No	72	24%

Source: Field work January, 2016 - April, 2016.

Table 3: Social media and academic performance

QUESTION 2.	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Does social media enhance academic performance	Yes	114	38%
Periormano	No	186	62%

Source: Field work January, 2016 - April, 2016.

Table 2 indicates that as high as 76% of the respondents believed that social media aids in the commission and perpetuation of examination misconduct in universities. This view is further given credence to by Osarumwense (2015) when he observed that with the aid of social media, students have advanced in their cheating and endeavours. He described how an undergraduate wents into the examination hall, took the picture of the questions in the examination questions and through whatsapp, sent it to a friend who was comfortably sitting in his house with textbooks. The friend answers the questions and sentthe same whatsapp medium which was then copied out into the answer booklet.

His view collaborates the opinions of some IDI respondents as clearly captured by one interviewee above collaborates the views of some IDI respondents as vividly captured by one of the main interviewees.

"My friend uses his mobile phone to answer questions in the examination halls and is always having "A's" and "B's" in his results"

Table 3 indicated that as high as 62% of the respondents felt that social media does not enhance academic performance. This view is further buttressed by Ayodele (2014) when he observed that some students in Nigerian universities these days, quietly go to the examination with mobile phones and browse the answers to the questions without the knowledge and sometimes to the knowledge of some unscrupulous invigilators. He further added that right inside the examination hall, students through whatsapp share answers to questions, sometimes without the knowledge of the invigilators. It is obvious that with this level of technology, examination malpractices will continue unabatedly while the standard of education will continuously keep nose diving. The above collaborates the views of some IDI respondents as vividly captured by one of the main interviewees

"Many students, instead of reading their notetextbooks, spend endless hours on the net browsing rubbish. That is why they not only fail exams but try to cheat too."

Another interviewer was very open when he said:

"I have only used the whatsapp medium once in the hallmy elder sister taught me how to use it and also how todownload/browse the answers. It is a very fast means and lecturers hardly ever catch you."

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

Social media ordinarily is a means of communication which promotes learning, interaction and the likes. However from the study, evidence about undergraduates in Nigeria universities have rather than use it positively to enhance their learning resulted to employing it as a means of cheating in the examination halls. This has also resulted in lowering their academic performance as they tend to spend endless hours browsing and chatting on their mobile phones rather than reading or studying in the library. Government and parents must therefore be up to their responsibilities.

Based on the findings of this study, the following are thus recommended:

- 1. Parents of undergraduates should wake up to the new challenge posed by the new media. Unfortunately, many of the parents are not exposed to the new media and have little or nothing to say to their children.
- 2. Perhaps, parents themselves should be enlightened by the media on the ills of the social media so that they can then enforce some rules at home.
- 3. Undergraduates in the universities should be re-oriented. A re-value orientation is needed. An outright ban on the use of cell phones is impossible. So counselors should rather teach the students to adapt to the positive side of social media. With persistence and encouragement, students will definitely change their attitude to the use of social media.
- 4. The university authorities should not only engage the leadership of the students' body but also make rules that prohibit the use of cell phones in the examination halls. Some universities have already put this in place. Others who have not done so should be encouraged to do so. Students caught with phones in the examination halls should be sent to the disciplinary committee.

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