

## Social Media Usage and Undergraduate Students' Research Skills Development in Tai Solarin University of Education, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** This study examined the influence of social media usage on undergraduate students' research skills development in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria. A descriptive correlation design of the ex post facto type was adopted. 1000 undergraduate students participated in the study. Four hypotheses were formulated while a researcher's developed questionnaire tagged 'Social Media and Undergraduate Students' Research Skills Questionnaire (SMUSRSQ)' was used to gather relevant data. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used as a test for all the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The study revealed that there is significant influence of social media usage on undergraduate students' ability to generate ideas about areas of research interest, source for quality research materials, source appropriate research analytical tools for their result presentation and develop creative writing research skills. It was recommended that universities should build and integrate interactive learning tools as well as links to research data bases to make the use of social media relevant to students' research needs. There is also the need to sensitize students with effective utilization of social networks for more academic oriented activities.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Usage, Undergraduate Students, Research Skills, University, Education

### 1. Background to the Study

Research report writing is one of the requirements for graduation in universities in Nigeria. Students are expected to conduct as well as be well grounded in conducting and reporting the findings of their research before they graduate. Sharon (2012) described undergraduate research as a form of assessment, designed by lecturers to test students' skills in locating and organizing materials, comprehending a topic, and/or applying a concept to a specific context. The above description of undergraduate research reporting reveals that first degree research projects are designed with the intent of creating new knowledge. It empowers students to create knowledge as well as communicate their findings. The students benefit from the research experience of the supervisors who builds confidence, offers encouragement, and provides guidance and assistance for the students' future education and career development. When students lack research skills, it is inevitable that they will experience difficulties in their postgraduate studies as well as their chosen occupation. Ajewole & Fasola's (2011) stated that many students unfortunately lack good research skills. This is manifested by their incapability to effectively use the library, source for quality academic works online or take meaningful notes during field work.

A growing number of Nigerian scholars hold the view that addiction to social media sites are potentially a disruptive technology to students' academic work in higher education. Oluwatoyin (2011) surveyed 1,860 Facebook users from the Lagos State University and found that most of the students did not have a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) above 3.50 because they have spent a large part of their time on social media than on their homework and study time which could contribute to higher grade. Ajewole & Fasola's (2011) study of 884 students from eight higher institutions in Oyo State showed that majority of them spent more time on social media at the detriment of their studies.

Social media are technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberation across stakeholders. They are primarily internet and mobile-based tools for sharing and discussing information by users. These technologies, according to Andreas & Michael (2013) are internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0. They include online applications for social networking sites, social book marking and sharing tools, social citation tools, blogging and micro blogging tools, virtual worlds, e-conference presentation sharing tools, audio and video tools, e-project management tools, and research and writing collaboration tools which are primarily developed to foster user-centered social interaction. Social media provide to their users adequate freedom of what they do with them. Osatuyi (2013) elaborated that social media platforms are many and are classified based on their functions and uses. He categorized the use of social media variously. These are interactivity, recognition, and participation. People use social media for either hard or soft issues or both. For instance, some

people use social media to play online games, while others use it to negotiate, establish, maintain, and participate in political and cultural issues. Social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook are used to share and update message. Microblogs such as Twitter is used for short messages while Wikis are mainly used for educational and informational purposes. Blogs are usually personal or collaborative online publishing diary while online forums are interactive space where participants discuss issues which are posted on a discussion board. The popularity, availability, and accessibility of social media account for their widespread usage in almost every aspect of life. Osatuyi (2013) stressed that people use social networks to organize campaigns (political or non-political), create awareness, social interaction, for sharing of information, marketing and healthcare activities. In institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, social media are used as tools for instructions, students' engagement and peer review. Ndaku (2013) asserted that, many students are assumed to be using social networks and the positive aspect of this is that youths can utilize them for academic assistance and support. Due to the ability of social media to enhance connections by making them easily accessible, social media can yield many benefits for the students such as providing a virtual space for them to share their interests or problems with individuals of like minds. Students who may be reluctant to speak up in class can participate in book discussion blogs and writing for real audiences. There are new Web tools emerging all the time that are accessible to students such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Popoola, (2014) emphasized that UNESCO, in its policy document, supported the potential of social media in this regard and recommended classroom experimentation with it to highlight its strengths and weaknesses. The

perspective of the potential effective use of collaborative learning via social media in institutions of higher learning in the present time is often referred to as Web 2.0. Social media have specific applications that provide various ways to collaborate. They comprise different tools elaborated by Omekwu, Eke & Odoh (2014) reiterated that social media do not merely allow knowledge transfer but also facilitate students' collaborative learning such as creating understanding among students, discussion with peers, lecturers, increase knowledge sharing and improve research students skills.

The view that social media is disruptive to academic treatise of students was rejected by some researchers who acknowledged that social media sites not only re-engage learners with their studies but also enhance their academic performance. Onyeka, Sajoh & Bulus (2013) argued that the frequent use of social media sites has no negative effect on the students' studies. In the same vein, Ogedebe, Emmanuel & Musa (2012) posited that Facebook usage does not have adverse effect on the academic work of university students.. While the present study is not burdened with the direct effect of social media usage on undergraduates' CGPA, its primary focus is centered on the impact of social media on undergraduate students' research skills.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

The current trend in technology has seen an increased use of social media technology by youths across the globe. While some educators see the academic benefits of social network, a number of them have foreseen dangers in undue dependence and misuse of the technology by university students. Also, the extent to which students used social media to improve their research skills have not received significant attention. This is

because quite a good number of students used social media network for social services, chatting with friends among others. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the extent to which social media has influenced undergraduate students' research skills acquisition in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State.

## 3. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the impact of social media on undergraduate students' research skills' development in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria. In order to achieve this, the following specific purposes were raised:

- To investigate students' preference of facebook, whatsapp, twitter, instagram and snapchat for undergraduate student research skill acquisition
- To examine the influence of social media on undergraduate students' ability to generate ideas about areas of research interest;
- To identify the influence of social media on undergraduate students' ability to source for quality research materials;
- To identify the influence of social media on students' ability to source appropriate research analytical tools for result presentation.
- To ascertain the influence of social media on undergraduate students' ability to develop creative writing research skills.

## 4. Research Question

What categories of social media are frequently used by students of Tai Solarin university of Education (TASUED)?

## 5. Hypotheses

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant influence of social media on undergraduate students' ability to generate ideas about areas of research interest.

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant influence of social media on undergraduate students' ability to source for quality research materials.

**H0<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant influence of social media on students' ability to source appropriate research analytical tools for their result presentation.

**H0<sub>4</sub>:** There is no significant influence of social media on undergraduate students' ability to develop creative writing research skills.

## 6. Significance of the Study

The output of this study would be of benefit to university students and the authorities of universities nationwide. It would expose the level of the students' use of social media and assist authorities on how best to sustain the students' attention on positive use of social media for improved academic research work. It would identify the influence of social media on undergraduate students' ability to source for quality research materials, to generate ideas about areas of research interest and to develop creative writing research skills. Also, it would help ICT department to design the best social media and networking site that would arrest the attention of students for improved skills in research writing. Also, the findings would be used by academic advisers and counselors to proffer professional advice to the university authorities on how to regulate the social network usage among undergraduate students in the nations' universities.

## 7. Scope of the Study

The study examined the impact of social media on undergraduate students' research skills development in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. It examined the impact of social media on undergraduate students' ability to generate ideas about areas of research interest, source for quality research materials, source appropriate research analytical tools in result presentation as well as develop creative writing research skills.

## 8. Research Methods

The study adopted a descriptive correlation design of the *ex post facto* type. This design helped to examine how the independent variables influenced the dependent without any form of manipulation in order to accomplish the research purpose. A clustered sample of 1000 students from various locations was selected for the study from a total population of 17,537 undergraduate students' of Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED), Ijagun, Ogun State. A researcher- developed questionnaire; tagged: *Social Media and Undergraduate Students' Research Skills Questionnaire (SMUSRSQ)* was used to gather relevant data for the study. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity as well as a reliability test-retest study among 20 undergraduate students. This yielded a Pearson Product Moment reliability index of 0.72 at .05 significance level. This evidenced the potency of the instrument for gathering required data for this study. Five research assistants were employed for the administration of the instrument.

### 8.1 Methods of Data Analysis

Frequency counts and percentage were used for presenting the answer to the research question as well as the demographic

characteristics of respondents while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for all the

hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

## 9. Results and Discussion

### Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

**Table 1: Gender distribution of Respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	391	39.10
Female	609	60.90
Total	1000	100

Source: Field Survey 2017 (SPSS 22 result)

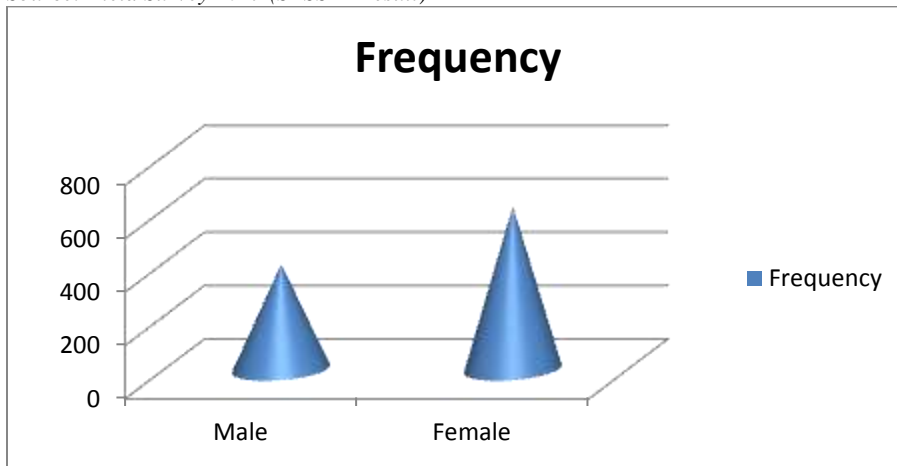


Table 1 revealed that 391 male respondents participated in the study. This represents 39.1% of the total sample used while 609 respondents representing 60.9% were females. This implies that greater proportion of the respondents were females.

**Table 2: Respondents distribution by College**

Colleges	Frequency	Percentage
COSMAS	147	14.7
COHUM	120	12.0
COSIT	110	11.0
COSPED	422	42.2
COVTED	201	20.1
Total	1000	100

Source: Field Survey 2017 (SPSS 22 result)

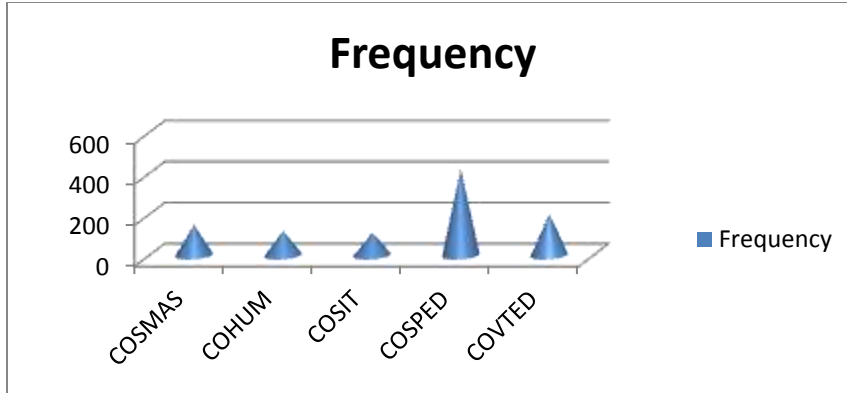


Table 2 shows that 147 of the respondents (14.7%) were from College of Social and Management Sciences (COSMAS), 120 (12%) from College of Humanities (COHUM), 110 (11%) from College of Science and Information Technology (COSIT), 422 (42.2%) from College of Specialised and Professional Education (COSPED) while 201 (20.1%) were from College of Vocational and Technical Education (COVTED). This implies that highest number of the respondents were from COSPED.

**Research Question:** What categories of social media are frequently used by students of Tai Solarin university of Education (TASUED)?

**Table 3: Categories of social media used by the students**

Social Media	Mean (X)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Rank order
Facebook	4.06	1.303	1
Whatsapp	4.02	1.296	2
Twitter	3.70	1.252	3
Instagram	2.13	1.296	4
Snapchat	2.43	1.415	5

Source: Field Survey 2017 (SPSS 22 result)

Table 3 revealed the mean, standard deviation and rank order of the social media used by undergraduates in TASUED. From the analysis, it was realized that Facebook was ranked highest in use followed by Whatsapp while snapchat was the least utilized.

**Hypotheses Testing**

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant influence of social media on undergraduate students’ ability to generate ideas about areas of research interest.

**Table 4: Influence of social media on undergraduate students’ ability to generate ideas about areas of research interest.**

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	17.979	1.381		13.020	.000
	Social media	.163	.048	.161	3.356	.001

a. Dependent Variable: StudentsAbilitytoGenerateIdeas

The first important thing to note in Table 4 is that the sign of the coefficient of social media is positive. This implies that undergraduate students’ ability to generate ideas about areas of research interest increases with the use of social media. Furthermore, the probability ( $p = 0.01$ ) as reported in Table 4 for social media implies that the slope ( $\beta = 0.163$ ) is statistically significant. Hence, the researcher concludes that there is significant influence of social media on undergraduate students’ ability to generate ideas about areas of research interest.

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant influence of social media on undergraduate students’ ability to source for quality research materials.

**Table 5: Influence of social media on undergraduate students’ ability to source for quality research materials.**

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	20.466	1.367		14.974	.000
	Social media	.134	.043	.207	3.152	.002

a. Dependent Variable: StudentsAbilitytoSourceforQualityRresearchMaterials

The important thing to note in Table 5 also is that the sign of the coefficient of social media is positive. This implies that undergraduate students’ ability to source for quality research materials increases with the use of social media. The probability ( $p = 0.02$ ) as reported in the Table implies that the slope ( $\beta = 0.134$ ) is statistically significant. Hence, it is safe to conclude that there is significant influence of social media on undergraduate students’ ability to source for quality research materials.

**H0<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant influence of social media on students’ ability to source appropriate research analytical tools for their result presentation.

**Table 6: Influence of social media on students’ ability to source appropriate research analytical tools for their result presentation**

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	14.823	1.411		10.502	.000
	Social media	.245	.035	.429	7.095	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Students Ability to Source Appropriate Research Analytical tools

Table 6 showed that students’ ability to source appropriate research analytical tools for their result presentation increases with the use of social media. The probability ( $p = 0.00$ ) as reported in the Table implies that the slope ( $\beta = 0.245$ ) is statistically significant. It was also safe to conclude that there is significant impact of social media on students’ ability to source appropriate research analytical tools for their result presentation.

**H0<sub>4</sub>:** There is no significant influence of social media on undergraduate students’ ability to develop creative writing research skills.

**Table 7: Influence of social media on undergraduate students’ ability to develop creative writing research skills Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	18.401	1.890		9.733	.000
Social media	.162	.048	.220	3.362	.001

a. Dependent Variable: StudentsAbilityDevelopCreativeWritingResearchSkills

The sign of the coefficient of social media in Table 7 is also positive. This implies that undergraduate students’ ability to develop creative writing research skills increases also with the use of social media. Furthermore, the probability ( $p = 0.01$ ) as reported in Table 7 for social media implies that the slope ( $\beta = 0.162$ ) is statistically significant. Hence, the inferenc that there is significant influence of social media on undergraduate students’ ability to develop creative writing research skills.

**10. Discussion of Findings**

The study revealed that there is significant impact of social media on undergraduate students’ ability to generate ideas about areas of research interest. This finding correlates with Al-rahmi, Othman & Yusuf (2015) who examined the effect of social media on researchers’ academic performance through collaborative learning in Malaysian higher education. They showed that researchers perceive social media as helping in increased collaborative learning and improvement of their performance. These researchers are more inclined to communicate through social media as opposed to face-to-face. In addition, the sample researchers are inclined to utilize social media.

The significant impact of social media on undergraduate students’ ability to source for quality research materials correlates with Nwangwa, Yonlonfoun & Omotere (2014)

who investigated the influence of social media usage on research skills of undergraduates offering Educational Management at six different universities randomly selected from the six geo-political zones in Nigeria and they indicated that undergraduates frequently copied from Wikipedia as their major source of information; uses Facebook to generate ideas from colleagues about their research focus; and make use of Wordpress or Blogger to develop their creative writing skills. However, students’ reliance on these social media tools alone has resulted in their dwindling research skills to produce quality research works.

Furthermore, there is significant impact of social media on students’ ability to source appropriate research analytical tools for their result presentation. This finding correlates with Al-rahmi, Othman & Yusuf (2015) who examine the effect of social media on researchers’ academic performance through collaborative learning in Malaysian higher education The findings showed that collaborative learning, engagement, and intention to use social media positively and significantly relate to the interactivity of research group members with peers and research students with supervisors to improve their academic performance in Malaysian higher education. However, the findings of this research contradicts Musa’s (2015) study of the learning process of mass communication students in Nigeria and the conclusion that their usage of social media

posed a threat to the internet without any usefulness for academic purpose.

It also contradicts Tartari (2015). who indicated that most university students only use social media and spend many hours checking social media sites with no positive aspect to academics.

## 11. Conclusion

The examination of the influence of social media on undergraduate students' research skills in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria showed that there is significant impact of social media on undergraduate students' ability to generate ideas about areas of research interest, ability to source for quality research materials, ability to source appropriate research analytical tools for result presentation and ability to develop creative writing research skills.

## 12. Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided for this study:

- Universities should build and integrate interactive learning tools as well as links to research databases to make the use of social media relevant to students' research needs.
- The students must be educated on effective utilization of social networks for more academic-oriented activities.
- Educational technologists and programmers need to focus on developing social networking sites (SNS) that is academic based.
- University authorities should organize frequent seminars to enlighten students on the bad aspects of social networking sites.

- Students who are heavy users, should moderate the use of the sites to avoid addiction and create a balance between their offline and online lives while using the sites.
- The ministry of Education should liaise with Nigerian Communications Commission: to compel all social network providers in Nigeria to monitor the online activities of their subscribers for optimum decorum.
- The federal ministry of information and the National Orientation Agency should draft regulatory measures to control the workings of social networking sites that are accessible to Nigeria students.

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